

# “Those Kids Can’t Handle Their Freedom”: A philosophical footnote exploring self- regulation in classroom teaching practice

By

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
In the Department of Curriculum & Instruction

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University of Victoria

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*I acknowledge with respect the Lekwungen peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day. I also acknowledge the T’Sou-ke peoples on whose traditional territory I reside.*

Supervisory Committee

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## Abstract

There are Stories that we are told, stories that we tell, and Stories that are told through us. This text sets out to ask whether self-regulation is a tool to support the progressivist educator *or* something that undermines the goals of progressivism. But we cannot avoid the footnotes or philosophy in educational research. What is ‘progressivism?’ How does its theory connect or disconnect from its practice? Can it function or live up to its name if those who call themselves ‘progressive’ teachers or parents are distracted by The Question of ‘*How do I get them to do what I want them to do?*’ And, what about the follow-up fear of control or chaos or the belief that ‘Those kids can’t handle their freedom?’ Employing an ‘out-of-the-box’ narrative academic writing approach, weaving stories from personal parenting and teaching moments with case studies, the questions surrounding self-regulation reveal some surprising answers. Can the narrative surrounding Classroom Management co-exist with progressivist educational goals or the tool of self-regulation? Can democracy be promoted, taught, or lived without praxis?

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## Dedication

A thank you to Jacques Rancière, who introduced me to the work of Joseph Jacotot, which has changed my life.

A thank you to Alfie Kohn, whose work has ruined playgrounds for me forever.

A thank you to all of the folks I have worked with in camping and teaching over the years, I am continually inspired by your commitment to the progressivist cause.

A thank you to my best friend and partner, who supported me in so many ways.

A thank you to my kids, who have taught me what connection can be, while inspiring me to continually strive toward it.

# Prologue

*There is a vitality, a life force, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique, and if you block it, it will never exist through any other medium; and be lost. The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is, nor how it compares with other expressions. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open. You do not even have to believe in yourself or your work. You have to keep open and aware directly to the urges that motivate you. Keep the channel open. No artist is pleased. There is no satisfaction whatever at any time. There is a queer, divine dissatisfaction, a blessed unrest that keeps us marching and makes us more alive than the others."*

*- Martha Graham in The Life and Work of Martha Graham (1991) by Agnes de Mille, p. 264*

## Keeping the Channel Open

After I defended my dissertation, which initially contained the introductory chapter of this text through to the conclusion, I was asked by my committee to make some revisions. This is standard practice; the feedback of these experienced and dedicated people, academics who had read my work carefully, was welcomed with appreciation and admiration. I set out to compose a new section for both the introduction and conclusion that would address the concerns of the committee. But, as I began to re-read the initial chapter, I came to the realization that I could not reconcile these additions (at least not in a standard way) with the rest of what was written. Something would have been blocked, an expression mis-expressed, and part of me felt lost when I envisioned it. Of course, I wanted to remain open; I wanted the revisions of the committee to be realized and I found value in their words. I also became keenly

aware that in order to keep this work authentic and mine, “clearly and directly,” and to maintain the flow and fit and *truth* of what I tried to do, I needed to “keep the channel open” (de Mille, 1991, p.264). For me, the ‘channel’ is a connection between me and the reader, one based in equality, and actualized through storytelling.

A prologue seemed appropriate, as it is sometimes used in narrative writing as an outworker. It is an opportunity to begin your story twice, perhaps at two different points, so that the reader is appraised of all of what contributes to the plot and/or development of character. My committee was concerned that the way the text stood left out certain important and necessary information, such as details that lay out or *explain* what the dissertation does and the process I follow throughout the manuscript. The purpose of such elements is to provide the reader with a roadmap to follow, as well as the “necessary orientation and background” (committee notes) that would guide you, the reader, from point A, to point B, to point C. The original structure may have caused folks to feel disoriented because I avoided some common academic approaches to research and analysis, and especially to writing. I am a storyteller. And I am committed to equality between you, the reader, and me.

#### Reconciling Requests with Praxis

The main text of the introductory chapter through to the conclusion does not do the work of explaining the layout of the dissertation, or the process that I follow throughout the manuscript, nor do these chapters give the reader a linear and/or typical map of the study’s design from its beginning. This is intentional, but I also recognize that for some readers it may be confusing or even discomfiting. In the main text, I tell the story of this approach to research; I tell my own story and how it is influenced by the historical and philosophical foundations of

progressivist education. I speak to what excites me about self-regulation practices for both parents and classroom teachers. I know there is a connection between progressivist goals of teaching others to be self-governing, or to be both aware of and motivated to support the freedom of self *and* others, and the practice of self-regulation. But I raise concerns about whether self-regulation can be practiced when the narrative that kids (and people more generally) are *not capable* of self-governance is dominant or accepted without question or critical reflection. I look at this problem through the lens of philosophy *first* but also with other educational research in mind. The more technically ‘expected’ elements of educational research are considered in the footnotes; the ‘unexpected’ and often overlooked aspects of the research questions, groundwork, literary basis, data, and analysis are elevated to the main body of the text.

The introductory chapter presents all of the above; the writing style (using storytelling as a method) honours both freedom and equality, and both Western philosophy and Indigenous ways of knowing and learning are discussed in support of this approach. *Praxis* is proposed as a way of being that can help us reconnect what we think and what we do, our theory and practice, so that we continue to progress toward our shared goal. If this dissertation is to investigate and discuss the problem of inequality in teaching and parenting, and the ways in which it inhibits our goals as progressivist educators, while it undermines innovative practices such as self-regulation, the technique employed through research and writing must be founded on equality. One can’t fight fire while adding gasoline to the flames.

Yet, despite my commitment to following a “path with heart” (Chambers, 2004, p.4) and “keeping the channel open” (de Mille, 1991, p.264), I find that it is fair to acknowledge the need

for some sort of layout of what is to come. A road map of the process that I follow throughout the manuscript is helpful especially when I've taken the road less travelled. Below is an outline of the dissertation in a more traditional or expected format. Following this profile of what is to come, I will also include a methodological review that encompasses features that are expected or considered standard in educational research documents. My approach to methodology is unconventional and I hope that by including a presentation of the research design in an *expected way*, some readers will have their needs met. Both of these efforts serve the purpose of helping the reader, perhaps more-so those who are long-established in academic standards, to get oriented in the manuscript and paint a clearer picture of what is to come. Considering the needs of others, even when they differ from my own, is a large part—in my view—of treating equality as a point of departure. This prologue, and what is to follow, was designed with the needs of others in mind, while also exercising my praxis.

#### A Road Map: Getting Oriented

The purpose of the introduction is to prepare the reader for what is to come. Rather than laying out the project in a linear way, I opt for making my interlocuter ready for vulnerability as I tell the story of my own encounters with discomfort while committing myself to praxis, or what I describe as assessing the connections and disconnections between theory and practice in education, classroom teaching, parenting, and my own places in all of the above. I also propose that the goal of 'progressivist education' in mainstream Canada is a commitment to teaching students to self-govern and to be participants in a pluralistic democracy. As teachers and parents, we want to support our students and children in being people capable of recognizing their own freedom *and* the freedom of others and to think and

act in ways that serve those freedoms with a commitment to equality. But there is something that stands in the way of realizing this goal, and hence progressivist efforts never seem to *progress*. The Question of *How do I get kids/students to do what I want them to do*, and the ways in which it has been approached in educational psychology, philosophy of education, as well as its effects on the progressivist's effort to perfect pedagogy, will be explored throughout this text as part of the problem interrupting the ability to take on 'new' or 'innovative' practices such as teaching self-regulation. I see the merits of progressivist education *and* the practice of teaching self-regulation, I am committed to both, but I wonder if either can be done without praxis. To answer this question, I investigate the Story of progressivist education, the narrative that stands firmly behind the call for classroom management in today's 'efficient' classrooms, and the theory and practice that proponents of self-regulation recommend. I take these elements into a school and two classrooms in which I collect surveys, interviews, observations, and autoethnographic data in the hopes that I will better understand the role of praxis in both the realization of progressivist education's goals *and* the practice of self-regulation.

In Chapter One, I present the Stories that make up progressivist education. I use storytelling as a method to shed light on the stories-that-we-all-know and how they demonstrate praxis through critical reflection. Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic has us locked into the refrain that without control there will be chaos. Hobbes demonstrates the origins (at least in the West) of the Story that humans are naturally incapable of governing themselves and require another person (a sovereign) to govern them. Rousseau makes a call for a 'new' approach to teaching and parenting that would raise a generation to think for themselves and self-govern in accordance with their needs and the needs of others. But his theories present

paradoxes; manipulation and external control of others counters his progressivist aims. All of these Stories are current in today's classrooms and other places we teach and parent. This chapter also highlights the unfortunate presence of a narrative that *we* (teachers, parents, and others) *cannot philosophize*. I reject this tale and ask: if we cannot think about our thinking, or reflect on the ways in which our doing is supporting our beliefs (connection) or subverting them (disconnection), then how can our practices *progress*?

In Chapter Two, I tell my own story of coming into praxis and the ways in which the Stories found in progressivist education came into focus in my own work and life. I speak to the vulnerability and discomfort experienced when we face a challenge to our worldviews and systems of belief with compassion and curiosity. In particular, I take up the common classroom management strategy of praise and the ways in which it demonstrates a paradox in progressivist education. After noting the disconnection between what I believed and what I practiced, I take the reader through some of the barriers to action and transformation. If progressivist education aims to innovate and keep moving toward a goal of teaching self-governance, what stands in the way?

In Chapter Three, I address the need for connection, or reconciliation, if progressivist education is going to free itself from its current static position. This chapter draws attention to the myths that keep progressivists from engaging in praxis—the Stories that maintain our disconnection—while offering alternatives. Recognizing power and the ways in which it operates, observing colonialism and Eurocentrism, desecrating dichotomous thinking (either/or) and when we cling to certainty or avoid discomfort, and our preoccupation with compliance all feed what I call the Classroom Management Narrative. This narrative is presented as part of

what inhibits progressivist education and this chapter demonstrates this problem through the story of educational philosopher John Dewey and the ways in which his progressivist work was eclipsed by an efficacy model promoted by E.L. Thorndike. I conclude by proposing that a Classroom Management Narrative distracts progressivists from our goals and undermines efforts toward self-governance, pluralistic democracy, and praxis. With the call for efficiently ‘managed’ classrooms so strong, can the tool of self-regulation be actualized? Further, can self-regulation support progressivist goals?

In Chapter Four, I explore both the educational theory behind self-regulation, as well as the philosophical elements underpinning its principles, concepts, and methods. According to Stuart Shanker, world renowned and Canadian-based researcher, author, and expert on self-regulation in teaching and parenting, the goal of teaching self-regulation is to understand our own stress and the stress of others. What does stress look/sound/feel like? What causes us stress? How can we relieve our stress in healthy ways? The belief is that if we are well-regulated, we can self-govern and support our own freedoms and needs *and* the freedom and needs of others. But, the most common misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the approach is deeply related to the Stories that surround progressivist education and the Classroom Management Narrative; self-control, control or chaos, and practices that disconnect us (adding stress) are widespread and acceptable and fly in the face of what both self-regulation and progressivist education seeks to accomplish. This chapter takes the reader through the theory and some of the ways in which self-regulation answers classroom management approaches with alternative mindsets, or a reframing of worldviews, so that progressivist goals can be met. I also attend to the barriers that the Classroom Management

Narrative erects in our way as we try to incorporate self-regulation into our teaching and parenting.

In Chapter Five, I take the reader through my struggle with conforming to typical research approaches. I discuss what autoethnography is to me and how my approach is unconventional but also rigorous. Also important is the ways in which my methodology in practice supports my beliefs surrounding equality, inquiry, and the need for praxis. The layout and the quantitative, qualitative, and autoethnographic aspects of this project are presented through both storytelling and other, more standard, comments in the footnotes. An argument for autoethnography, and the inclusion of myself as a subject, is made, as are some of the challenges that can arise when memory and truth are considered. I present some anecdotal observations about self-regulation and its relationship to praxis from my experiences in classrooms, with my children, from observations of the teacher-participants, and from conversations with other educators. Self-regulation as a classroom teaching practice, and the observations of the teacher-participants, is discussed through a lens of inquiry. Some of the results are blended into this chapter as part of the discussion of methodologies, such as the way in which I approached data and analysis. This is not a standard methodologies chapter, but there is a section in this prologue that includes what is typically expected.

In Chapter Six, I present a few observations from each of two teacher-participants in the study. I offer analyses of these snapshots in time as I recount what I experienced. I present my conclusions on the need for trust, a belief in capability of self-governance, and ongoing praxis as essential for self-regulation to be exercised in classroom teaching. I also introduce the need to let go of the Story that teachers must, in their approach to classroom environment, maintain

‘an effective balance’ between being autocratic and permissive. The stories told in this chapter demonstrate the ways in which the data suggests that the Classroom Management Narrative influences and can undermine self-regulation in classroom teaching. The role of praxis in this process is also brought into analysis through storytelling. Finally, how self-regulation as a tool of progressivist education can be realized, and the ways in which this approach can be empowering, is alluded to by the teacher-participants and discussed in my examination of the data and its ‘expressions.’

Finally, the concluding chapter offers a culmination of the Story of progressivism and the reality of self-regulation through a comparative recounting of my own shift into praxis and a story that came from the data. Both progressivist goals and the aims of self-regulation rely on reflection and a question that relates to praxis—does what I am doing reflect what I believe?—is helpful to ask. When to ask it is also discussed; the relationship between feeling vulnerable and an opportunity for transformation is tangible in both stories I tell. The work of Paulo Freire plays heavily into this chapter as I explore what he means by ‘making Easter’ and how this relates to overcoming the Classroom Management Narrative, and other stories-that-we-all-know, and letting in tools like self-regulation. Self-regulation may feel counter-intuitive in some ways, as can engaging in praxis, but letting go of the Stories told through us is empowering; seeing ourselves and others as capable of self-governance is self-actualizing; trust is a form of radical love. The chapter also take up some of the limitations to this study, but does not conclude in a standard way. The ways in which this study contributes to knowledge, or where this research could or should go next, is left out. This chapter is followed by a brief epilogue that will fill these gaps.

## A Methodological Review of a Methodology

This section reflects the standard format that methodology in academic processes can take and is derived from my proposal of this project and my application with the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Committee. I begin with my research objective and questions, followed by a description of the study's design, the participants, benefits and risks, and consent. The analysis and discussion are found in the main body of the text and the epilogue. The definitions of terms are also found throughout the main text and footnotes.

### *Objective*

The research objective is to examine the connections and disconnections between what progressive teachers think/believe and what they do in classroom practice; in other words, I am concerned with whether theory is supported by practice (connection) or subverted by it (disconnection). In particular, this study aims to explore the use of self-regulation in teaching practices and the ways in which it may support or weaken progressivist educational goals.

### *Research Questions*

In pursuing the research objective, researcher reflections and a review of the literature led to two concerns about the theory-practice connection (or support of theory with practice and practice with theory). I begin by asking how valid are my hypotheses that:

a) mainstream Canadian teachers who subscribe to goals of progressivist education may be employing practices that undermine progressivist aims?

b) materials and resources that promote and support progressivist educational tools, such as self-regulation, are not addressing philosophical aspects that weaken progressivist goals?

And these concerns are followed by the questions:

c) Can self-regulation, and other progressivist tools designed to promote/teach/support self-governance and supporting cultural aims be enacted and effective without addressing possible contradictory philosophical goals or practices?

d) Does the progressivist classroom practice of teaching SR support the progressivist goal of preparing people to be self-governing participants in a democratic society?

### *Design*

The study is a blend of quantitative and qualitative data collection and reflection. After an application and approval by the University of Victoria Human Research and Ethics Board [HREB] to conduct this study, a school district in British Columbia was contacted for permission to pursue teacher-participants at selected schools. Four schools were selected based on having no pre-existing relationship to the researcher, as well as being representative of average socio-economic status for the area. The schools are publicly funded, in middle to low-income neighbourhoods (indicated by the presence of StrongStart programs). The schools selected were to be as 'average' as possible, or as representative of a school with simple resources in the mainstream public system. Considering the study was assessing the use of a new tool to be employed in classrooms, the monetary and human resources available needed to be neither too depleted (there needed to be enough resources to properly enact SR) nor more plentiful than average (skewing the results because they would exceed the capabilities of most public schools). Once approval was granted, selected schools were contacted through principals for permission to conduct the study. Subsequently, teachers in each school were sent a recruitment letter and the primary researcher visited school staff rooms during recess, lunch, or a meeting to discuss participation. Two teachers interested in participating signed a consent

form and completed the Philosophical Orientation in Teaching Survey (created by Thomas G. Ryan, 2008, and modified and used with permission). The Philosophical Orientation in Teaching Survey is an educational philosophy survey to determine the philosophical orientation of teachers. It is a 48 question Q-sort and is discussed in depth on pages 295-297 (an example of the survey is available in Appendix A). The survey includes initial questions on the teacher's approach or understanding of self-regulation, as well as some personal identifying characteristics. Once results were tabulated, suitable candidates or those who scored high in progressivism by choosing *Strongly Agree* for statements associated with Progressivism (Ryan, 2008, p.254) were selected for interviews and observations. Both teachers were selected to continue in the study due to the results of the survey and researcher interest. The teacher-participants displayed classrooms that demonstrated SR in décor and spoke of their commitment to SR; this was the first time I had encountered willing participants who subscribed to SR *and* appeared to present an understanding of SR theory and practice. The teachers consented to participate in an in-person initial interview, taking approx. 30 minutes. The questions for this Initial Teacher Interview are found in Appendix B. Following the Initial Teacher Interview, one week (5 non-consecutive school days for 4 to 6 hours a day) were arranged for observations to take place. Interviews and observations are discussed in the main text in Chapters Five and Six.

The observations were done with a covert ethnographic approach. This means that the researcher was immersed in the classroom setting but did not have a role in the classroom structure (non-participant). The researcher blended in as much as possible so as not to disturb

the classroom workings. The ethnographic element also means that instead of using categories defined in advance, and/or an observation scheme, data was collected in an unstructured way. The observations were unsystematic, in that processes were observed openly and without a standardized observation scheme. Also, there was an introspective element to the data; the researcher observed natural phenomena and reflected on it in a journal both on-site and pre/post-observation. The researcher did not intervene in situations. Themes and points of interest emerged during data analysis. The journal was a space of preliminary analysis during the observation period. After the observations were complete, a Post-Observation Interview (Appendix C) was arranged with the participating teacher.

In addition to what is noted above, the researcher took an autoethnographic approach. The data (notes from interviews and observations) were reflected on and recounted in a way that brings the observations to life through story. The stories of what happened or what was said in interviews and observations were braided with the researcher's own experiences of the interviews and observations. This approach is further discussed in Chapter Five.

### *Participants*

The quantitative and qualitative data collection had a main participant group and a peripheral participant group. Elementary classroom teachers in mainstream Canadian schools who identify as progressive (tested through the survey) and believe they employ self-regulation in their classrooms were the main participant group. Elementary students were peripheral in that the research takes place in classrooms, among students of an elementary age (4-12 years, Kindergarten to Grade 5), but it was the teacher's interactions with students that were central to being recorded and analysed. Elementary classroom teachers were a population of interest

because they commonly identify as philosophically oriented to progressivist educational goals (Deryakulu, 2018; Moore, et al., 2002; Ryan, 2008; Watkins, 2007) and they are more likely to be employing tools of self-regulation in their classroom teaching than teachers in middle and secondary schools (Pascal, 2009; Shanker, 2013b & 2017b; Timmons *et al.*, 2016). The salient characteristics essential for these participants were that they were British Columbia Certified Teachers employed in a public-school district in BC with a homeroom (a group of students that they teach for the majority of the day). The class must be conducted in English (due to the language restrictions of the researcher). The race, gender, class, ethnicity, religion, and other socio-political factors of these subjects are not of significance to this study but there is the potential for them to be acknowledged or for socio-political factors to impact the research. Teachers who teach in BC are BC certified and therefore must have spent enough time in BC to understand the cultural commitment to democracy. Commitment to 'democracy' and progressivism is also tested in the survey.

The desired number of participants was between three and six, in three different schools. This number was selected so that there would be more than one school to compare in the case that school culture was a factor. But, as discussed in the main body of the text (in detail in Chapter Five), school and teacher recruitment were challenging due to the lack of teachers who identified as using self-regulation in classroom teaching, and the actual participants were two teachers in the same school. There were no pre-existing relationships between the researcher and the participants nor was there potential for a perceived power relationship.

In addition to what is noted above, the researcher took an autoethnographic approach. As discussed in Chapter Five of the main text, autoethnography can be interpreted in many ways. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) point out that autoethnography “characteristically begins with the researcher's autobiographically oriented narrative associated with the research puzzle” (p.40). In the case of this study, my own stories are part of the picture that the data provides, if only the background that will allow the main subject of SR to be more striking in juxtaposition. I am a participant and an observer, and I relate this to my being a cultural member and a cultural stranger (McNess *et al.*, 2015). Information from the researcher's own life and experiences were used to compare to what was observed in the research schools/classrooms. The classrooms and teachers studied were doing something unique and the ‘norm’ is being pulled from the life experience of the researcher who is a teacher, teacher educator, pre-school teacher, parent, and student of philosophy of education. All people and places from the life of the researcher were discussed in ways that disguised the times/places/identities of the people. Real names were not used. Relationships and other identifying characteristics were altered. Principals and other teachers in the research schools, my family (my two children and my partner/spouse), my students in the Faculty of Education, workshop participants, teachers in schools I encounter through my work as a practicum supervisor, and other people in my life, such as people in theatres, grocery stores, on the street, at the playground, are used in stories to exemplify the common attitudes and practices surrounding parenting and teaching that I am describing as the Classroom Management Narrative, progressivism, and efforts toward self-regulation, as well as the ‘culture’ of schooling

and parenting that I find myself in and in which the participating teachers are also coming from and resisting.

### *Benefits and Risks*

The benefit to the participants, society, and the state of knowledge are one and the same; to further the dialogue surrounding the use of self-regulation in progressivist education and classroom teaching practice and demonstrate its potential benefits and barriers to supporting efforts to prepare democratic participants in Canadian society. Progressivist educators, who are the participants of this study through their professional roles as teachers in Canadian public schools and having demonstrated their progressive philosophical orientation by volunteering for a study that calls for those who identify as 'progressive,' will benefit because this study seeks to further this philosophical and political movement. The results of this study aim to encourage more dialogue and understanding between theory and practice, between philosophy and science/psychology, and between teachers and society. A possible outcome is an improvement to classroom practice through a more approachable understanding of the purposes of teaching self-regulation. A long-term goal of this study is to have more teachers practicing self-regulation, which has the potential to improve not only their own professional lives but also the lives of the many students with whom they work. Teacher-participants also received a \$20.00 gift card and \$150.00 in cash for participating. The participating teachers had the inconvenience of their time, a total of 2.5 hours or less, being committed to a survey and interviews. Also, it may have been difficult or inconvenient for a teacher to feel observed or watched, adding some stress and using more energy than teaching without a researcher in their classroom. The teacher had to assist with handing out a letter of

information about the study to the parents/guardians of their students (this is allotted in the above time devoted), which may have added to their responsibilities during non-instructional time. The use of the teacher's time may have taken time away from instructional preparation and personal time. If students were unsettled by the presence of another adult (the researcher), teachers may be inconvenienced by having to engage with students with these reactions/feelings. There may be possible costs associated, such as a need for additional childcare for the participant's own dependents.

In terms of the risks to those referred to in autoethnographic reflections, I have assessed the effect of most group members as very low and the Human Research Ethics Board [HREB] agreed with my assessment. This agreement was ostensibly based on the HREB finding credibility in a claim that the stories being told are stories that are common to classrooms in the mainstream public schooling system in Canada. The beliefs expressed and the practices mentioned in the stories are taught and promoted in classroom management textbooks, praised in mainstream media, and observable in the majority of schools. The reliance on traditional teacher dominance and the 'management' of students is acceptable and normal in the mainstream. The stories being told reflect this norm. Also, as found through stories and within the literature and data collected, the use of classroom management and teacher dominance told through stories speaks to the way in which teachers and parents have the best intentions but aren't always aware of how practice can be incongruent with and hence undermine beliefs. The main story being told is about the researcher's own realization; my reliance on dominance over students and children, my focus on the question of how to get kids to do what I want them to do, had to be overcome through reflection and an active dismantling

of dominant narratives. When stories about the reliance on teacher dominance or classroom management are told, they are not stories that are unique or distinguishable to any one teacher. If a person was suspected of being in a story that was told the risk of feelings of distress, loss of privacy, or stigmatization would be low. The stories are my recollections, but they are stories that most teachers, people who are regularly in mainstream public schools, and parents would recognize as typical. I tell the stories of my own use of classroom management. Any of the stories I tell about other teachers or parents I encounter, and what they say to me in conversation, are also typical. Many parents and teachers have expressed the sayings “If you give them an inch, they’ll take a mile” and “It’ll be like Lord of the Flies” when speaking of freedom and children. Comments such as these indicate that my claims are supportable and tie directly to the objectives of the study. The ways in which the stories are written are meant to address the feelings of distress for all teachers and parents as the large majority of us engage in the practices being discussed and problematized. The stories are meant to be relatable to the reader who is likely a teacher or parent, and they are carefully written reflect the struggles we may all encounter.

### *Consent*

Participating teachers signed an informed consent form before their participation in the study. After the teacher had been selected for the full study, the parent[s]/guardian[s] of the students were sent a letter that described the research and the role of the teacher and their child[ren], regarding the presence of the researcher (an introduction to me and my background), data collection methods (although I was not authorized to take photos or

recordings of the classroom, I used note-taking and drawing), an assurance of the high priority of student and teacher privacy and anonymity, and the level of risk to the students (low).

My spouse was not a main subject, but in my own reflections and autoethnographic engagements he was essential as we have conversed about my work and our own life's work of teaching and parenting with a commitment to freedom and equality, and we have integrated self-regulation as a tool of our parenting approach. He has read and signed a consent form that describes how some of his information and our conversations and relationship may appear in the stories that I tell in the finished product. Likewise, my own children are not main subjects, but my oldest child is very philosophical and has influenced my work and I have informally asked his consent about appearing in the dissertation and related articles or a book. His formal consent has been attained through an assent script that will indicate what stories are being told, whether or not he would like his name to be used and allowing for him to decline being a part of the research reflections. My younger child is barely mentioned but has used the same assent script. Other people mentioned through autoethnographic reflections are non-consenting and their names and other distinguishing features are disguised.

The way in which the data was analysed is discussed deeply in Chapters Five and evidenced in Chapter Six as well as in the conclusion. My approach is unconventional, and I support my reasoning for questioning the traditional approach and embracing storytelling and 'braiding' (Hasebe-Ludt *et al.*, 2009) the research with personal stories and reflections in the main text. The ways in which I take up the data and perform analysis is a living part of my argument toward equality as a point of departure and the role of democracy in progressivist education.

## Divine Dissatisfaction

As I mentioned before, I aim to make the reader uncomfortable, but it is in this “queer, divine dissatisfaction, a blessed unrest,” that I hope you find your opportunity for transformation (de Mille, 1991, p.264). I also hope that you take it. Discomfort does not mean that we are dysregulated. When dysregulated, we are disconnected and it is more challenging than ever to be open to new ideas, especially when they throw our current worldviews into question and shine a critical light on the way we may be doing things. So, I invite you to check in with your body, make sure your needs are met, do what you must to feel connected, and “keep the channel open” (de Mille, 1991, p.264).

# Boxed-In: An Introduction

*For those of you accustomed to being taken from point A to point B to point C, this presentation may be somewhat difficult to follow. Pueblo expression resembles something like a spider's web—with many little threads radiating from the centre, crisscrossing one another. As with the web, the structure emerges as it is made, and you must simply listen and trust, as the Pueblo people do, that meaning will be made.*

*- Leslie Marmon Silko of the Laguna Pueblo Nation, 1996, pp.48-49*

## The Level Story

It is a dry and sunny day, one of the last before the winter rains settle in for the remaining months of the year. The children are rolling the log rounds with impressive strength from one end of the garden to another. They have a plan and my partner<sup>1</sup> and I stand by—we are on stand-by—and watch as seven people between ages two and six pause and talk, give directions to one another, point here and there, smile and laugh. The little apple tree is at the centre of it all. It is crooked and nearly without leaves; covered in a lichen we call 'old man's beard' because it resembles a faint green and coarse facial hair. The children are trying to 'fix' the tree. They have moved the log rounds, about eight of them, so that they are now placed on their flat sides and cannot roll and so that wooden planks laid on top create a sort of scaffolding. They have a toy toolbox with plastic replica tools, and they have sticks and rocks, and they are tapping the tree or 'sawing' its branches and trunk while humming and talking as they work.

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<sup>1</sup> My 'partner' is my business partner and my spouse. He has agreed to be named and gendered and discussed in this text.

It is rare that all seven young members of our playschool invent a game that includes everyone. My partner and I speculate that it is because of the new toolbox and all of its brightly coloured contents. A four-year-old approaches us and asks, 'What's this do?' He is holding up a red rectangle that looks like a level without the small glass tubes of liquid and bubbles; instead there are shapes cut out where the useful parts of the instrument would be. I open my mouth to speak, to give its name and explain its function, but I stop myself. I smile and invite him to go to the shed with me; 'Would you like to see what that tool really looks like?'

I dig around for a minute and produce a small aluminum level, about ten inches long, complete with tubes filled with yellow liquid and bubbles. He runs back to the tree with both levels, imitation and actual, and proceeds to compare them, study them, and then try them out; he places them both on one plank of the scaffolding. Another child, about five-years old and with a muddy face, crouches down to see the level and asks, 'What's *that* for?' They both take turns handling it and talking about it. I return to standing beside my partner; the children don't press us for an answer as they experiment. Another child joins and now there are three of them crowding around the levels. They are interested in the bubbles; do they come out? They know that these pockets of air are important. The levels have been set on a plank and I hear one child say 'don't touch it' as another one picks up the short end of the one-by-four plank and lifts it slightly off of the log round on which it had been resting. There is some excitement. The two children closer to the level are pointing and talking and they instruct the child with the plank in her hands to slowly lower it to the ground. The original curious kid runs my way; 'Come here! You've gotta see this!'

We crowd around the plank, which has been resituated on two log rounds and is parallel to the ground ten inches below. The level, the real one, has been set on the plank; the little red rectangle, the mock level, is nowhere to be seen. The ‘hammering’ and ‘sawing’ has ceased, and the children gather around us. He begins: ‘At first, I thought it was a measure. But it was not having numbers.’ This was true as what numbers used to be on the level had faded away. He continued in his little kid way, ‘So this thing has a bubble inside of it and the bubble moves around when you move it, see?’ He holds the level up to my face and tilts it from side to side with a slow and steady hand. I tell him that I see it moving. The other children are very close and clamouring to see it and talking and telling me what they have done. The child places the level on the plank and proceeds, ‘See how the bubble is in the middle? This wood is flat. And then we move the wood...’ He instructs another child to move the wood; everyone clears the way and is suddenly quiet. ‘And look! The bubble moved all the way this way! Do you see?’ He sounds triumphant and his eyes are bright. I acknowledge that I see what he means. The child holding the plank returns it to its place and takes over: ‘That’s because it’s not flat. Now it’s flat and the bubble is in the middle!’ The little ones are excited, and they all talk and pass the level around; they go from plank to plank and test it again and again.

Later on, my partner and I discuss that moment and how difficult it was for each of us to *not* intervene. We exclaim to each other that we both wanted to explain the level to the children, tell them what it does and how it works, and show them how to use it. We agree that we are glad that we refrained, that we watched this experience unfold, and that we learned about learning right along with the kids. But to quash this compulsion to explain, this deep need to show what we know, was so much more difficult than the usual role we take on. We talk

about why it is that we are revisioning our roles when we are with our kids and the other children with whom we work. We reflect on our feelings during the fifteen or so minutes of consciously resisting the urge to pass on information; the tension in our bodies as we hold back, the suspense as we grow impatient (it would be so much faster just to tell them!), the mild frustration when they fail to think of the answer in the way that I would have presented it, and then a melting and release. At first, we each felt constrained and then the invisible walls around us, boundaries of our own making, disappeared. Suddenly we were experiencing our emotions *with* the kids. For me, that moment was when the triumphant child asked me, 'Do you see?' and I noticed in that split second before I responded that the knee-jerk reaction that I usually experienced, the one where I repeat back to the child the explanation for what occurred, one that seemed so essential to me before, was not there. Instead, I felt a strange relief and a deep connection with his story of discovery. There was excitement and curiosity and the sort of raw energy that one encounters when on a mission and he was recounting this adventure and I was being welcomed to share in that experience. Explaining his experience back to him in my teacher/parent way would have separated us in some way.

I believe, upon further reflection, that the initial sense that I was confined by this active restraint was because I was trying *not* to do something; I was *sure* in my intention to resist explaining the level. I was *unsure* of what I was *doing*. I'm a teacher and teaching *is* scaffolding a carefully approached lesson. What were my partner and I doing if not teaching? What were the children doing with the level if not learning? The lines were blurring and there was uncertainty and vulnerability that came with our roles being unboxed. I felt I could choose to rein it in, bring the situation back to something with which I was familiar and perhaps regain the assurance of

my position, or I could let down my guard and explore the unknown, the unscripted, and what other possibilities there may be. The children were clearly engaged in the latter. I wanted to be with them.

### *Praxis* and the Stories-that-we-all-know

I am interested in *praxis*. To me this term means that teaching and parenting, and possibly all areas of life, involve theory, practice, reflection, and action. Our theories are our thinking, our beliefs, our worldviews; our practices are our techniques, methods, the tools we employ; and our reflections are our observations of the connections and disconnections between what we think and what we do as well as our actions in response to these observations. Often, we think of these elements as separate; as though we are pulling from our 'theory' box *or* our 'practice' box and the contents are related but distinct. In *praxis*,<sup>2</sup> these elements are not separated but interconnected and interdependent; we *practice* something because it makes sense in relation to what we *think* and we know it makes sense because we

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<sup>2</sup> If you look up *praxis* in a search engine, there will be many different definitions and applications. When I talk about 'praxis' I am pulling on the work of Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire (1921-1997) and American educator and social activist bell hooks (also known as Gloria Watkins, 1952-present). Freire's call for *praxis* is an invitation to view theory and practice as interconnected and interdependent; what we think and what we do cannot be separated because one informs the other (2005, p.124). The theory-practice connection is not linear but more of a cycle with 'reflection' added in. It is a summons to recognise and appreciate that "theory informs practice, while experiential and practical knowledge can be employed as a means to understanding and interpreting that theory" (Breunig, 2005, p.109); reflection is necessarily a part of the circle of *praxis*. Both hooks and Freire understand that there is a danger in separating their theories from the corresponding possibilities of practice and that without reflection this is bound to occur. In her ground-breaking book, *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), hooks argues that "[b]y reinforcing the idea that there is a split between theory and practice, or by creating such a split, both groups [those who construct theories and those who react to theories] deny the power of liberatory education for critical consciousness, therefore perpetuating conditions that reinforce our collective exploitation and repression" (1994, p.69). For Freire, *praxis* is necessary for transformation because it is "reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed"; *praxis* supports teachers in their effort to make change in themselves and in their classrooms by making space for critical conversations surrounding what we think and what we do (2005, p.124).

have *reflected* on the way in which what we do connects to what we think. Praxis does not mean that we are always experiencing or noticing a *connection* in our teaching or parenting; alternatively, we sense a *disconnection*. When our theory and practice are at odds, however slight it may be, we are essentially undermining our aims. Praxis invites us to transform, to make changes, so that we might find connection and support our theory with practice, or practice with theory, and therefore move closer to our goals. Without knowing this word, *praxis* is something with which many people already engage; perhaps not all of the time but enough so that they<sup>3</sup> experience growth.

Transformation, or growth, is something that is valued over being static or continuing to do something that does not work. There are possibly many things that interrupt our praxis and inhibit our reflection, or our ability to pick-up on the connections or disconnections between what we think and what we do, and what we think we're doing and what we're actually doing goes undetected, unrecognized, and unattended. Without praxis, we continue to undermine our goals, we repeat our mistakes, we re-invent what we are already doing without knowing it and then wonder why it doesn't work, and we are static or at least stalled in our progression. Praxis is an action; it involves active reflection and opening ourselves up to the unknown in a way that makes us vulnerable. This is one of the reasons why we sometimes avoid it. Brené

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<sup>3</sup> A note on the singular 'they' and gender-neutral pronouns. Throughout this text, I will avoid the use of gendered pronouns, such as he/she and him/her and assume the gender-neutral singular pronoun they/them/their while writing about hypothetical situations or people whose gender is unknown. I will also note (with *[sic]*) when other quoted authors use gendered pronouns in these ways as though they are erroneous. Gendered pronouns will be used when a person's gender is known (has been disclosed) and when a quoted theorist has made clear that they are only speaking of one specific gender (i.e., Rousseau writes extensively on the education of boys, and girls are separate in his plan for education). I have chosen to employ gender-neutral pronouns because gendering examples as him/her or he/she, as has been done in an effort to be more inclusive than simply writing 'he' to encompass all people, is problematic when one considers that there are more than two binary genders.

Brown (2010), researcher in the field of Social Work at the University of Houston, speaks and writes about the common effort to evade vulnerability. She argues that many of us feel that we are supposed to be certain and that we prefer to feel in control and to be able to predict outcomes (Brown, 2010). When we encounter new or conflicting concepts, information, or skills, there are times when we feel empowered by development and reinvigorated by change. But there are also times when new ideas, modifications or even rejections of what we know and with which we feel familiar, unsettle us. As teachers and parents, often the last thing we want to feel is vulnerable or uncertain (Brown, 2010). But why is this?

There are stories all around us. Stories that we already know. Although some of these ‘dominant narratives’ are obvious, many of the stories-that-we-all-know are not necessarily stated explicitly but rather are mostly absorbed through our exposure to them as we move through life in a society and culture. Even though these stories affect us differently our abilities to tell these tales and live in accordance to them, our thoughts and actions influenced by them, is often the case regardless of our social location<sup>4</sup> or political beliefs. An example of a dominant narrative, one that is currently in the forefront of an initiative in most British Columbian school districts,<sup>5</sup> is the one surrounding sex, gender, sexuality. There is a story that we can all tell; even

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<sup>4</sup> Dwight Boyd, philosopher of education, makes the argument that consideration of ‘social location’ matters to discussions of education (2016). ‘Social location’ means exactly what it sounds like, locating ourselves within the social; situating ourselves in relation to others in terms of the categories that we have created and that we focus on for our own identities, such as sex, gender, race, language, physical or mental ability, religion, class, etc. Knowing our own social location is to recognize ourselves as “*within* the problem, not some abstract individual above or outside it” (Boyd, 2016, p.172). Dominant narratives indicate or impact our social locations, but where we are located in the social does not usually impact whether or not we know the dominant narratives.

<sup>5</sup> The program is known as SOGI 123, which stands for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, has the directive of creating more inclusive learning environments for everyone, including people who identify as LGBTQ2+ and their allies, through signage, informed word choices and pronouns, lesson plans, and general diversity education programming. As of the 2017-2018 school year, the BC SOGI Education Network had participation from 51 of 60 school districts and the support of the British Columbia Ministry of Education (SOGI123, 2019).

young children can fill in the blanks. It is important to note that we may or may not believe this story is the *most* true, or the *only* story, but regardless of our beliefs we know what the answers will be. It begins like this: when a midwife or doctor holds up a newborn baby, and the baby has a penis, someone will announce ‘It’s a \_\_\_\_\_!’ The story continues; the baby *boy* will grow up and become a \_\_\_\_\_. And when he is a *man* he will be attracted to \_\_\_\_\_. This brief thought-experiment<sup>6</sup> demonstrates the dominant narrative that genitalia informs gender, or that our ‘biological sex’ indicates how we will act and who we will grow up to be, and that this sex and gender pairing will align with a specific understanding of sexuality (a heteronormative one). It is with certainty that we can unfold this tale—this is not to say that we do not acknowledge that it is not true for everyone or that this story has been and continues to be a damaging and exclusionary one—but it has been and remains to be the dominant narrative in Canada. The SOGI 123 program is an effort to expose this narrative and its impacts; being able to see a Story is the first step in dismantling it. We need to take it out of its enclosed packaging to examine it, unravel it, in order to decide which parts undermine our beliefs and goals and which parts it may support.

Some of the stories-that-we-all-know are easier to upset than others. Nigerian novelist and activist, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, says that what stories are told depend on who has power and arguably who wants to maintain power; this power is “the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person” (TED, 2009). In many cases, a dominant narrative, or what Adichie calls the “single story,” props up our worldview and keeps us comfortable in our certainty (TED, 2009). This is partly why we adhere to these

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<sup>6</sup> Introduced to me by trans-activist, scholar, and friend, Alyx MacAdams.

narratives, but also built within the stories themselves are messages that keep us from considering other possibilities.<sup>7</sup> The single story is not necessarily told or followed with malice and often very well-meaning people operate within it; Adichie comments that she too is “just as guilty in the question of the single story” and she recounts her early efforts to write novels that reflected the experience of white British boys because the dominant narrative told her that a Nigerian novel, especially one about a black female experience, was not a possibility (TED, 2009). Adichie notes that the “unintended consequence” of her own adherence to the dominant narrative, one that says that books are written about white boys in rainy climates who eat apples rather than black girls in a hot and dry setting who eat mangos, does not leave room for an alternative; “The single story creates stereotypes and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story” (TED, 2009). The strangest thing about dominant narratives is that they are all around us and yet they are difficult to detect. The stories-that-we-all-know make praxis unappealing because of the uncertainty that comes with upending our own beliefs or worldview and yet we need the action of critical reflection located in praxis to detect the possible disconnection between what we think and what we do. This quandary makes remaining static, fixed in a position even if it is paradoxical, more appealing than questioning our own positions and methods as the powerful single story promises ascendancy. To examine a dominant narrative, especially one from which we may benefit, can be uncomfortable; to tell

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<sup>7</sup> In my previous work, I discuss the ways in which many dominant narratives, and in particular The Story that teachers must be in control of students or there will be chaos, is fueled by dichotomous or dualistic thinking – the idea that things are either/or – and how this leads to or supports the belief that there could not be any other options (Harvey, 2015).

*our own stories* becomes an act of resistance. And this is where an essential distinction needs to be made; Adichie says “[s]tories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize” (TED, 2009). The single story, the story-that-we-all-know, the dominant narrative, is being told *for* us while being recounted *through* us. When we fill in the blanks with synchronous and unvarying answers, we are not telling our own story and we are not *storytelling*. Praxis is about interrupting the ways in which we approach The Stories that tell themselves through our thoughts and actions; it is about reflecting on the connections and disconnections because *and* in spite of these dominant narratives.

### Storytelling & Equality

*His questions came from behind the box, ‘How many sides do you see?’*

*‘One,’ I said.*

*He pulled the box towards his chest and turned it so one corner faced me. ‘Now how many do you see?’*

*‘Now I see three sides.’*

*He stepped back and extended the box, one corner towards him and one towards me. ‘You and I together see six sides of this box,’ he told me.*

*- Hampton, 1995, p.42 as cited in Battiste, 2000, p.xvii*

As a Westerner, and white settler on unceded Indigenous lands in what is currently known as Canada, I am heavily influenced by Western philosophy and the dominant narratives surrounding what constitutes research in academe. What constitutes rigorous and acceptable research is often drawn from this same story; a scaffolded explanation is necessary in the

writer-interlocutor<sup>8</sup> interaction and it is necessary for learning and understanding and without it there would be no *reasoning* and only foolish ignorance. French philosopher Jacques Rancière's (1940-present) book, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*<sup>9</sup> (1991), is a challenge to that story and declares that it is one based on inequality. Both teaching and educational research are often understood as an opportunity to either reproduce or reduce inequality; Rancière demonstrates that the latter effort to *reduce* inequality has been more common since the *Enlightenment* period,<sup>10</sup> but that even this strategy is problematic and ineffective. He illustrates the ways in which a "language of reason" creates and maintains polarities and the methods employed to unveil research can be seen as comparable to the practice of teaching (1991, p.84); the endeavour to make a concept or skill *understandable* by breaking it down into easier parts, explaining the significance and possible use of these elements, and how they make a whole. A 'good' teacher or researcher knows the secret to transferring knowledge from one

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<sup>8</sup> 'Interlocutor' is not a commonly used word, but I felt that it best represented the role of which I am trying to speak. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED, 2019) an interlocutor is "One who takes part in dialogue, conversation or discussion." I don't want to view the reader simply as one who reads and absorbs, but also as one who is finding meaning, questioning the text, and in a relationship with the writer that is based in equality.

<sup>9</sup> Jacques Rancière's 1991 text entitled *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons on Intellectual Emancipation* is influenced by and includes much of the writings of 19<sup>th</sup> century theorist and educator Joseph Jacotot (1770-1840). Jacotot was an exiled French revolutionary hero who was invited to teach at the university in Louvain (Rancière, 1991). There were many students who desired to learn from the scholar's 35 years as a teacher, but some of them didn't speak French and Jacotot did not speak Flemish (Rancière, 1991). Jacotot's solution was to give the students a bilingual edition of *Télémaque*, a bestselling 18<sup>th</sup> century French novel, and tell them through a translator to learn French (Rancière, 1991). The story goes that the students returned speaking and writing university level French; they had taught themselves (Rancière, 1991). This caused Jacotot to determine that one could teach what one didn't know, that every person has equal intelligence, and that the method of scaffolded explanation is based on an opinion of intellectual inequality (Rancière, 1991). Rancière is currently active in political science and philosophy and writes extensively on equality. He is understood by most as outside of the realm of education and schooling, and yet reading this book was a game-changer for me and heavily influences my thinking and rethinking of education and human interactions more generally. His work will be discussed throughout this book and more in depth in the next chapter.

<sup>10</sup> The Enlightenment Period, also known as the *Siècle des Lumières*, was a Western philosophical movement that dominated much of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Many of the ideas that came out of this time and place are still influential to our dominant narratives today and will be discussed in the next chapter. The progressivist education movement, which heavily influences schooling today, began during the Enlightenment; this era was also fascinated with each person's ability to be rational and the role of reason in emancipation.

who is learned to one who is ignorant; the heart of the practice is to be able to “recognize the distance between the taught material and the person being instructed, the distance between learning and understanding” (Rancière, 1991, p.5). After determining what someone else needs to know, the teacher/writer explains through carefully scaffolded points which effectively reveals their knowledge to the person supposedly without it. The logic of this methodology, the science of explanation, is deemed necessary because the one who explains considers the ignorant incapable of learning without their explanation; the belief is that the ignorant person needs to have information explained in order for them to learn (Rancière, 1991). According to Rancière, when explanation is the procedure in place, the goal of understanding is usurped with the objective of stultification,<sup>11</sup> meaning the loss of initiative for those who have something done for them, resulting in a “numbing or deadening” rather than understanding (Ross, 1991, p.7). Instead of reaching a goal of understanding there is “*enforced stultification*” because within the explanation is an unspoken message which maintains the rationale of inequality; the message being that “[t]o explain something to someone is first of all to show him he [sic] cannot understand it by himself” (Rancière, 1991, p.6). Rancière is drawing attention to the disconnection between theory and practice. In teaching and the writing of academic research we cling to our scaffolded explanation because we believe it is necessary. We see it as

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<sup>11</sup> In Kristin Ross’ introduction to *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, she shares her process in the selection of the word ‘stultification’ as a translation for “the French term *abrutir* (to render stupid, to treat like a brute)”; the word ‘stultify’ “carries the connotations of numbing and deadening better than the word ‘stupidify,’ which implies a sense of wonderment or amazement absent in the French” (Translator’s notes in Rancière, 1991, p.7). Stultification is not a common word in Canadian English, the OED rates its frequency of use as a Band 3 which means it occurs “between 0.01 and 0.1 times per million words in typical modern English usage” and it is among words “not commonly found in general text types like novels and newspapers, but at the same they are not overly opaque or obscure” (OED 2018). The OED defines it as being made to appear foolish, or reduced to absurdity, or to seem of “unsound mind” and therefore less responsible which leads to stultifying or “to frustrate, to stifle, to neutralize” (OED, 2018).

necessary because of The Story that the interlocutor does not possess an intelligence that is equally capable to ours. We think that our efforts to explain will raise up students/readers and our practice will *reduce* inequality. An explanation may in fact *reproduce* inequality through maintaining The Story that explaining is teaching and being explained to is learning; a scaffolded argument in written research is the only option when the interlocutor cannot reach an understanding without a breakdown of the details into more approachable parts.

Explanation maintains a distance between people, an interval that is vertical and unbalanced. It puts the focus on that perceived 'gap' and this belief in intellectual inequality informs a method. Rancière raises the prospect of an alternative, another possibility that escapes this dominant narrative; what if we were to change our point of departure? If the teacher/writer began with the belief or theory that the student/reader is *equally* intelligent and capable of understanding and learning, how would their practice look? This is not to say that the student/reader knows everything the teacher/writer knows but only that they are equally intelligent and therefore adept at understanding what any other human has created with their intelligence. Indeed, we have different life experiences, diverse strengths and interests; one person's understanding of the lifecycle of the frog may be more verifiable<sup>12</sup> than another's. Rancière's goal was not to *prove* that everyone has equal intelligence and he constructs 'equality' here as an *opinion*. And it is for the purpose of "seeing what can be done under that supposition" (Rancière, 1991, p.46). What other methods might one use in writing research or

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<sup>12</sup> A note on what Rancière means by 'verify:' in Jacotot's work, he argues that *Universal Teaching* is the act of "teaching, by oneself" and then a 'teacher' asking the learner to verify this new knowledge (Rancière, 1991, p.16). To verify is to show how one knows what they believe they know. In the case of the lifecycle of the frog, a learner may have kept a journal with drawings and writing about what they witnessed at the pond each day. They may be able to further verify what they know with a book on frogs.

teaching without explaining, without being the knowledge-keeper, without “the language of reason,” without leading another on a journey to a destination already decided (Rancière, 1991, p.84)? The revised goal is not a transmission of knowledge; we cannot possibly know what another person already knows or how they know it, we cannot know another person’s truth, and to make either supposition is to assume inequality. Rancière’s opinion is that learning is about relationships and making connections; we relate everything we encounter to what we have already learned, and we make associations from our experiences to our existing interpretations (1991). Learning is a sort of translation. When the method employed is explanation, the connections and translations are made for the student/reader, the ‘right’ way to reason is modelled and the message is that one cannot learn, cannot do the reasonings, without intervention from a superior intelligence (Rancière, 1991). The revised course of action is connecting to the shared humanity of others through speaking our truths and the method is guided by the value of the journey rather than the destination. The problem is that within the dominant narrative we seek truth; a teacher/writer instructs so that the learner/reader “lifts up a mask, rejoices, but his [sic] joy doesn’t last long; he soon perceives that the mask he has taken off covers another one, and so on until the end of all truth-seekers” (Rancière, 1991, p.138). Rancière says that the pursuit of truth is different from the speaking of truth; the former presents opinion, or one’s interpretation of facts, as truth, while the latter acknowledges truth to be only a person’s opinion and opinions are in need of verification.<sup>13</sup> It is the lifting of masks,

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<sup>13</sup> This is not to say that all truths are on equal ground. Relativism or the well-worn argument that truth is ‘just your opinion’ is extremely problematic when one is operating in the moral realm (see Ruitenberg, 2007). Rancière (and Jacotot) use the term in a way that calls for ‘opinion’ to be verified by another equally intelligent mind (1991). But ‘opinion’ is *not* “a feeling we form about facts we have superficially observed,” grown in “weak and common minds” and “the opposite of science” (Rancière, 1991, p.45). An ‘opinion’ is not a truth, but “this is precisely what interests us: whoever does not know the truth is looking for it, and there are many encounters to make along the

the search for truth, the method relying on explanation or someone ‘more intelligent’ reasoning for an(other) that leaves one wanting for something. The focus on a conclusion, one that is reached through reasonings and judgments, undermines our shared humanness. A method that aims to verify our shared humanity with others who we believe to be like us makes “poetry” and “translates and invites others to do the same” (Rancière, 1991, p.65). Rancière models and describes a more satisfying approach to teaching/writing research: “[i]t’s a storyteller who never runs out of stories. It gives itself over to the pleasure of the imagination without having to settle accounts with the truth. It sees that veiled figure only beneath the travesties that hide it. It is content to see those masks, to analyze them, without being tormented by the countenance underneath” (Rancière, 1991, p.138).

In Western and colonial thinking, there are other Stories that we encounter telling us that science is superior to philosophy, instruction prevails over dialogue, persuasive argument trumps storytelling, reason is more valid than emotion, and what is ‘unknowable’ must be put aside for what is certain (Battiste, 2009). This separation and hierarchy of methods in educational research is evident in the dominant narratives surrounding the role of the teacher and student, parent and child, psychology and philosophy, and Western and Indigenous ways of

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way. The only mistake would be to take our opinions for the truth. Admittedly, this happens all the time. But this is precisely the one way that we want to distinguish ourselves [those who align with Jacotot]: we think that our opinions are opinions and nothing more. We have seen certain facts. We believe that this could be the reason for it. We (and you may do the same) will perform some other experiments to verify the solidity of the opinion” (Rancière, 1991, p.45). The truth must be verified; its substance substantiated; its accuracy authenticated. Rancière (and Jacotot) use the word ‘opinion’ to describe the stance that there is an equality of intelligences; “We can never say: take two equal minds and place them in such and such a condition. We know intelligence by its effects. But we cannot isolate it, measure it. We are reduced to multiplying the experiments inspired by that opinion. But we can never say: all intelligence is equal. It’s true. But our problem isn’t proving that all intelligence is equal. It’s seeing what can be done under that supposition. And for this, it’s enough for us that the opinion be possible—that is, that no opposing truth be proved” (1991, p.46).

knowing (Battiste, 2009). The presentation of knowledge as something that is sought and 'given' to us divides us and the use of scaffolding to explain how one arrives at a certain judgment or interpretation preserves the roles of superior and inferior (Rancière, 1991, p.84). As helpful as Rancière is in my effort to deconstruct and open up to alternatives to Western and colonial approaches to 'thinking and doing' in educational research, contemporary Indigenous understandings of researching and writing with a narrative approach should not be overlooked. In particular, Jo-ann Archibald's *Indigenous Storywork* discusses the need for stories to be "taken seriously" (Archibald, 2008, p.3). Archibald demonstrates the ways in which narrative writing is based in *equality* as the meaning is not given by and from another but rather it is 'found' by the interlocutor. In the West, we tend to live and think out of our bodies, and we push aside our hearts so that we may focus on the rational, our reasoning, and this is not what Gregory Cajete calls "a good life" (1994 as cited in Archibald, 2008, pp.12-13). The Western/colonial approach sees storytelling and emotion as the domain of the irrational other (Ellsworth, 1992) and something to be avoided in quality research if the outcomes are to be accepted by the academy as rigorous; rigor being the primary qualifier rather than equality (and these elements are exclusive). Archibald shows that when the medium is storytelling, not only is meaning 'found' rather than given, but "one does not have to give meaning right after hearing a story, as with the questions-and-answer pedagogical approach" (Archibald, 2008, pp.24-25); but rather, we cannot control the lesson. Reading or hearing a narrative "implicates the 'listener' [interlocutor] into becoming an active participant in the experience of the story" (Archibald, 2008, pp.31-32). The threads that tie Rancière's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* and Archibald's *Indigenous Storywork* together are their efforts to reflect a connection between the

opinion of equality and its practice. The reciprocal and interrelated relationships between storyteller and an interlocutor reconciles the hierarchy that is usually employed; equality is implied because all humans tell stories and listen to them, too. The story is not an equalizer but begins with equality in mind. Also, the perspective that a text is supposedly complete can be upset by storytelling; with equality as a point of departure this “thing to dissect” can instead be approached as something with which we connect and interact (Archibald, 2008, p.33).

Archibald quotes Gerald Vizenor who believes that the story “doesn’t work without a participant... there has to be a participant and someone to listen. I don’t mean listening in the passive sense. You can even listen by contradiction... So that’s really critical in storytelling” (1987, 300-1, as cited in Archibald, 2008, p.33).

This text will be an exercise in praxis; as a teacher and parent, as well as a researcher and writer, I hope to both explore my own connections and disconnections between thinking and doing and the influence of the many stories-that-we-all-know and the paradoxes found therein. Essential to this effort is a commitment to the interconnected and interdependent relationship between the teacher/writer and the student/reader.<sup>14</sup> Just as there cannot be a teacher without a student, there cannot be a writer without a reader, nor can there be a researcher without an interpreter; there must be a person who takes part in the dialogue or conversation even if the one who is reading is the author. In storytelling there is a storyteller and an interlocutor; in this dynamic, equality is the point of departure. Can these roles be

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<sup>14</sup> I would also include ‘researcher’ in the teacher/writer role, and ‘interpreter’ in the student/reader role, but to simplify things for myself, I will keep to the teacher/writer and the student/reader distinctions. These thoughts are drawn from a paper presentation entitled “Changing Our Point of Departure: Abandoning Scaffolding in Philosophical Method and Teaching Practice” (Harvey, 2018).

incorporated into educational research? I feel that they must be when this project is one exploring goals of freedom and equality in Canadian democratic values and the effort to connect our theory and practice in schooling. As in the story of the child with the level, I am already finding myself distracted by the belief that I must lay out my argument and convince my audience. What am I doing if I am not explaining? If I am not reasoning for my reader, will any of this make sense? Can I trust this process? There is vulnerability in these questions, and I hope to deepen my praxis by leaning into the uncertainty that bubbles up with these stories about how research and academic writing should look and also what the role of philosophy in educational research should be.

This is where the words of philosopher of education, Claudia Ruitenberg, reverberate in my mind; this is also where the significance of the term *footnote* in this study's title becomes relevant to me. Ruitenberg (2016) speaks to the likeness of the footnote's function in a text and the role of philosophy of education in educational research. Other educational research provides phenomena, and knowledge of phenomena, on which philosophy of education ruminates and raises questions. But philosophy of education "can provide more than a commentary from the sidelines; it can insert a deliberately marginal discourse that interrupts and makes curriculum, policy, and research writers stutterers in their language" (Ruitenberg, 2016). Like a footnote, I aim to disturb the dominant narrative on the acceptable presentation of research but also the ways in which philosophy and other research are separated. Ruitenberg describes the main job of the footnote as an interruption, a nagging element that announces "that which must not be said" (Derrida, 1980/1987 as cited in Ruitenberg, 2016, p.446); something that perhaps makes it a little harder to read the main text, but adds a necessary

dimension to our understanding of what it is we are taking in. With this in mind, I situate my research and writing as an effort to bring philosophy physically out of the footnotes and into the primary body of this work and, along with it, the critical role of “contesting conceptual fuzziness” while remaining committed to equality (Ruitenber, 2014, p.95). I will infiltrate traditional educational research and the phenomena it describes and, like a footnote, engage in a philosophical questioning with an approach that enhances and elucidates but also intrudes and aims to be the voice that cuts in and calls the reader’s attention elsewhere (Ruitenber, 2016). The actual footnotes will be there to expand and even distract from the stories being told, to keep the academy happy,<sup>15</sup> and also to offer the reader a short-cut to the information behind some of these stories. Like so many other teachers and parents, it is a challenge for me to stifle the urge to explain. Let these footnotes be a place to put these impulses. I am in transformation, after all.

### An Answer & The Question

There are still a few more people filtering into a crowded church basement. On their way in, each person stops by a folding table that has been set up just inside the doors and signs

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<sup>15</sup> There is a Story in academia about how rigorous and legitimate research is done and presented. This Story, like most stories-that-we-all-know, operates in dichotomies and leaves little room for alternatives. Alternatives are more deeply scrutinized. The polemics of reason and emotion, fact and opinion, explanation and storytelling, are being disrupted in the main text but the footnote will be offered for the academy and those of us who struggle with letting go of its associated Story. I include myself in this group; I have played by the rules most of my life and it feels rather unnatural and strange to upend them in this way. I often feel myself being pulled back into the tendency to explain in my writing, teaching, and parenting in a way that dehumanizes and disconnects me from others. The footnotes can be a space to which I divert that energy in a (hopefully) subversive way. Why should I, in taking this alternative approach, have to work twice as hard to ‘keep the academy happy’ or protect my work from scrutiny beyond what all research, typical or subversive, should receive? Because inequality of intelligences *is* the dominant narrative and we all operate within it even when we question it. Women often work twice as hard to be seen. People of colour have to speak twice as loud as their white counterparts to be heard. Pointing this out is subversive in its own way; it highlights narratives of misogyny and white supremacy. Perhaps these footnotes will call attention to the effort toward shifting the point of departure in academia, education, and parenting.

their name to the roster. Because this slows the line down, there is a cold draught coming in from the partly open entryway. I stand at the front of the room and try not to shiver; I shake a little when I'm anxious and the current of winter air is not helping. I survey the audience as they settle into the rows of plastic chairs. There are about thirty adults who are mostly in their late 20s to late 30s; they are parents of pre-schoolers, but there is also the occasional grandparent. These are average folks attending a compulsory meeting for their co-operative preschool. I have delivered variations of this presentation more than a dozen times over the last year and I still get nerves. The door finally closes, and I detect a nod from a woman at the back signalling to me to begin. It is then that I spot him; a tall and slim white man with short salt and pepper hair seated in the middle of the second row. He is leaning back, with his arms crossed, already looking unimpressed. I am sure that he will be the one to ask a question, *The Question*, that is always asked. I smile at him and begin.

I'm not saying that every crowd, every time I give this talk, is completely alike. But there are certainly two elements that are strikingly similar from event to event. The first reliable sameness is an answer and the second is a question. I ask the parents, grandparents, caregivers, early childhood educators, teachers, administrators, and other people in the room to list the characteristics or qualities that they hope to pass on to their children or the children in their lives. *What sort of people do you want your kids to be when they leave the nest/preschool/classroom?*

Responsible

Respectful

Creative

Caring

Happy  
Critical Thinkers  
Adventurous  
Thoughtful  
Loving  
Open-minded  
Problem-solving  
Fun-loving  
Accepting  
Honest

There may be slight differences, but more or less the words that are called out as I madly scribble them on chart paper are synonymous with the ones provided above. And when I prod them further, inquiring as to whether these attributes should be used individually or in relation to others, the answer is invariably *both*. Amongst hundreds of people, the answer is that we want children to learn to be aware of, and responsive to, their responsibilities to themselves *and* to others; to have respect for themselves *and* for others; to create for/by themselves *and* for/with others as well as to recognize the creativity of others; to be caring to themselves *and* to others; and the list goes on. I am also careful to point out that it would be strange if when asked the initial question folks had called out words such as ‘docile,’ ‘subservient,’ or ‘self-centred.’ Even the word ‘obedient’ is one that would sound strange, perhaps because it connotes a loss or lack of agency and autonomy. Certainly, if one was to engage with respect for self and others then there would be no need for ‘obedience.’ A broader reading of these answers—the list of words, and the belief that we are both individual and social beings—effectively suggests that we value freedom and equality for all. Living the

inventory of essential attributes as individuals *and* in connection with others indicates that we value our needs for happiness, being caring/cared for, thoughtfulness, adventure, respect, and acceptance, and the need of others to experience these qualities in equal terms. After all, is it possible for one individual to live out honesty, for example, without others also partaking freely and equally? Or respect or critical thinking, for that matter? To every group of people participating in this conversation I ask: could we sum this up to mean that we want our children or students to have the ‘freedom to be fully human?’ The answer is the same from group to group: yes.



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The Freedom to Be Fully Human - Figure 1.0

The ‘freedom to be fully human’ is just that. It is not the ‘freedom to be partially human’ as that limit indicates a lack of freedom; in that formulation there is only enough freedom to support part of a whole. It also does not indicate that this liberty is limited to only some people; it is not ‘fully human’ for some people and ‘less-than-human’ for others. This indicates that there is the value of equality accompanying freedom. And fully human does not mean self-

centred or self-serving; no one has ever called out ‘entitled’ or ‘egocentric’ during the audience participation period in even one of these presentations. The ‘freedom to be fully human’ does not mean freedom at the expense of others or the licence to do whatever one wants to do. The ‘freedom to be fully human’ may be the *progressivist*<sup>16</sup> holy grail; a goal that has been eagerly pursued and sought after for generations and which progressivist education has been designed and re-designed to serve and, as the story goes, remains elusive.<sup>17</sup> In today’s Canadian context, our cultural values are based in pluralistic democracy.<sup>18</sup> Our constitutions (charters that govern) and broader social norms are *in theory* designed to support a society of free and equal citizens

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<sup>16</sup> The meaning and *The Story* of the term ‘progressivist’ will be discussed in detail in the next three chapters of this text. A snapshot of what is meant by this term is this: born out of the *Enlightenment*, when people in the Western world began to write and discuss a departure from the intellectual, spiritual, and bodily authority of sovereign and religious rulers, there intensified a call for individual liberty, democracy, and reconsiderations of equality and to whom it extends. The aim of a progressivist is the onward movement, advancement, or progression of freedom *and* equality.

<sup>17</sup> The Story of this progressivist goal, and how it is ‘elusive’ or unachieved, will be discussed in depth throughout this text.

<sup>18</sup> The term ‘pluralism’ will be more deeply discussed in the second chapter. For now, pluralism refers to the effort to make room for some conflicting beliefs or truths; there is not one right answer but also there are not an infinite number. ‘Democracy’ is a term that is brought into the discussion of raising the next generation, teaching the newest citizens, on a regular basis and yet without much thought given to its definition. ‘Democracy’ is not simply a system of government, but an ideology that argues for *freedom and equality* (Foucault, 2008; Santas, 2007). The OED (2019) describes democracy as “a system of decision-making” within a government or institution “in which all members have the right to take part.” Also, “In later use often more widely, with reference to the conditions characteristically obtaining under such a system: a form of society in which all citizens have equal rights, ignoring hereditary distinctions of class or rank, and the views of all are tolerated and respected; the principle of fair and equal treatment of everyone in a state, institution, organization, etc.” (OED, 2019). In Foucault’s final lectures, he discusses democracy deeply, through a ‘history of thought’ (2008). He says that the morphological definition is a government by the demos (citizens), but he takes it beyond this simple classification (Foucault, 2008). Often, when we think about democracy, outside of voting, we think about ‘free speech.’ Foucault deconstructs the Ancient Greek concept of *parrēsia* (2008). Parrēsia is more than the statutory right to speak, but one that is a truth telling that carries some risk and is part of the “appropriate game of politics” (Foucault, 2008, p.158). He links parrēsia to democracy in a circular relationship; in order for democracy there must be parrēsia but in order to have parrēsia there must be democracy (Foucault, 2008). Foucault is concerned about the problem of the “ambiguity of parrēsia” (2008, p.168) and how this in turn effects democracy or “the deterioration of parrēsia, or the deterioration of the relationship between parrēsia and democracy” (p.173). He argues that a lack of understanding surrounding parrēsia leads to “bad parrēsia” and a crumbling democracy (Foucault, 2008, p.180). A recent study (Zyngier, 2012), one that is expansive in its effort to explore the beliefs of teachers from democracies across the Western world, has demonstrated that teachers don’t understand what ‘democracy’ means, their understanding of ‘democracy’ is limited to voting – this project is not about this misunderstanding, although it seems to run alongside the misunderstanding of ‘progressivist education’ that I am attempting to discuss and address.

that govern together and our curricula from province to province to territory propose that schools prepare children for an adulthood that includes “community-mindedness,” “solving problems in peaceful ways,” “valuing diversity” (BCME, 2016a), working in “collaboration” (NSME, 2015), learning to “respect their own rights and the rights of others” (BCME, 2016b), “value an inclusive society” (OME, 2013), and preparing for life as citizens in a “democracy” (OME, 2013). The majority of parents and caregivers with whom I speak, who list these attributes and nod in agreement with the desire to see their children attain the ‘freedom to be fully human,’ *hold beliefs* that are in line with these societal goals. Teachers are also more often than not *philosophically oriented* toward progressivist educational aims.<sup>19</sup> What we think and what we do needs to be connected; what we practice must be in service to our theory. In theory we want democracy, we hold beliefs supporting equality and freedom, we are philosophically oriented toward progressivism. But what about in practice?

This is where the water gets murky and *The Question* that I mentioned before comes into focus. Our methods and techniques with the children and students in our care should support the freedom to be fully human. But in the messy world of getting our kids into the car and out of the car, into the bath and out of the bath, in making sure that they share and clean

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<sup>19</sup> A survey and study that will be discussed more deeply in a later chapter (Ryan, 2008) indicates that the large majority of teachers in Canada identify as progressivist. A study that examines Turkish pre-service teachers’ educational philosophies found that 95.5% expressed a strong belief in progressivism (Deryakulu, 2018). Another article, entitled “Compliance, Resistance and Pragmatism: The (Re)Construction of Schoolteacher Identities in a Period of Intensive Educational Reform” argues that there may be many teachers and schools that call themselves ‘progressive,’ but they found that “teachers who identified themselves as traditional or progressive did so, as a kind of shorthand that may have sent out an immediate message but that bore no true correspondence to the complexity and eclecticism of the individual school’s or teacher’s actual philosophy, policy and practice” (Moore, et al., 2002, p.561). Along this line of thinking, there is research that shows that textbooks and other resources in Canada have “come to adopt a more progressivist orientation” (Broom, 2011, p.54). Yet another study acknowledging that the vast majority of teachers hold “progressivist notions,” they also draw heavily on “neoliberal forms of governance” (Watkins, 2007, p.301).

up their things, in among the crayon-on-walls and the goals scored, there is a perturbation or uneasiness; something obstructs us and diverts us from our intended course. In the busy and diverse classroom sphere where there are *expectations*, standards and curriculum, benchmarks, and assemblies to attend and hallways to navigate and 100 questions a day, hurt feelings and new-found independence, we are bound, at least on occasion, to accidentally leave the tracks and find ourselves preoccupied with something unintended. The participants in each talk I give confirm their goal, the progressivist goal, and it is *The Answer* and of course we all want to parent and teach in service to this aim. But praxis is a challenging thing; uncertainty and stories-that-we-all-know find their way in and their impact is felt. There is always one person in the room who asks the same question, at least in essence, and I like to play the game of trying to guess who it is going to be. On this particular evening, in an old church basement with a group of pre-school parents and other caregivers, as well as their teachers and early childhood educators, my prediction was accurate. As I finished up the first portion of my presentation, I caught the eyes of the man with salt and pepper hair as he uncrossed his arms and leaned forward, propping his elbows on his knees, and rubbing his chin. I could see him formulating his words. He sat up and slowly raised his hand. I smiled at him and nodded with acknowledgment.

But how do we get our kids to do what we want them to do?

He is the one person in this group to ask *The Question*,<sup>20</sup> but this is not to say that he is alone in his wondering or his need for this problem to be addressed. It is a question that most

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<sup>20</sup> The Question of *How do I get kids/students to do what I want them to do*, and the ways in which it has been approached in educational psychological, philosophy of education, as well as its effects on the progressivist's effort to perfect pedagogy will be explored throughout this text as part of the problem interrupting the ability to take on 'new' or 'innovative' practices such as teaching self-regulation. In Chapter Three, I will examine what is sometimes

teachers and parents, including me, ask ourselves over and over again throughout each day. The Question is part of a dominant narrative, a “single story,” being recounted through us (Adichie, 2009). It is a question that can return us to the certainty we desire because within this question is an indication of the role of teachers and parents as well as the nature of students and children. Getting students to do what we want them to do is often understood as a necessary step before teachers can get to the *real* work of assisting students with their learning; it is commonly the case that “much of a teacher’s typical day is spent in enacting disciplines that emphasize solving the ‘problem’ of undeveloped and disruptive children” (Leafgren, 2009, p.68). The Story places a “very strong emphasis on control – adult control of children is mandated and legitimated and children’s self-control of their bodies and minds is demanded” (Purpel, 1999, p.89). The Question being asked is drawn from what I call the ‘Classroom Management Narrative’ or CMN.<sup>21</sup> When we reflect on the connection between theory and practice, we need to ask whether or not The Question is in service to the belief that we want our children/students to have the freedom to be fully human. Educational theorists have argued that the focus on student compliance found within the CMN is hardly ever in support of goals such as the development of moral consciousness (Harvey, 2015; Purpel, 1999) or active citizenship (Boyd, 2010; Purpel, 1999). Instead, defaulting to the short-term goal of compliance or the aim of obedience is a strong indication that our beliefs are being undermined by our practice (Bellous, 1995; Harvey, 2015; Kohn, 2006; Leafgren, 2009). The prevalence of

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called ‘behaviourism,’ or Thorndikian “Law of Effect” and “Theory of Transfer,” and their relations to dominant narratives and the ways in which these highly criticized approaches still live and breathe within contemporary classroom management strategies (Gibboney, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> Management of students in schools by teachers is based on a similar narrative to the management of children by their parents.

the term ‘classroom management,’ drawn from the work world’s roles of ‘bosses’ (or supervisors) and the management of workers, in and of itself shows that there is a belief that the teacher’s role is to ‘manage’ the students (Kohn, 2006). Some contemporary educators call their methods ‘Positive Discipline,’ ‘Progressive Discipline,’ or promoting ‘Prosocial Behavior’<sup>22</sup> but, as independent scholar and author Alfie Kohn argues, “the formal programs just refine and systematize the application of these same interventions” (2006, p.22); in other words, each approach calls for progressivist goals of freedom and equality<sup>23</sup> but is distracted by the

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<sup>22</sup> The word ‘positive’ is often put in front of ‘discipline’ and ‘classroom management’ in texts selling what Alfie Kohn calls the “New Discipline programs” (2006, p.52). *Positive Discipline in the Classroom* (Nelson et al., 1993) is a text that Kohn (2006) takes up in his book *Beyond Discipline: From Compliance to Community*. *Positive Classroom Management: A step-by-step guide to successfully running the show without destroying student dignity*, by Robert DiGiulio (1995), and *Toward Positive Classroom Discipline*, by Harvey F. Clarizio (1971), are books I will discuss later in Chapter Three. ‘Progressive Discipline’ is what the Ministry of Education in Ontario terms the approach promoted in their public schools; in fact, “[e]very school in Ontario is required to have a *progressive* discipline policy” (OME, 2019, *emphasis added*). ‘Prosocial Behavior’ is another take on ‘classroom management’; at the University of Victoria, there is a course entitled “Promoting Prosocial Behaviour: Strategies and Management” and the course description says that the course is designed to “provide beginning teachers with insights and concrete strategies that will assist them in preventing and/or effectively intervening in situations involving discipline, conflict, aggression and bullying” (UVIC, 2019). I will discuss two texts that have been used for this course: Charney’s (2002) *Teaching Children to Care: Classroom Management for Ethical and Academic Growth, K-8* and Shanker’s (2013b) *Calm, Alert and Learning: Classroom Strategies for Self-Regulation*.

<sup>23</sup> Up until this point, I have discussed ‘freedom’ and ‘equality’ separately. Freedom and ‘unfreedom’ have been grouped together and discussed, as has equality and ‘inequality.’ ‘Freedom’ has been defined as the ‘freedom to be fully human’ or our need to act in accordance with our own freedoms *and* the freedoms of others. Freedom has been (perhaps subtly, but right now I would like to articulate it more clearly) distinguished from ‘licence’; we cannot do whatever we want to do as long as it is in service to our freedom. This is because freedom and equality might be interconnected and interdependent and their separation or disconnection means that one negates the other. As mentioned before, I believe that we are both individual and social beings, and, I would also argue, it is part of Canadian pluralistic democratic values to say that being a ‘good’ citizen is to support one’s own freedom *and* the freedom of others (requiring equality). This is a lesson that we, as teachers and parents, are charged with navigating and passing on in order to prepare children to be the humanizing and active citizens we need to keep our society progressivist/progressing. Equality is when one has the freedom to be fully human along with everyone else. Equality is that freedom and freedom demands equality or only some of us are ‘free.’ Just as equality is my opinion, it is also my opinion that no one is free unless we are all free (I share this opinion with Paulo Freire, among others). I like to think that freedom is not a scarce commodity; just because *you* have freedom, it does not mean that I will have *less freedom*. When freedom is viewed with scarcity, there is a fear that one won’t get enough, and, like a pizza, one tries to pile more on one’s plate, leaving scraps for others. Freedom is not a pizza, and this fear and effort to maintain one’s freedom is not freedom. This is a separation of freedom and equality, and this disassociation (and disconnection) undermines both. These ideas will be further discussed through the lens of Hegel’s (1807/1977) Master-Slave-Dialectic (in the next chapter).

*certainty* in The Story that management is necessary. It is interesting and troubling to me that the dominant narrative that children and students necessitate parent and teacher control arises in the form of this Question even when the goal of encouraging the freedom to be fully human has just been established. How easily we become preoccupied with the type of obedience that subverts the democratic values we seek to impart.

The dominant narrative tells us that our only options are to reduce or reproduce inequality. As progressivists, we want our kids to have the freedom to be fully human, but do we go about this by *reducing* inequality and barriers to freedom? Certainly, freedom and equality are not achieved by increasing or reproducing inequality and barriers to freedom. To choose to 'reduce' is to say that we start with barriers and a perspective that sees disparity; if one is trying to *lessen* something than there is *something* to decrease. We start with inequality and step-by-step, progressively, we lead our children/students to equality; from 'unfreedom' to freedom. Does this mean that we begin by treating children as though they are not as free as, or as/equal to, adults<sup>24</sup> and not capable of understanding their freedom and the freedom of others? Can we ask our children/students for docility now while preparing them to be decision-

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<sup>24</sup> This is not to say that although adults are often in the role of authority that they enjoy 'freedom.' In the case of an adult leading a student to what they view as equality the adult does not begin in a state of 'equality.' As noted in the previous footnote, this is drawn from Hegel's (1807/1977) Master-Slave-Dialectic (which is explored in the next chapter). Freire (2005) argues that neither master nor slave are free because they both live in fear and are continually dehumanized by their roles. The master must maintain supremacy and control, or they risk losing their position, while the slave must fight to win their own freedom. Within this Story, the alternative to being master is framed only as becoming the slave. Within The Story of inequality, equality is a goal but not a real possibility. The roles of master and slave are ones that are constantly exchanged between the people or groups operating under the opinion of inequality. I believe that anyone who has encountered a child, or been a child, would agree that between an adult and a child there are occasionally times when the child becomes the master and the adult takes on the role of slave. Take any melt-down in a grocery store as an example; the adult must quickly regain supremacy as onlookers judge the dialectic taking place. Adults are equally 'unfree' in situations of dehumanization including when they are the ones dehumanizing another person. Adults are also caught up in the dominant narrative that calls for them to maintain control of their child or classroom in ways that are based on inequality.

making, problem-solving, thoughtful, and respectful people? In my presentation, I examine the ways in which common parenting and teaching tactics undermine this goal and rather focus our actions on gaining compliance. In the moment, we seem to want obedience, docility, and subservience. We think we want to reduce inequality and yet we begin with it. I argue that if we want to produce people who have the ‘freedom to be fully human’ than we need to commence with treating them as ‘fully human’ and in this practice we effectually demonstrate our own ‘freedom to be fully human.’ To postpone this freedom *and* equality is to disconnect from it and fail to interrupt The Story that the ‘freedom to be fully human’ is something that we grow into or earn, we are given or allowed, that we experience in stages *progressively*; it is to begin with inequality. Separating these concepts negates them.

#### Self-Regulation & Handling Our Freedom

My eldest child<sup>25</sup> spent a recent school year in a grade one/two classroom in a public school in British Columbia. The classroom was bright and colourful, filled with the things that most classrooms contain, but it had child-sized yoga balls instead of chairs. Centred on one wall was a poster entitled ‘Zones of Regulation’ outlining what it looks and feels like to be optimally self-regulated as well as dysregulated. A small tent was set up in a corner. Another wall had a selection of photos depicting yoga poses done by children. The hallway outside the room had masking tape zig-zagging the floor with instructions on how to crab-walk following the lines. The bulletin board displayed the classroom calendar along with several articles from local and national news outlets on the benefits of self-regulation [SR] and why many classrooms have

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<sup>25</sup> My children have agreed to be discussed in this text. My eldest, Finlay, has agreed to be named and to have his gender disclosed. My youngest would prefer not to be named or gendered.

added fidget toys and disc cushions.<sup>26</sup> The reaction among the parent community was overwhelmingly positive; “Aren’t we lucky to have a teacher like this!” *Our* children did not have to sit in the traditional rows of desks on hard chairs, they would not be sent to the hallway as punishment when they couldn’t sit still. Instead, they had yoga balls and ‘fidgets’ outfitting their classroom and a teacher with an understanding of the young body’s need to move and equipped with methods to garner concentration, focus, and calm so that teaching and learning could be practiced in a more ideal way. The teacher called her classroom a ‘Self-Regulation Classroom’ and she exclaimed at our initial class meeting that she would be teaching our children to self-regulate.

It all sounded so innovative, and a little avant-garde; meditation and mindfulness, opportunities for movement and rest, and working with students to help them to better understand how their bodies and minds were feeling and what they needed in order to participate in their school lives and beyond was surely a development in classroom teaching. It seemed a step away from the traditional approach of stimuli and response<sup>27</sup> and toward something a bit warmer, more understanding, and also better in line with the aim of learning characteristics such as independence, self-confidence, respect, and responsibility. Furthermore, self-regulation was being presented to the parents of these students as cutting-edge research

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<sup>26</sup> ‘Disc cushions’ are soft round plastic cushions that can be placed on a hard chair for comfort and to allow movement. ‘Fidgets’ are a small item that can be manipulated with one’s hands so that one can fidget; this is for the purpose of allowing movement so that those people who need to expel physical energy and need help to “stay calmly focused and alert” (Shanker, 2013b, p.15) or increase energy through mild movement.

<sup>27</sup> The traditional approach of stimuli and response is based on popular educational psychology spearheaded by Edward L. Thorndike (1874-1949). A subject is conditioned to pair a response to specific stimulus and therefore behaviour can be modified through certain conditioning. Thorndike’s interest in the role of stimulus-response in learning and teaching, as well as an underlying martial approach to children that focuses on obedience, has a contempt for softness, and a strong reliance on the theory of developmentalism, aligns well with a progressivist dependence on the CMN (Saari, 2016). Stimulus and response, as well as a critical discussion of the CMN’s relationship to it, will be explored in Chapter Three.

and an increasingly scientific approach to teaching and learning. After all, it required an understanding of the neurological processes that contribute to self-regulation because knowing how the brain works is integral to supporting students' biological, cognitive, social, emotional, and prosocial<sup>28</sup> development so that they may achieve their academic and personal goals. As a parent and as an educator, I also felt 'lucky' to have a teacher implementing fresh, modern, and well-researched practices into my son's classroom. And yet, as someone who thinks and writes about parenting and teaching, and perhaps because some of my previous research has explored the ways in which progressivist character and moral education practices often mask behaviour management efforts that undermine all that progressivists *philosophically* hold dear, I began to detect something about this contemporary and cutting-edge approach to classroom teaching that seemed disconnected from, and perhaps even destructive to, its supporting theory.

Every morning parents or caregivers were invited to sit on the carpet of this 'Self-Regulation Classroom' and read with their child. Toni and Slade Morrison's (1999) picture book, *The Big Box*, was our favourite. In the book, three children are in a big box that is much like a large bedroom and filled with many things that children enjoy, such as swings, toys, cake, and bean bag chairs. But there are hints as to why this box is not ideal; we are told that "the door has three big locks" and that it "only opens one way" (Morrison & Morrison, 1999, p.2). The rest of the story tells the reader how the children came to be in the big box. Each tale is unique

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<sup>28</sup> Shanker describes the "Five-Domain Model of Self-Regulation", which includes the "linked" Biological, Emotional, Cognitive, Social, and Prosocial domains (2013b, p. xiii). While some students struggle in particular domains, due to their disposition or temperament, physicality, prior experience, or present situation or environment, any student could become *dysregulated* in all five domains (Shanker, 2013b). In SR literature, it is up to the teacher's assessment, or "correctly interpreting a child's behaviour," to determine in what domain(s) the student may need to "up-regulate" or "down-regulate" and respond accordingly with tools or approaches to assist the student (Shanker, 2013b, p. 9 & xv). SR, and the above concepts, will be discussed deeply in Chapter Four.

and yet reminds the reader of children more generally; their behaviour, needs, and intentions as well as the ways in which they experience the world. Outside of the big box, the children sing and play, sometimes at moments that perhaps do not make sense to adults; they act silly and create games, occasionally at times and in places that are interpreted as inappropriate to their caretakers; they do not always remember the rules, or heed warnings, causing the adults to repeat them. In the end, the adults express that the behaviour of the children makes them “nervous” and they agree that “Those kids can’t handle their freedom” (Morrison & Morrison, 1999, p.6). The adults are not malicious, but rather they are using the big box as “a cure” and a way in which to prepare their children for the ‘real’ world, teaching them “how far to go so the grown-up world can abide you” (Morrison & Morrison, 1999, p.10). Each child replies with a similar and salient point:

If owls can scream  
And rabbits can hop  
And beavers chew trees when they need ‘em,  
Why can’t I be a kid like me  
Who doesn’t have to handle his [sic] freedom?  
I know you are smart and I know that you think  
You’re doing what is best for me.  
But if freedom is handled just your way  
Then it’s not my freedom or free.<sup>29</sup> (Morrison, 1999, p.12)

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<sup>29</sup> Again, I would like to draw attention to The Story that tells us that one person or group is free when another person or group is ‘unfree’ and that when we operate within this narrative we can still work toward equality. I am arguing, on the shoulders of giants such as Freire (2005), hooks (1994), and others, that we cannot be committed to the theory of equality and freedom while our actions undermine these values or goals; this is a disconnection in praxis. We cannot be free until we are all free; equality is not just for those ‘ready for it’ or with the ‘right’ skills or interpretations of how that freedom *should* be enacted.

One afternoon, in the comfort of our living room, my son demonstrated some of what he had been learning at school. We were dancing around to one of our favourite songs when his younger sibling abruptly turned the music off, which resulted in what those versed in SR theory would call ‘dysregulation’; he was upset and creeping toward a melt-down. I could see the frustration, let down, and anger welling up inside him, but rather than cry or voice how he was feeling he put his hands in prayer position and took some deep breaths. After five deep inhales and long exhales, he opened his eyes, which were wide with concern. He explained that he was ‘taking 5’ and that that was something he was *supposed* to do at school when he felt angry or upset. This struck me as strange—the words ‘supposed to’ reflect an externally imposed imperative—and I could see that his effort hadn’t achieved its purpose. He looked strained, his shoulders were tight, and he shuffled around the living room as though he didn’t know what to do next. I asked him if taking the deep breaths had helped and he immediately burst into tears. He stomped his feet. I said my usual, ‘Tell me about it.’ I offered my hand. He sobbed for a few minutes and when he was ready he said that he still felt like things were unfair because it was his turn to switch off the music and that he still wanted to feel angry about it. He wanted to talk about it. When I asked what would help him to feel better, he said that he just wanted to turn the music back on and then off again. After he did so, his demeanor changed and he melted back into his usual or “optimally regulated” self (Shanker, 2013b, p.9).

Initially, I thought ‘taking 5’ made a lot of sense; who would not benefit from taking a few deep breaths and calming down before reassessing a situation? As Stuart Shanker, distinguished professor of psychology and philosophy at York University and Founder/CEO of

The Milton & Ethel Harris Research Initiative Treatment [MEHRIT] Centre,<sup>30</sup> and author of several articles and books on SR would argue, my son had attempted to use ‘Taking 5’ to move from his ‘red brain’ to his ‘blue brain.’<sup>31</sup> But this experience caused me to think that something was getting lost in translation. There is paradox in the experience of my son; Morrison’s book, *The Big Box*, helps me to locate the self-contradictory element, the incongruity, and the disconnection within SR that disturbs me. In the book, the adults strive to pass on a type of freedom that they value without a consideration of the meaning of freedom itself. Although they desire to do what is best for the children—children who they believe have “potential” and a “wonderful future” (Morrison & Morrison, 1999, p.10 & 20) before them—they are nonetheless *distracted* by the behavior of the children and The Question of how to get the kids to handle their freedom in ‘just [their]way’ or *how to get these kids to do what they want them to do*. There are certain behaviors and ways of being in the world that have been normalized and when the children veer from these accepted types of behaviour they are disciplined (punished by a withdrawal from their homes and placement in the big box, rewarded for their calm acceptance of the box with gifts from the outside world), they are surveilled (the adults watch and assess their behavior from both outside and inside the big box), and they are pressured to normalize (the adults diagnose the children as either those who the adult world can ‘abide,’ or tolerate, and those whom they cannot accept). In the story, the box almost seems normal (as though there are no other options) and yet the children point out its

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<sup>30</sup> The MEHRIT Centre was established as a sister organization to the Self-Regulation Institute in 2012 to “work towards a vision of calm, alert children, youth and adults flourishing in physically and emotionally nurturing environments” (“About Us”, 2018, para.1).

<sup>31</sup> These terms will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four, but essentially this means shifting from a limbic or threat-based response to the neocortex or thinking-brain response (Shanker, 2017a).

absurdity and the way in which the effort to teach freedom is being undermined by their confinement. The goal of preparing these children to handle their freedom, for a future in which they can be free, does not figure into the 'now.' The practice is to direct, restrict, restrain, and manage the behavior of the children in *The Big Box* until they are old enough to do so on their own. The method is focused on behavior and based on a narrative claiming that by being controlled we learn to control ourselves. Are we looking at our Answer or The Question? Are we practicing in a way that supports our Answer, our goal or theory, that we want our kids to have the freedom to be fully human? Or, are we practicing in service to The Question of how we get kids to do what we want them to do? In reflection, is there a disconnection or connection between what we think and what we do, and can we see that The Question is based on the dominant narrative that "Those kids can't handle their freedom" (Morrison & Morrison, 1999, p.6)?

My son had not reduced his stress by 'Taking 5' but suppressed it so that he could maintain an acceptable exterior of calm. He had modified his behaviour, but he had not addressed his stress. He felt that there was an injustice because his turn was co-opted by someone else; anger is an indication that one feels a sense of injustice (Lee, 2017a). He had suppressed his anger and the voice that comes with it; he had used 'Taking 5' to quell his emotional reaction and stopped short of working through the problem, the injustice, within himself or with others. The message he had brought home from school was that instead of being angry and doing something about it, he should be calm and do nothing. Was it something he was *supposed* to do so that the grown-up world could abide/adore/approve<sup>32</sup> of him? This is

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<sup>32</sup> Words used in *The Big Box* to describe the proposed outcome for the children put into the big box.

not an example of SR. Teaching SR is not about teaching kids to have self-control so that they will behave 'appropriately' or so that they will be focused and on-task in a classroom. This is perhaps why the idea of having students regulating themselves goes down so easily; all we have to do to meet our aims of better classroom learning is get kids to adopt the 'right' approaches to stress and distraction, to impulse-control and goal-setting, and to self-reflection and problem-solving, and we will have students *regulating themselves* in a "maximally efficient manner" (Shanker, 2013b, p.5). The conflict is that a SR approach is an effort to counter and reframe the more common stimulus-response method and the CMN. The focus on behaviour and its modification through prompting, repetition, and consequences (Asher, 2003) found in the CMN shifts and rather than an assessment of why a student *won't* behave the revised question is about why they *can't*. In SR, this begins with being able to identify the difference between stress behaviour and misbehaviour (Shanker, 2017a). This may come as a shock to some teachers and parents, as SR is often misunderstood and conflated with self-control. This problem has been identified by those at the MEHRIT Centre; they have produced a Self-Regulation Infographic entitled "Self-Regulation vs. Self-Control" (2016a). The distinction being that "Self-regulation seeks to identify and reduce the causes of problems in mood, thought, and behaviour" while self-control "seeks to inhibit or manage such problems only as they arise" (MEHRIT, 2016a). Further, Shanker explains that SR "is always searching for hidden stressors" and self-control "looks only at surface behaviours" (2017a); SR is *not* the managing of behaviours but rather the managing of stressors and tensions and a recognition that behaviour is communicating a level of stress being experienced. For Shanker, "Self-Regulation makes self-control possible, not the other way around" (MEHRIT, 2016a). SR theory does not argue that

anger be dismissed, or that it is in any way healthy to teach children to ignore or suppress their feelings (Shanker, 2013 & 2017b). SR seeks to help students develop skills to identify stress, such as lethargy or feeling over-energized, and to reduce stress, so that they can bring *themselves* to a place of optimal regulation and be in a better position to meet their goals and address their problems. Although I am sure that SR theory has its limits, and that most proponents would not deny that there are shortcomings, the problem that I am trying to locate may not reside in SR's research or claims, but rather the way in which it is being derailed by a lack of praxis. Is a commitment to SR goals, and efforts to adopt its approach, being distracted by the CMN and *The Question*?

Out of the Box: Writing approach and questions not usually asked

I recognize that typically, whatever a book is about is stated in the beginning lines and sometimes explicitly laid out in the first few paragraphs. This is not that book. As I have mentioned above, I am interested in praxis and, in my reflections, I often see a disconnection between my thinking and doing in a typical teacher/writer role. I do not want to lead the student/reader to a preformulated answer because that practice does not support my belief in our equality. And even though this belief is based on an opinion, I want to explore what could happen when I change my point of departure and approach this project with an interlocutor in mind. Although this research is not aimed at the academy,<sup>33</sup> but rather with contemporary parents and teachers in mind, I have to acknowledge my own background and influences as

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<sup>33</sup> This research is not aimed at the academy, but it needs to be accepted by the academy as it is written in partial fulfillment of a doctorate. In this process, I have found that the absence of the carefully laid out research objective and questions or a description of the study's design is problematic. In an effort toward my own praxis *and* in meeting the expectations of the academy, I have added an abbreviated version of this information in the prologue. There will also be ways in which this information is offered in the main text and footnotes that keep to the alternative approach that I am attempting to employ.

well as the expectations of rigor in scholarship. I am writing with the empowerment that comes with stepping outside of the box while, at the same time, I am writing with trepidation because I want this research and the expression it takes to have merit, to be rigorous, and to be accessible. What is to follow will be the effort of a proven academic writer and teacher, one who has relied heavily on explanation and doing the reasoning for others, to let go.

Not only am I letting go of The Story that explanation is necessary, and that storytelling is not able to represent research, but I am also coming to terms with the strength of the CMN in my own approach to teaching and parenting. As a teacher and outdoor educator, I have been applauded for my strong classroom management skills and ability to elicit ‘appropriate’ behaviour by adherence to The Question. As a parent, I have often found myself conflicted when I consider the goal of supporting my children in their freedom to be fully human and the ways in which my practices may be undermining that aim. SR came to me like an answer; it still appears to be a possible alternative to the narrative that does not allow my theory and practice to connect. I want to tell the story of my own reflections with the hope that an interlocutor will join me in praxis and ‘find’ their own questions and locate their own stories while confronting The Stories that are told through them and distract them from what they value. This does not mean that an interest and dedication to praxis supplies all the answers we seek; rather, it may provide more questions and uncertainty. But, as Adichie says, there is empowerment in storytelling. The reflection in storytelling, in reflecting on the stories we live and the ones that are told through us, is as transformative as it can be immobilizing. Critical engagement with theory and practice often falls by the wayside because the dominant narrative tells us it is not

something we can do but instead something that must be done for us. Theorizing<sup>34</sup> is reserved for folks in academia; philosophy is for a philosopher and not me. We tell ourselves that we do what works, what we already know and have experience with, and we need things explained to us if they are new or counter to that with which we have experience. And then a 'new' tool, such as SR, comes along and we incorporate it into our certainty, our framework, and The Stories that are told through us.

What are these Stories that contribute to our understandings of progressivist education, the role of the teacher or writer, our image of children, the substance of freedom or the meaning of equality? Just as being able to see the narratives that contribute to ideas of sex, gender, and heteronormative understandings of sexuality, being able to think through the CMN and its influences on my practice helps me to see the control it has over me. From where does the CMN emerge and what is its relationship to progressivist education? Like many teachers and parents in Canada, I want to be 'progressive;' but what is The Progressivist Story? Will what I understand to be a progressivist tool, such as SR, support my progressivist aims? In relation to this effort toward praxis and finding connection between what I think and what I do, I want to engage with educational research and theory with thinking about thinking. Rather than relegating some of these philosophical questions and critical reflections to the footnotes and leaving SR to be absorbed into the dominant narrative of classroom management without considering the ways in which it may be distracted by The Question and other stories-that-we-all-know, I want to bring this tale into the main text. SR, as a tool designed with progressivist

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<sup>34</sup> A discussion of The Story of theorizing and teachers will be taken up in Chapter Two.

goals in mind, needs some praxis or it may be used in a way that undermines its purpose and our own values.

In writing the final lines of this introduction, I feel compelled to lay out what is to come. I am conscious of this expectation in academic writing, just as I have often been confronted by my students with their desire to have a rubric with what *I want them to do* spelled out, and I hear the call at this point in the chapter for a roadmap or some semblance of a plan for what is to come. But, as the quotation at the beginning of the chapter suggests, I am intentionally avoiding the draw to linear thinking. As an aspiring praxis mentor<sup>35</sup> and storyteller, this is both uncomfortable and empowering. As I stare at the chapters that are coming up, and read and re-read each section throughout my revisions, I find myself thinking about their order and I am filled with doubt. Should this part go before that? Would this point be more effective if it were brought up sooner? Then I take a deep breath (or five) and remember that my journey and process, and the “many little threads radiating from the centre, crisscrossing one another” is not the problem (Leslie Marmon Silko of the Laguna Pueblo Nation, 1996, pp.48-49). The goal is not to take my interlocutor from point A to point B to point C. I need to trust in you and know that “meaning will be made” and that I cannot control the outcome with a well-ordered explanation. The perceived safety and security, predictability and certainty, that we experience in our Big Box will be upset. But, as a student of mine pointed out to me (full disclosure, her point rocked my confidence and, in its utterance, I felt incredibly vulnerable), the three locks

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<sup>35</sup> A term I made up. I think of a ‘praxis mentor’ as one who models and dialogues around their effort to assess connections and disconnections between theory and practice as well as the process of making connections between thinking and doing. My praxis mentors are mostly found in books, such as the work of Hal Adams (2016) and bell hooks (1994 & 2010). But I also meet praxis mentors in daily life (my appliance repair technician was one of them) and my children are also my guides and teachers in becoming more praxis oriented.

pictured in Morrison's (1999) book are *inside* the room. The adults have not locked the children in, which was what I had presumed. And in the end, the learned helplessness is overcome, and the children emerge on their own.

Oh, the porpoises scream

And the rabbits hop,

And beavers chew trees when they need 'em

But Patty and Mickey and Liza Sue—

Who says they can't handle their freedom? (Morrison, 1999, p.40)

# Chapter One—Our Progressivist Condition

*Thus we never see the true State of our Condition, till it is illustrated to us by its Contraries; nor know how to value what we enjoy, but by the want of it.*

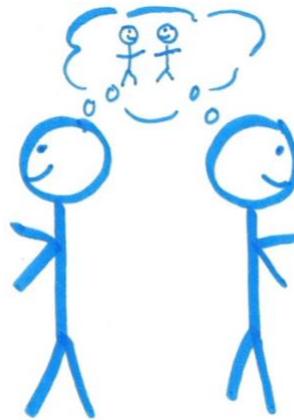
– Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 1759, p. 221

## The MSD in Crappy Pictures

Here’s a Story that you’ve not only heard before, but one that you probably live throughout each day. Some may know it as ‘Viking and Victim,’ while others have heard a version of it called the “Concept of Dread” (Kainz, 1979, p.146). For me, it was a case of hearing this Story articulated for the first time and having a light bulb flicker on. The 19<sup>th</sup> century German philosopher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1807/1977), wrote what is commonly known as the Master-Slave-Dialectic [MSD], which is a famous passage from his text entitled *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and it has given substance to a narrative that I struggle with on a daily basis. The 20<sup>th</sup> century Brazilian educator and philosopher, Paulo Freire (2005), who inspires much of what I think and write about, has taken up the MSD in his work on the relationship between teachers and students. Although I believe that both teachers and parents, or for that matter any person in relationship with another, for the most part do not willingly and/or intentionally enter into this dialectic, I still see this Story being told through us and around us constantly. It is a Story to which I will explicitly refer throughout this text, but also one that may be sown into my words without forethought or design. I often share this Story with my students and the folks who attend my workshops and it usually results in a few uncomfortable laughs, some lightbulbs, and then some tension; no one wants to be a part of this Story. The good news is that I hope to also share my take on what might reconcile this tale. I have included the pictures that I have used to share

my take on Hegel's MSD because they make a rather wordy approach—his actual tale uses some rather abstract language—more approachable and, I think, possibly entertaining.

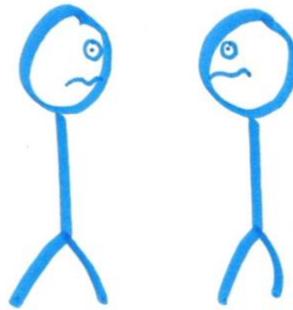
We begin with two people, each having never met another person, and both with an interest in being self-aware and conscious of their 'self' (Hegel, 1807/1977). Although metaphorically I suppose this could mean any number of things, I like to think of becoming aware and conscious of 'self' as each person's quest to have their capacity and freedom to be fully human recognized by another person who is also fully human. The need for one's freedom and equality to be acknowledged by another equal and free person is what makes us fully human. Although it isn't straightforward whether Hegel is telling the story of two individuals coming into their own consciousness-of-self (self-consciousness) or if the tale could be likened to a society realising freedom, for our purposes, I think either understanding works.



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Figure 2.0

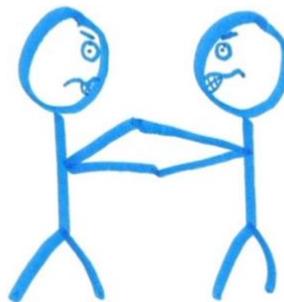
In the figure above, there are two beings in search of another being who is free and equal so that they may recognise each other as free and equal, hence making them both fully human.



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Figure 2.1

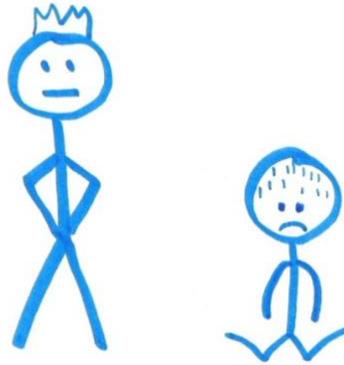
In this next drawing, you can see that this process isn't as easy as it may seem. At first, it is rather off-putting to see one's self reflected in the eyes of another; one's concept of self is confronted. Hegel says that their options are: to ignore the *other* and *not* acknowledge the freedom and equality of the other, maintaining that the other they face is only an object; or they can test the other to "determine whether that other is... a free self-consciousness like itself" (Kainz, 1979, p.147).



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Figure 2.2

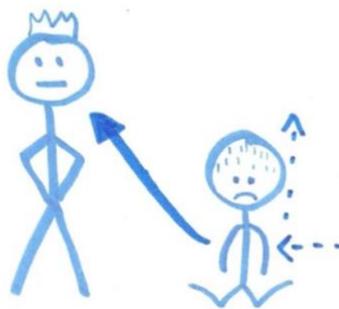
The beings choose to test one another; Hegel calls this the fight to the death (Hegel, 1807/1977). However, as the two are fighting, they realise that if one kills the other, there will be no one left to recognise them, and therefore no one making them fully human or fully self-conscious.



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Figure 2.3

As pictured above, the result is that one person becomes the master (in this case, wearing a crown) and the other becomes the slave (kneeling). The master is in control and determines how this control should play out (work, behaviour, social norms). The role of the master is to maintain their role as subject, and the role of the slave is to be the object and to act in a way that maintains the role of the master. They are dialectically opposed; the master is defined by what they are not, and this makes the slave ‘the other.’

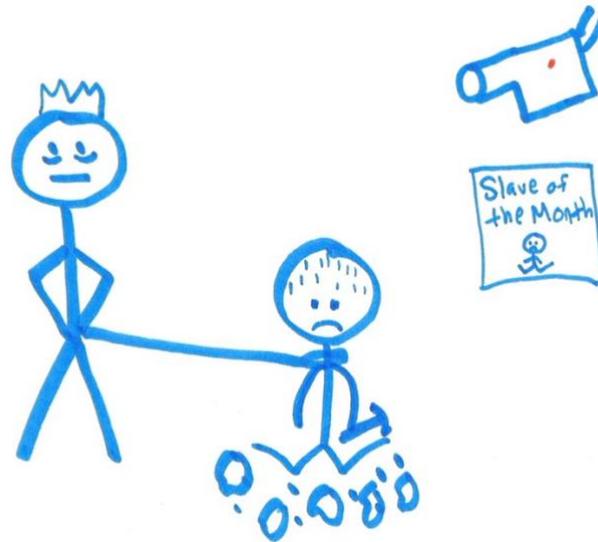


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Figure 2.4

The slave, as the object in the object-subject relationship, is “forced to give recognition to the subject... [and] comes gradually to recognize his [sic] own subjectivity” (Kainz, 1979, p.147). This self-

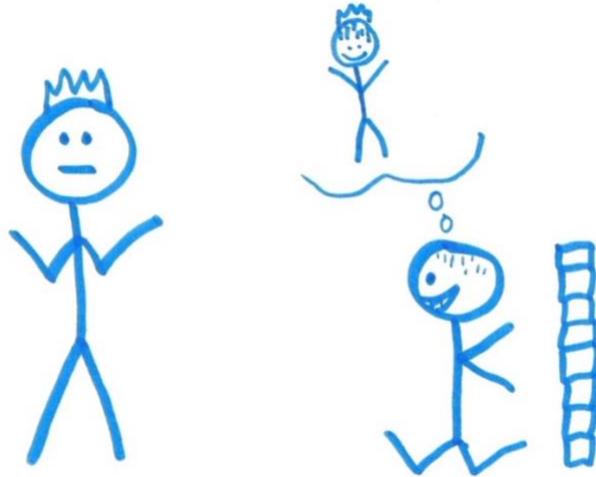
recognition could lead to reconciliation of the dialectic and to each role coming to an end. But it is difficult to see one's subjectivity when the dominant narrative requires an object. The slave or master would have to let go of The Story, move out of this paradigm, and accept another possibility. Also, there are other factors at work.



*Lyndze Harvey © 2020*

Figure 2.5

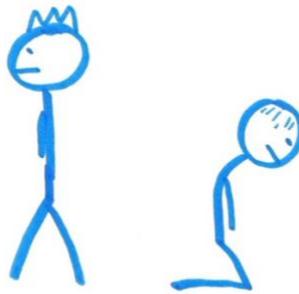
The slave's effort to rise or resist is thwarted. The slave fears for their life. The master fears the loss of their role. But control begets the need for more control. The master must use more elaborate efforts to maintain their position; positive reinforcement (slave of the month poster), surveillance methods (the camera), and more time directed to work (less time for thinking or reflection). Retaining one's role can be exhausting (hence the bags under the master's eyes).



*Lyndze Harvey © 2020*

Figure 2.6

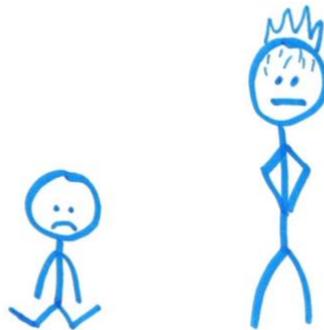
The master and slave each have beliefs to justify their roles. The master believes that the slave must be controlled because they are not capable of controlling themselves; they think, “the slave needs me because without control, there would be chaos.” The slave believes that, if they work hard enough/are obedient enough, they will show how needed they are by the master, and they will rise to the level of the master. Although it is possible that the slave can become free through their work (because they are self-sufficient and may self-reflect on their own subjectivity through this empowerment), they are distracted by the dichotomous thinking that upholds that there are only two options: master or slave.



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Figure 2.7

Neither being is recognised as free and equal, and neither can become fully human. Freedom and equality are separated; there is an attempt to have freedom without equality, but the result is to live in fear of losing one's role and in the belief that there is a scarcity of freedom (hence no equality). The master cannot recognise the slave as fully human because they cannot see the other, whom they dehumanize, as free and equal. The master also cannot be recognised by the slave for the same reason; if the slave is an object, they cannot reflect the master's freedom and equality back to them.



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Figure 2.8

Within the MSD, there are only the roles of master and slave; there are no other possibilities. The slave could rise up, there could be another fight to the death (Figure 2.2), and the master could

become the slave and the slave the master (Figure 2.8). The Story repeats itself and no one is free to be fully human.



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Figure 2.9

Hegel proposes that the cycle is broken by means of slavery<sup>36</sup> (1837/2001). In the dialectic, master and slave cannot achieve full self-consciousness; they are held back by the roles of dominated and dominator, and neither are free. Hegel (1807/1977) argues that the slave who creates products for the master becomes more self-reliant and eventually sees reflected in their work their own self-consciousness; they are liberated by their connection to their own labour and can exist *without* the master. However, the master is completely dependent on the slave and disconnected from labour—they cannot produce what they need for themselves *without* the slave—and this reliance on the slave and the necessity of controlling the other is their downfall. They cannot be free or fully self-conscious.

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<sup>36</sup> In *The Philosophy of History*, Hegel (1837/2001) writes “It was not so much from slavery as through slavery that humanity was emancipated” (p.426).

Everyone is a Philosopher

*“We come to share, not to learn.”*

– ‘Laura’ in Hurtig, 2016, p.35<sup>37</sup>

I have the fascinating job of teaching teachers-to-be the compulsory subject of philosophy of education, toward which they more often than not express an initial disinterest and some apprehension. One of the courses I have instructed is entitled *Historical and Philosophical Foundations of Canadian Education*. I sometimes think that if it were up to me, I would like to re-name this course so that it seems more approachable and less pretentious. But after some thought, perhaps it is better to keep such a long-winded title with seemingly ornate language because, as those in the course quickly come to know, philosophy does not have to be overblown or grandiose, a field reserved for the privileged elite or exceptionally well-read, but rather everyone is a philosopher.<sup>38</sup> Certainly, there are those who are more practiced in philosophy; including those who have more time and energy to direct toward thinking about thinking<sup>39</sup> as well as others who live with a commitment to reflection either consciously or

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<sup>37</sup> ‘Laura’ is a member of a writing group run by a renowned adult educator, Hal Adams. This quotation is from an essay on the work of Adams by Janise Hurtig, entitled “The Praxis of Sharing and the Dialectics of Small Group Writing” from *Every Person is a Philosopher* (Ayers et al., 2016).

<sup>38</sup> The educator and theorist Hal Adams remarks that every person is a philosopher and relates this idea back to the work of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci who writes, “Everyone is a philosopher, though in his [sic] own way and unconsciously, since even in the slightest manifestation of any intellectual activity whatever, in ‘language,’ there is contained a specific conception of the world, one then moves on to the second level, which is that of awareness and criticism” (Gramsci, 1971, p.626).

<sup>39</sup> In the book entitled *The Philosopher and His Poor* (1983), Rancière makes the argument that philosophy has traditionally been reserved for the upper classes as the working classes and the poor would have no time for it; they were/are too busy working. He also contends that much of philosophy depicts the poor as those “who can only do one thing,” such as being an artisan or shoemaker (Rancière, 1983, p.xiv). For a person who is not considered a philosopher to write or think is subversive and stepping outside of one’s “respected function” and this would not be true philosophy but rather only an imitation of it (Rancière, 1983, p.11). Rancière speaks sharply in presenting The Stories that keep the poor in their place and the philosopher in *his* (because the philosopher is a

unknowingly. There are also those who understand themselves to have had more ‘training’ in certain approaches to philosophy deemed most legitimate, tenable, and recognized. But then there are the rest of us, most likely in the same boat as the students of acclaimed educator Hal Adams, who through listening and responding to The Stories being told all around us, as well as telling some of our own and sharing in the practice of life-writing,<sup>40</sup> can come to know ourselves as philosophers. As a dedicated and somewhat radical teacher, Adams offered these students (mostly women, poor and racialized, considered ‘uneducated’ by many standards) no guidance whatsoever but only his unwavering belief that each of them had something to offer, something to say, a unique take on the world, and the very human inclination to sort through all of that. Adams and his students demonstrate that leaving philosophy to the elites is dangerous precisely because doing so suggests that there are superior and inferior intelligences and only some can ‘do’ philosophy. Also, so many stories and challenges to the *stories-that-we-all-know* go untold and unstated when philosophy remains unapproachable and misperceived as the domain of a select group.

By keeping the somewhat imposing label of a ‘philosophy’ course, and the involved course name, I hope that we redeem the term. While students and I tell stories, explore the narratives that make up our foundations and inform our positions, and invite reflection and

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man and occupies a privileged space). He argues that the “function is an illusion” and one that reinforces inequality (Rancière, 1983, p.29).

<sup>40</sup> Life-writing is a “new kind of scholarly text” and approach to writing that is explored in the book *A Heart of Wisdom: Life Writing as Empathetic Inquiry* (Chambers et al., 2012, p. xxv). Life-writing is described as using writing for the purpose of “coming to understand what matters to [us] most, and what sustains [us], others, and the places [we] inhabit” as well as “what [we] have given [our] hearts to” (Chambers et al., 2012, p. xx). Hal Adams (2016) employed life-writing with his students, facilitating writing workshops that encouraged people to write about their own lives and experience, and through the workshop discussion it would become apparent that every person had insights to offer.

engagement in a critical interrogation of our thoughts and actions, we reclaim philosophy. It is not the realm of the capable few, consisting of theorists or those considered highly educated, but rather it is part of our shared human experience. One of the participants in a writing group that Adams initiated announced that she and her cohorts “come to share, not to learn” (Hurtig, 2016, p.35). As an educator and committed *lifelong-learner*, an identity with which most if not all teachers in Canadian education would align, I initially found this statement off-putting. Shouldn’t we always be open to learning? But upon further contemplation, I think of this statement as emancipatory; rather than entering into an educational space or relationship in a reduced capacity, one comes to share and does so by approaching their role and the roles of others (including the teacher or instructor) as an equal. Regardless of one’s *role* in the classroom, all can enter as participants and capable critical co-inquirers in dialogic<sup>41</sup> relation with one another. When authentically enacted, a lifelong-learner would relinquish the enticing status of authority<sup>42</sup> located within the role of teacher and instead acknowledge the mutual capacity of each person’s potential for knowledge generation and contribution through sharing.

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<sup>41</sup> I would like to make a distinction between what I understand to be ‘dialectic’ and the way in which I am using ‘dialogic.’ Under the opinion of inequality, our roles are hierarchical and our thinking is dichotomous; our only options are master or slave, truth or untruth. This is ‘dialectical’ in the sense that there are opposing forces and, in an effort to find a ‘truth’ together, rational argument or reasoning is performed for a resolution. A dialectic carries with it a power differential. When I say ‘dialogic’ I am referring to engaging in dialogue but in a way that embraces an effort to reconcile inequalities. I think about *being* dialogic rather than *doing* dialogue. Freire (2005) speaks of entering into solidarity with the oppressed or a relationship that is approached with humanization and equality in mind. Being dialogic, for me, must involve authenticity and must be committed to reconciling the inequality that exists in relationships such as parent and child, teacher and student, researcher and interpreter. While a dialectic is oppressive, being dialogic is liberatory.

<sup>42</sup> Within the role of the teacher, there is a Story that one must be an authority on content (curricular subject matter) and knowledge (and how to transmit the sum of what is known). There is also The Story that the teacher’s role (when effective) is authoritative, which is to say that the teacher should be the person who keeps others (students) in order. The authoritative role is one that is seen as necessary, and The Story of its necessity will be discussed at length over the next few chapters. The resistance to the role is when one conflates an ‘authoritative’ role with ‘the authoritarian,’ or one who enforces strict obedience at the expense of personal freedom and shows a lack of concern for others. This distinction is often made for the purpose of propping up The Story that an authoritative role (as a parent or teacher, for example) is required or else there will be chaos. The narrative that

Philosophy is a part of who we are as human beings and we are essential to its action; we are its shift, its utterance, and its re-visioning. And yet historically most of us have been pushed away, shut out, left out, or dehumanized by it. Philosophy is not immune to power and hierarchy, it has been affected by the many lines drawn to separate us; class distinctions, the attributes assigned to some interpretations of gender, and the invention of race<sup>43</sup> all have the habit of separating the ‘philosophers’ from the rest of us. The reliance on the scaffolded explanation and the degradation of storytelling is used to divide intelligence in two; the superior intelligence is needed to break down the reasonings into smaller, more understandable parts for the inferior intelligence (Ranci re, 1991). The telling of a story undermines this partitioning. In storytelling, meaning is not *given* but *found* by the interlocutor because the performance “implicates the ‘listener’ [interlocutor] into becoming an active participant in the experience of the story” (Archibald, 2008, p.3). The storyteller and the interlocutor are connected and on equal ground: and the old guard exclaims, ‘But this is not

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one can be a kind, benevolent, heart-in-the-right-place authority still says something about one’s image of children and humans more generally. Full disclosure: I do see authoritative and authoritarian roles as undesirable as I associate them with a dialectic that is based on inequality. These roles and images will be taken up further in the next chapters. One last point I would like to make surrounding the idea of authoritative roles is this: leadership *can* be possible without being authoritative or being the authoritarian. I would like to make a distinction between leadership and authority, and I will explore that distinction later in this text.

<sup>43</sup> Humans did not always have race as a category with which to separate others. Racial classification was popularized in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Howard Winant argues that race “was invented along with the modern era; this was a historic swing that itself took several centuries to accomplish. It involved the lift-off of capitalism, a big bang of sorts: primitive accumulation, worldwide European seaborne empire, the Westphalian state system, conquest and settlement, the African slave trade, and the advent of enlightenment culture” (2014, p.313). Race is a story that we continue to tell and believe and live by, but “When the colonial encounter happened and the African slave trade began, the race concept didn’t yet exist. Some precursors can be identified. These are chiefly the distinctions between ‘civilized’ and ‘barbarous’ peoples, which go back at least to the Greeks (Hannaford, 1996), and the quasi-biological stigmatization of Jews and Muslims by the Inquisition under the doctrine of *limpieza de sangre*: possession or lack of pure – that is, Christian – blood. In a more general way, however, categorization of peoples was not primarily corporeally-based, not attached to the body, not ‘biopolitical’ (Foucault via Stoler, 1995), in the premodern world. It was more like what we would today call cultural or ethnic: religious, linguistic, territorial” (Winant, 2014, p.313).

philosophy!’ The dominant narrative tells us that the most acceptable approach in doing philosophy is a reason-based one, a scaffolded argument, and add to that a demonstrated understanding of well-quoted dead white men<sup>44</sup> on whose shoulders we stand (or whose thumbs we remain under) *or* whose questions and proposals through which we sift. This perception of philosophy leaves out a lot of philosophers, which is to philosophy’s detriment. In addition, there is the problem of placing reason above emotion; “[r]ational argument has operated in ways that set up as its opposite an irrational Other, which has been understood historically as the province of women and other exotic Others” (Ellsworth, 1992, p.94). Emotion is touted as a distraction from the *real* work of thinking. For example, women and other systemically oppressed groups are often identified as ‘angry’ when they speak about injustice.<sup>45</sup> Perhaps some of us have rejected philosophy rather than the other way around; after all, if philosophy has been reserved for an elite, then who does philosophy serve?

In reclaiming philosophy, we need to make sure it serves our aims, and this may mean deconstructing and rethinking its methods. In order to hold up the old guard, philosophy is presented as a special kind of reason and out of a belief in necessity and a fear of losing our power (when we are in the position of the superior intelligence) we cling to this message.

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<sup>44</sup> This is a joke that may or may not be funny; what it is meant to do is acknowledge the fact that the majority of theorists and philosophers that influence Western and progressivist education in Canada today were men, considered to be from a more privileged class, white, and at this point have long since died and cannot defend their written work and are open to various interpretations.

<sup>45</sup> Author of *Rage Becomes Her*, Soraya Chemaly (2018), tells The Story behind women (and by women, Chemaly addresses an intersection of race, class, ability, health, sexuality and more) and their anger. In her book, she catalogues through a well-evidenced study the experience of women with injustice and the cultural reactions to their anger about their systemic oppression. Chemaly contends that anger continues to be the least acceptable emotion for girls and women because it is the primary reaction made to counter injustice (2018). The relationship between the anger of oppressed groups and the belittling or demonizing of their emotion has also been discussed by bell hooks in her trailblazing book, *Black Looks: race and representation* (1996) and Judith Butler’s ground-breaking work, *Gender Trouble* (1990).

Rather than proving, right now, that explanation is unnecessary or that reason should not trump other ways of knowing and showing understanding, I want to propose that *letting go* of the opinion of a necessary primacy of reason and explanation is likely to accomplish a *letting in* of the opinion of equality. I want to advocate replacing our *fear* of our loss of position with a *faith* in the interlocutor (and ourselves). The relinquishing of this ascendancy may help us in our endeavour to engage in philosophy without all of the baggage that tells us that we aren't capable or worthy. Because philosophy *is* something that we *do*. It is in that effort of *praxis* that was previously mentioned; we philosophize when we reflect on the connections and disconnections between theory and practice. Philosophy is an action; it is located in movement rather than in stillness, voice over silence, transformation instead of preservation. When we question the status quo, when we critically assess the stories-that-we-all-know, when we ask questions (and not necessarily 'deep' questions such as troubling the meaning of life, or justice, or Truth but rather questions about our Stories and the connections/disconnections between them and our actions), and when we open ourselves up to a shift in our own ways of being and thinking in the world we are *doing* philosophy. Indeed, children philosophize;<sup>46</sup> and through storytelling and working through problems with children (the questions they ask about the world, our efforts to help them through their big feelings, their attempts to understand the way other people feel or what they believe) we examine thinking about thinking and the

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<sup>46</sup> Children think about their thinking in a way that is unprovoked; they ask, "why?" One study suggests that from a very young age, three months old, children are concerned with what is fair or unfair and this is known to inform social decision making (Lucca et al., 2018). Another study points out that children have been shown to be "not only curious but also capable of asking profound philosophical questions. Numerous studies conducted in recent years across the globe have confirmed and proven time and again that children possess the ability to engage in inventive thinking, their questions and work in philosophic communities of inquiry developing their creative and caring thinking skills" (Kizel, 2016, p.4).

connections between our thinking and doing with them. Are children as experienced as adults in these matters? Do they understand the nuances embedded in these discussions or have they the same grasp of language as most adults when it comes to philosophical engagement? It is most likely that they do not. And yet, is it possible that anyone can know the extent and depth of another person's life experiences? When we engage in storytelling or philosophical dialogue with another, are we seeking agreement, connection, or something else?

The reciprocal and interrelated relationship between storyteller and interlocutor can be applied to other relationships; in particular, I am interested in bringing this sort of equality into the associations of researcher/interpreter (or one-who-'finds'-meaning), teacher/student, and parent/child. Reconciling the divisions between us and engaging with equality in mind<sup>47</sup> is essential to moving beyond traditional approaches to doing philosophy and to bringing a consciousness to our philosophical efforts in educational research and teaching praxis. I believe that the perspective that the text is supposedly complete can be upset by storytelling; ultimately that this "thing to dissect" (educational research and theory) can be something with which we connect our practice, our own stories, and our lives (Archibald, 2008, p.33). *We cannot control the lesson*. The meaning we take away from a story, the message we recover from a lesson, may just be the one we needed, and we may be learning what we were ready to

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<sup>47</sup> When Rancière speaks of equality, he remarks that it is an opinion. Often in education, we are theoretically attempting to reduce inequality and avoid reproducing inequality. Essentially, we believe that there is already inequality and we can do things to lessen, change, or maintain it. Rancière argues that this is based on an opinion of inequality and he proposes that our thinking must shift to equality as a point of departure so that our actions are informed by this revised position. This is not to say that systems of oppression go unacknowledged; clearly systems that maintain oppression need to be addressed. Modifying our opinion to one that begins with equality is something that could have a cascading effect on many relationships and interactions; Rancière writes, "But we can never say: all intelligence is equal. It's true. But our problem isn't proving that all intelligence is equal. It's seeing what can be done under that supposition. And for this, it's enough for us that the opinion be possible— that is, that no opposing truth be proved" (1991, p.46).

learn and not necessarily what our teacher (or the writer or researcher) intended. As interlocutors, we may be constructing meaning through our own reflections. But philosophy is not often treated as an action and rather it is more commonly approached as a resource on which to pull or a collection of carefully crafted *answers* or refined arguments to be employed skillfully when the moment arises (Bakker et al., 2019). Philosophy is not a thing done for us; Socrates remarked that philosophy is the examination of life (Plato's *Apology*, 38a5-6), of our habits and conventions, and the pursuit of truth and even the questioning of ruling opinion rather than thoughtless conformity. Philosophy is a practice of thinking in which the philosopher is both "an element and an actor" in the process of questioning what constitutes the present (Foucault, 2008, p.12). Others have contemplated the role of the philosopher and their process in relation to their product; 19<sup>th</sup> century German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, writes, "I have gradually come to realize what every great philosophy so far has been: a confession of faith on the part of its author, and a type of involuntary and unself-conscious memoir" (1886/2002, p.8). Perhaps philosophy is a way of *being*. It is my hope that over the following chapter, the recounting of philosophy, and the stories being told, provide nothing other than an opportunity to reflect and to engage in praxis. Whether you are an educational researcher, teacher, parent, or just another interested human, let this be an invitation to find meaning, to weave in your own life experiences, and to come to an understanding for which you are ready. And while you do so, please be prepared to upend well-rooted concepts of what is true or necessary, what accounts for our own realities, and pay attention to the journeys, including the detours, that you take while you ponder, reconsider, recount, and re-emerge from your philosophical acts. To recap, I am suggesting philosophy be approached with the following

in mind: Everyone is a philosopher and philosophy is for everyone; philosophy is something we do (not a label or a resource to be tapped); philosophy is political (certain people have been excluded from philosophy and philosophical thinking often approaches issues that are political in nature); philosophy is for transformation and movement (not for preservation or remaining static). And, there is a mutual and dialogic dependence between philosophy and its actors; we need philosophy and philosophy needs us.

### A Self-Governing *Man*

Jean-Jacques Rousseau had a plan; after peeling back the metaphorical political carpet to see “how the philosophical floorboards align beneath it” (Bakker et al., 2019, p.16), he announced that he wished to burn down the house. There was no saving a society so far gone. He looked around at his compatriots in his adopted country of mid-18<sup>th</sup> century France, pre-revolution, under the rule of the House of Bourbon, and found that most people were unaware of their servitude. That, or they believed that their very existence required a sovereign, one who would protect and direct them from cradle to grave and even into the afterlife. Rousseau was born during a time when a shift in seeing the world and the people in it was palpable; the French called it *Le Siècle des Lumières* (The Century of Lights) but it was also known by the English as the *Age of Enlightenment* or the *Age of Reason*. At the time, Rousseau and others were aware of the gripping new worldview that positioned those living in the Enlightenment as preferably more advanced than their forerunners. This story is familiar as we still often think of our 21<sup>st</sup> century Western existence, such as our standards of living, communication technology, and education, as superior to what was around when our grandparents were coming of age. We like to think of our single-family-home neighbourhoods, our smart phones and virtual

assistants like Alexa,<sup>48</sup> and our new local schools with fashionable cedar beams and glass walls, classroom stationary bikes and yoga balls, as state-of-the-art and far more developed than living communally, letter-writing, and the old rows of desks and cinder-block construction in classrooms of yore. Strangely, as this concept of *modernity*<sup>49</sup> was being invented, there wasn't an awareness of the ways in which it modified our relationship with the past and created a revised notion of 'progress.' The Story that tells us 'what is modern is better' implies that the methods and beliefs of the past are deficient and need to be improved through innovation, development, growth – essentially the definition of *progress* – but the narrative does *not* suggest that we question the superior status of the contemporary. Progress is accepted as (inevitable) progress. Thinking in terms of the single story does not encourage us to use the past to help us to understand how we landed on these shores of modernity, nor whether we are stepping out of our boats onto white sand or mud or a heaping pile of plastic waste.

Much like today, at the dawn of the Enlightenment era there were many conflicting ideas of what would best continue human advancement and put more distance between our modern existence and what the narrative differentiates as the strange and backward past.

During this point in history, Rousseau was one of many Western thinkers discussing a 'freer' existence, a mark of a progressivist, while making a rare critique of 'progress.'<sup>50</sup> He also

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<sup>48</sup> Amazon Alexa, known broadly as Alexa, is a device one can keep in their home that has software that allows it to perform services or tasks (such as turning off lights in a room or ordering toilet paper or playing a specific song) for a person by voice command.

<sup>49</sup> Foucault (2008) considers this era to be the one that invented *modernity*. I will explore the myth of modernity in Chapter Three. The converse of the myth of modernity, 'good old days,' is also stuck in dichotomous thinking (either/or); it is nostalgia and still a Story. Although, within progressivism, it is a less common Story.

<sup>50</sup> Some may argue that Rousseau (1750/1923) was skeptical or even critical of *progress*; in his first major work, *First Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*, he argues in the negative to the question "Has the restoration of the arts and sciences had a purifying effect upon morals?" (p.129). Rousseau contends that the progress of civilization, which produces what are perceived as advances in the arts and sciences, had a troubling effect (1750/1923). He writes, "In our day, now that more subtle study and a more refined taste have reduced the art of pleasing to a

endeavored to articulate a profoundly progressivist ideation that still resonates today. But in order to convince us that there needs to be change, an improvement on the present, we must be satisfied that the current way of doing things is not the ideal. When Rousseau picked up a pen to write, the Western world was engulfed in the Enlightenment phenomena of shifting questions about human existence from a focus on salvation to the revised concern of liberty. Although there were certainly many conflicting voices and various approaches to the movement and how to maintain its trajectory toward however each thinker thought the end goal should look, all were aiming to upset the traditional collective servitude to church and sovereign and address the ‘new’<sup>51</sup> concept of an individual’s freedom. In the quest to figure out what it is that constitutes the ‘self,’ or an answer to the question “What is it, then, that I am?” (Porter, 2004, p.23), thinkers such as Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Kant, Voltaire<sup>52</sup> and other men of the period wrote of an individual with *his*<sup>53</sup> own thoughts and mind. From

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system, there prevails in modern manners a servile and deceptive conformity; so that one would think every mind had been cast in the same mould. Politeness requires this thing; decorum that; ceremony has its forms, and fashion its laws, and these we must always follow, never the promptings of our own nature” (1750/1923, p.132). He is critiquing advances in the arts and sciences as a distraction from true ‘progress;’ for Rousseau, being prepared for one’s duty as a citizen under a social contract is ‘progress’ and our preoccupation with arts and sciences is “artificial simplicity” (1750/1923, p.133). Although according to Rousseau “natural man [sic]” is better off, he is not arguing that we return to what he views as a ‘primitive’ society, but rather that we progress to be conscious of the trappings of the magnetism of something new, such as an innovation in the arts or sciences, and remember to think for ourselves when it comes to our morals. He writes, “So long as government and law provide for the security and well-being of men [sic] in their common life, the arts, literature and the sciences, less despotic though perhaps more powerful, fling garlands of flowers over the chains which weigh them down. They stifle in men’s breasts that sense of original liberty, for which they seem to have been born; cause them to love their own slavery, and so make of them what is called a civilised people” (1750/1923, pp.130-131). Perhaps Rousseau was less concerned with *progress* and more concerned with what was being confused for progress: thoughtless conformity and concern for the opinions of others, both of which he raises as problems in his later work, *On the Social Contract* (1762/1987), which will be discussed.

<sup>51</sup> ‘New’ to the West. Because of colonialism, Western philosophy has been privileged and informs the dominant narrative.

<sup>52</sup> Who were Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Kant, Voltaire? A collection of dead, white men who still inform Western understandings of the world. They all had a lot of enlightening (pun intended) things to say and my poking fun at them is meant as no disrespect but rather an acknowledgement of the social locations of those who are telling these stories.

<sup>53</sup> They mostly wrote of male bodies, minds, and spirits.

Descartes' first principle<sup>54</sup> that *man's* existence is proven by *his* ability to form thoughts, to Locke's discussion on one's ability to be self-reflective in a way that gives an individual a concept of self, considerations of independent and distinct human minds and wills was subversive to the traditional understanding that sovereignty was external; the question of whether we are ruled by the monarchy/other political rulers/God or ourselves occupied the world of ideas.

Rousseau's liberated society was based on the belief that if man<sup>55</sup> had his own mind then he should be *self-governing*.<sup>56</sup> Through the eyes of Rousseau, the problem of man's subjugation is not man himself but the social conditions that are imposed and that rob him of his freedom; he writes, "Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains" (Rousseau, 1762/1987, p.17). Rousseau argues that natural man is born a self-governing being only to be enslaved by a society that teaches him to be governable by others and/or to govern others. He contends that the problem with people (of Rousseau's) today is that they are raised to be vain and concerned with what other people think of them;<sup>57</sup> this was the critique Rousseau expounded in the mid-1700's and yet it rings of familiarity. It is this comparison to others or living in a way that conforms to arbitrary ideals of a society that makes one's governability less about one's self and more about other people. When one is concerned with the opinions of

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<sup>54</sup> Descartes is famous for saying 'I think, therefore I am' and he declared new principles of philosophy based on this thought experiment. The opinion that one's ability to think is proof of existence is known as Descartes' first principle.

<sup>55</sup> Just like the other major Western philosophers of the Enlightenment period, Rousseau wrote about a liberated 'man'—as in man and *not* woman—and here, and in the subtitle of this section, I am following his language.

<sup>56</sup> The term 'self-governing' will be discussed at length in this chapter.

<sup>57</sup> In Rousseau's (1755/1992) *Discourses on the Origins of Inequality* (also known as the *Second Discourse*), he writes that social man lives "always outside himself and only knows how to live only in the opinion of others. And it is, as it were, from their judgment alone that he draws the sentiment of his own existence" (1762/1987, p.70).

others one can be easily manipulated. Rousseau called this trait *amour-propre*,<sup>58</sup> which roughly translates to a sense of one's own worth or self-love, but this sort of personal value is one that is dependent on the approval of others. One's esteem or worth is based on the value that others attribute to one's traits with the aim of maintaining superiority or a position of control or dominance. For example, a man who is known as wealthy and powerful, and benefits from that persona and from the judgement that others may make about him because of his position in society, may engage in an action or behaviour that is unethical in order to maintain his image. Any person in a position that manipulates others is at risk of being manipulated because of a fear of losing one's status.

*Amour-propre* is a self-absorbed type of self-love and not preferable in a progressivist society with its sights set on liberty. After all, who could be free while preoccupied with maintaining power over others at the same time as preserving one's image of control? Those who embody a negative *amour-propre* are not self-governing but are governing and governable. They are not concerned with their freedom *and* the freedom of others as both an individual *and* social being, but rather they are concerned with their power and influence over the freedom of others and act as individuals using society and others so that they may make personal gains or avoid personal losses. Hence, the one who bows to the negative affect of

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<sup>58</sup> The term *amour-propre* does not have a perfect translation. Christopher Bertram (2004) notes that the term is "often somewhat misleadingly translated as pride or vanity" (p.22). Xinghua Wang (2018) argues that *amour-propre* is often presented in contrast to *amour-de-soi*, but "it is a matter of controversy what *amour-propre* refers to" (p.428). Allan Bloom (1979) juxtaposed the two terms with the former being "a self-love relative to other men's [sic] opinion of him [sic]" while the latter is defined as a "natural and healthy self-love and self-esteem" (p.11). Wang (2011) contends that *amour-propre* can have "a positive aspect" (p.428), such as "desire for public esteem" (p.429), with the difference being that a negative *amour-propre* is based a "desire for superiority in the sense that the [positive aspect] can be satisfied by one's having or being evaluated as having equal status with others" (p.429). Wang (2018) argues that a positive form of *amour-propre* seeks recognition by others as "having equal status" (p.429). The negative form of *amour propre* is to desire superiority through the opinions of others (Wang, 2018).

amour-propre is a slave to this desire for recognition. The governing and governable are stuck within a system of limited possibilities and fear; they don't have freedom and they live under the assumption of inequality. The self-governed are governable only by their understanding and commitment to their own freedoms *and* the freedoms of others. For Rousseau, self-governance is the progressivist aim and the only real freedom.

The state of our condition is being illustrated to us; a *traditional* framing of man is one who either governs others or is governable. Within such a structure we would either be aiming to have children become preoccupied with the compliance and dutifulness of others to their own objectives or moments of caprice<sup>59</sup> or teaching them to be obedient and unquestioning.

But who would want to promote one of those outcomes? When traditionalist theory and practice are presented as such, it is clear that there is a connection between the two.

Traditionalism is often purported to be based on the governing/governable binary and the practices are understood to align with this thinking. Rousseau made the case that we are educated to be either governing or governable from the earliest days of life; the new-born baby's cries are met either with soothing<sup>60</sup> or threats and it seems that, within the problematic paradigm Rousseau is attempting to address, "we submit to his whims or subject him to our own. There is no middle course; he must rule or obey" (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.15). The

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<sup>59</sup> In *Émile*, Rousseau warns of becoming a "slave of human caprice and liable to every kind of abuse" (1762/1974, p.117). He argues that one should be led by what is natural, by "a natural appetite directly dependent on the senses," rather than "convention" or the excessive control that circumvents our needs with rules and arbitrary expectations (1762/1974, p.117). Indeed, Rousseau's conception of a self-governing person would not have sudden and unaccountable changes of mood or behaviour; for him, this is an indication that one is influenced by outside forces and not one's own reflections.

<sup>60</sup> In *The Story*, soothing a child is seen as giving in and the child 'ruling' over the adult. In a SR framework, this is not the way soothing is viewed (this will be discussed in depth in Chapter Four). But when we operate with dichotomous thinking, we are left with only being authoritative or permissive and the former is preferred.

earliest interactions are to teach the child to govern others or to be governable and this is continued from the family home and into formal education.<sup>61</sup> Rousseau argues that one does not want to be permissive with children, allowing them to do whatever they want, but he also recommends that one avoid being authoritative or an authoritarian<sup>62</sup> with children; no child should be issued demands because this teaches them to be governable but we should also not give the child whatever they ask because to do so gives them lessons in how to govern others. Rousseau suggests that parents, other caregivers, and teachers or tutors tend to play the tyrant or the slave and that neither role serves the purpose of raising a person to be self-governing. It is this traditional approach to childrearing and education, an ideology that promotes the aim of yielding more governing or governable people, to which Rousseau is radically responding. He is calling for us to *progress*, to move beyond these conventions, because of the impacts on the development of a self-governing individual and in turn its effect on a liberated society. Rousseau understands 'nature' as the authority, and he contends that self-governance is the natural state of man,<sup>63</sup> and it takes a self-governing man who is true to himself, his nature, to

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<sup>61</sup> In *Émile*, Rousseau writes, "Thus early are the seeds of evil passions sown in his young heart. At a later day these are attributed to nature, and when we have taken pains to make him bad we lament his badness... ..The tutor completes the development of the germs of artificiality which he finds already well grown, he teaches him everything except self-knowledge and self-control, the arts of life and happiness. When at length this infant slave and tyrant, crammed with knowledge but empty of sense, feeble alike in mind and body, is flung upon the world, and his helplessness, his pride, and his other vices are displayed, we begin to lament the wretchedness and perversity of mankind. We are wrong; this is the creature of our fantasy; the natural man is cast in another mould" (Rousseau, 1762/1974, pp.15-16).

<sup>62</sup> The terms *authoritative* and *authoritarian* are discussed early, in footnote 42.

<sup>63</sup> Rousseau juxtaposes civilization and nature; a civilized man is in chains because of his traditional education that prepares him to be governing or governable, while a natural man is one who is in touch with his innate goodness: "[h]e who does as he likes is happy provided he is self-sufficing; it is so with the man who is living in a state of nature" (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.49). Rousseau seeks to raise a (boy) child into a man who is not corruptible by the ills of society; one who maintains his self-governance. When we are "corrupted by social conventions," so is our happiness and our morality (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.141).

adhere to the *general will*.<sup>64</sup> When a practice teaches the young to rule or obey it does not meet the needs of the progressivist philosophy that Rousseau inspired but rather it contradicts its goals and damages any effort to turn out people who can be free and self-determined individuals by teaching them, from their earliest moments, to depend on others as those who govern them or those who are governable to them, which separates freedom and equality<sup>65</sup> and provides freedom only to some.

Rousseau and others looked at the world around them with progressivist-tinted glasses. He believed that he knew the way to move past the age-old problem of being preoccupied with control. What needs to be addressed is our fixation on whose control we are under and who we control, how we maintain our dominance over others and the dualistic belief that our only options are dominance or submission, because it undermines the contention that a person (whether in power or without) is capable of self-governance. Rousseau sought to reconceptualize and reframe the *subject*, a person aware of their own consciousness, as capable of self-governance but also as entitled to it. In addition, he framed the self-governing

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<sup>64</sup> The *general will* is an essential idea in *On the Social Contract* (Rousseau, 1762/1987). Rousseau (1762/1987) argues that the general will is the only sovereign, meaning that no one is dependent on the will of another but rather when each self-governing individual contributes to the communal order, we do no more than obey ourselves (Smith, 2006, ch.3, para.5, line 4). Rousseau claims that it is through one's civil liberty, "which is limited by the general will," that one gains a state of moral liberty and a sense of freedom, "which alone makes man truly the master of himself" (1762/1987, p.27). In this sense, we are free to the extent that we are participating citizens and we obey the laws that we have had a hand in creating (Rousseau, 1762/1987). Rousseau writes, "Each man in giving himself to everyone gives himself to no-one; and the right over himself that the others get is matched by the right that he gets over each of them. So he gains as much as he loses, and also gains extra force for the preservation of what he has" (1762/2017, p.7).

<sup>65</sup> What is meant by 'freedom and equality?' Freedom and equality cannot be separated; if the focus is on freedom there will be some who are not free (freedom won't be applied equitably) and if the focus is on equality there may be equality at the expense of the freedom of some. When freedom and equality are considered interconnected and interdependent, one cannot be free unless others are also free, and equality does not mean 'sameness'. Equality refers to the opinion that each human is deserving of humanization (or a praxis that supports the freedom to become fully human). Freedom and equality involve reflecting on what we do and say so that we are encouraging our children in becoming fully human and supporting our own humanization through our thoughts and actions.

man as the remedy for the ills of society. For him, we cannot return to our ‘primitive’<sup>66</sup> days before we lived in human society, but a progressivist movement toward a liberated society requires self-governing people. By ‘self-governing,’ I understand Rousseau to mean autonomous people who are self-determining, those who are compelled to seek justice and demonstrate an ability to make impartial and unconstrained judgments: “The motive power of all action is in the will of a free creature; we can go no farther. It is not the word freedom that is meaningless, but the word necessity” (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.243). The need for power must be let go. Rephrased, a self-governing individual is one who thinks for themselves, does not try to control others, and is not beholden to an authority, because “freedom, not power, is the greatest good” (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.48). Rousseau envisions his ‘free’ man to be one who is influenced by himself, thinks for himself, and does not “live in the opinion of others” as this is a negative manifestation of *amour-propre* (Rousseau, 1755/1992, p.70). For a liberated society people need to recognize their own *amour-de-soi*<sup>67</sup> or their natural commitment to their own

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<sup>66</sup> Rousseau writes of Indigenous peoples, or what he knew as those who inhabited the ‘Americas’ before Europeans arrived, as ‘primitive’ and he also commonly used the word ‘savages.’ It is arguable that his influential writings popularized the idea of the ‘noble savage;’ a natural man untainted by social immorality (Wasserman, 1994). This is problematic for many reasons, but primarily because it paints all Indigenous peoples with a single brush and not included in the picture are the complex and diverse societies they developed and continue to maintain (despite the impacts of colonialism). Although exoticism and race were not central to Rousseau’s work—Wasserman argues that he never wrote specifically about the Americas and “he was not interested in the politics or the anthropology of non-European states and peoples”—his writing was so influential that it inevitably had that effect (1994, p.74). Wasserman contends that “it is precisely because his works are not *about* the exotic that they show its acculturation so clearly: they use the exotic as a given” (1994, p.74, *emphasis original*). I point out the problematic and colonialist slant to his writing in the same way that I have drawn attention to his misogynist views and writing; I do not accept either, but I am not taking these issues up directly.

<sup>67</sup> *Amour-de-soi* is in contrast to *amour-propre* in that it is a self-love that is “independent of others and which refers to the desire for self-preservation or for one’s well-being” (Wang, 2018, p.428). Rousseau argues that “original human nature is made of original dispositions and capabilities from nature alone” and that *amour-de-soi* is the earliest form of human nature and pre-social (Wang, 2018, p.430). Immorality and social inequality arose from society and “originates in an artificial passion that seeks social advantages” (Wang, 2018, p.430). This seems counter-productive when *amour-de-soi* is necessary for a society to work for everyone. *Amour-propre* is centred *only* on the self, and with disregard for the needs or freedoms of others, while *amour-de-soi* is what is required for those living as both individual *and* social beings to coexist and thrive. Rousseau writes, “Self-love, which concerns

well-being and pursuit of a self-love that is not at another's expense and not founded on what others think of them. But the ability to self-govern (I consider *my* own freedom as well as *yours*) has been lost in a society that teaches *amour-propre* (I consider only *my* own freedom, sometimes at the expense of yours). Rousseau argues that 'civilized' man and his education "to fulfill what the social requires," which "at once achieves nothing," is trained to be governing/governable and ego-centric rather than free (Rousseau, 1762/1974, pp.9 & 8).

Although he acknowledges that we are far from immersed in *amour-de-soi*, the educational conviction born out of the Enlightenment era asserts that we can raise a child to be self-governing. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century Western world, the progressivist goal of teaching kids to be free and to recognize the freedoms of others (the freedom to be fully human) is strongly upheld by the associated goal of preparing active democratic citizens. One would be hard-pressed to find a parent, teacher, or other caregiver in the mainstream who would hold fast to the traditionalist goal of producing governing/governable people; it would be shocking to find characteristics such as 'subservient,' 'docile,' or 'unquestioningly obedient' inscribed in school mission statements as desirable. And yet, many parents struggle to get their kids to 'just do what you're told.' One evening, after facilitating a workshop with a group of parents, a parent approached me to say that "we seem to spend the first year with our babies coaxing them to walk and talk, but the subsequent 17 years asking them to sit down and shut up." It is true that many

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itself only with ourselves, is content to satisfy our own needs; but selfishness [*amour-propre*], which is always comparing self with others, is never satisfied and never can be; for this feeling, which prefers ourselves to others, requires that they should prefer us to themselves, which is impossible" (1762/1974, p.174). *Amour-de-soi* is spoiled by vanity and comparison to others, and Alan Bloom (1979) argues that *Émile's* education is to demonstrate the problem of *amour-propre* and to nurture the child to be aware of their needs in relation to their strength. Rousseau writes, "What is the cause of man's weakness? It is to be found in the disproportion between his strength and his needs" (1762/1979, p.128). *Amour-de-soi* is to think of one's own needs and freedoms in relation to others, but without the concern of dominance or control of others; it is a social self-love.

businesses and organizations in the adult world function within hierarchies and employ governing/governable tactics, such as using incentives to motivate workers, because The Story goes that “If you don’t offer them [employees] a reward, they won’t do anything” (Kohn, 1993). After nearly 300 years, how much progress has progressivist education made? The aim has remained the same and yet the traditional Story continues to come up. Are we distracted by the opinions of others or is our attention being preoccupied, diverted, by something else? If our theory and practice are disconnected, is it because we keep them separate?

What Progressivist Education is *Not*

I was feeling apprehensive about today’s topic and the reading on the syllabus. I knew nothing about the late 18<sup>th</sup> century Swiss educational reformer, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, or his influences on schooling in Canada today. I didn’t remember learning anything about him prior to finishing my own Bachelor of Education or receiving a certification to teach in Ontario. But, as the instructor in a university course that is a requisite for such a degree, I am supposed to *know*. I had glanced over the assigned readings before class; reading about something, anything, usually has the effect of making me realize how little I really *know*. My apprehension was derived from my difficulty in letting go of this lesson, in not having any control over its outcome, and in having to do the unnatural thing of handing over control and putting my faith in my students. The next eighty minutes were to be taught and organized by thirty-five teachers-to-be and it was up to them what we (including me) would take away from each other and our interpretations of the work and life of the man we soon affectionately referred to as ‘Pesto.’

I took my seat in the second row of desks, two seats in, and waited for the lesson to begin. The first group to take the reins appeared to be absent but soon five students marched into the classroom from the hallway. The remaining thirty students and I were seated in our desks, in rows, facing the front of the room where the five students stood, each in a menacing stance and with dark paper mustaches stuck to their upper lips. The five presenters were the 'teachers' and the rest of us took on the role of the young 'students.' We knew this because one of them said "Good Morning, children!" in a loud and commanding tone. Each of the presenters maintained perfect posture, mimicking something reminiscent of what I picture when I think of the militant teachers that often populate movies for kids. Most of them had a stare that was harsh and made me want to look away. The central figure, wearing a suit jacket in the same dark colour as her paper mustache, demanded our attention and that we straighten up in our seats and prepare to repeat the lesson. Many of us in the audience of this spectacle, the 'students,' shifted in our chairs and did as we were told. As one of the mustached and sharp figures wrote large numbers on the white board, the main 'teacher' straightened her jacket and shouted the numbers for us to recite in unison. Some of us giggled uncomfortably. One of the people at the front of the room was smiling and a little red as she adjusted the paper on her upper lip. "One! Two! Three!" said the 'teacher' at the front in a curt and loud voice as another slapped the board near each number with her hand. We called out the numbers, but we were flustered. The other mustached 'teachers' began to stomp around the room asking curtly that we "sit up straight," "eyes to the front," and "say the numbers!"

After only a few minutes of this charade all fake facial hair and exaggerated pretences were removed, and the presenting students left the room. The remaining students let out a

collective sigh and turned to their closely situated colleagues to talk. I noticed that many of the conversations around me seemed to contain stories of each person's separate experience or interpretations of what had just happened. Within a minute or two, the presenting students returned with colourful sweaters and giant warm smiles. They spoke with calm animation as their eyes shone and they flitted throughout the room with colourful wooden blocks which they distributed to each 'student.' One 'teacher' took centre stage; a bright cardigan had replaced the dark suit jacket. She called our attention with her clear and cheery sing-song voice: "Alright, class. I am so happy to see all of your bright and shining faces this morning! Cara<sup>68</sup> looks ready; she is sitting up tall. Sam is ready; his eyes are up here. Thank you, Cara. Thank you, Sam." The 'students' around me looked entertained and certainly more comfortable than we had been a minute or two ago, and I noticed that some of them rearranged themselves to sit up in their chairs. We were asked if we wanted to "try a fun math activity" to which we all responded with an emphatic "yes!": "Alright, then we must sit on our hands while we receive our instructions." People immediately shifted while shoving hands under their bottoms; then there was a stillness. One of the other 'teachers' wrote a number on the board and we were asked to show what the sign represented with a number of stacked blocks. We were building towers, "...special towers to show what we know. Does everyone understand the game?" We nodded in the affirmative and watched as the first number was drawn in blue marker on the white board. All those around me quickly stacked their blocks three high to reflect what was written. I watched and listened as the remaining 'teachers' wandered around the room, going from 'student' to 'student,' and saying, "Good job" and "I like the way you stacked the same colour"

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<sup>68</sup> Many of the details of this story, including the names of the students in the class, have been changed.

and “Nice stacking.” I carefully stacked four blocks instead of the requested three and waited to see what would happen. When one of the ‘teachers’ got to me, she smiled awkwardly and said “Not quite” as she removed the block from the top of my tower. She told me that I “had four blocks and the number on the board is ‘three’” and walked away. Another number was inscribed on the board and we stacked five blocks to reflect what we *know* and the ‘teachers’ made their rounds and the heads of ‘students’ were literally and figuratively patted. Once again, the act dissolved, and our attention was summoned by a young woman who had removed her fuzzy blue cardigan with bright yellow sequins in the shape of ducks; no longer was she mustached or bedazzled. She announced that the demonstration was over, and it was time for a discussion about the shift from “traditional classrooms to progressive ones.”

My jaw nearly dropped. I may have made an audible gasp. And I looked around for kindred responses and found only the faces of those with placid anticipation and some concurring head-nods. I turned my gaze back to the front and attempted to stifle my reaction. The class was asked to discuss how a ‘traditional’ classroom looks and feels. The room was immediately engaged; they knew this Story.

Rows of desks.

Straight lines.

Teacher-centred.

Students put in the corner.

Rote memorization.

Silent students.

Shouting teachers.

Teacher is knowledge keeper.

Students are ‘empty vessels’ to be filled with knowledge.

Not a lot of play or fun.

This is when they got back to our old friend 'Pesto.' The students considered him one of the fathers of progressivist education. They spoke about his belief that students benefit when a teacher is warm and kind like a mother (Gutek, 2001, p.71). Pestalozzi wrote that students need to spend time outside and that many children benefit from using their hands or being more tactile in their learning (Gutek, 2001, p.71). They told us about Pesto's motto of learning through *head, heart, and hands* and of his progressivist pedagogical approach of breaking down large concepts into small parts that made logical sense (Gutek, 2001). They echoed the textbook when they exclaimed how experiential and forward-thinking this approach was for the late 1700's and early 1800's.

The conversation reflected what we had all just experienced; the mustached teachers who stomped around the room while demanding our recitation were the traditional example of schooling, while the calm and gentle sweater-adorned teachers who sweetly offered us blocks and invited us to use our hands to show our understanding were a display of the progressivist classroom. Not only were these two approaches presented as dualistic, existing exclusive of one another, but there was also the insinuation that one of these strategies was in the past. The message of the lesson was in line with the stories-that-we-all-know; the 'traditional' classroom has been abandoned and the 'progressive' classroom has taken its place. In addition to this, the 'traditional' strategies are outdated, and the 'progressive' ones are innovative and driven by a new understanding of what children need and how learning works. The message was that Pestalozzi was one of the folks who, through his 'experiments' in teaching, figured out the *science* of pedagogy. Progressivist methods were being presented not just as the dawn of a new

era, but as the answer to all of our schooling problems. The Story that we have moved on from the less humane and less effective traditional teaching strategies and adopted *better* and *different* tactics (or at least the ‘good’ teachers have) limits us to only these options – traditional or progressive – and of course any right-minded teacher in a mainstream Canadian school would choose the latter.<sup>69</sup>

So, why did I feel alarmed? Certainly, it was not because I appreciate what the students presented as a ‘traditional’ approach; clearly our Canadian culture, educational research,

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<sup>69</sup> Although this chapter will sort through what is meant by ‘progressive/progressivist education,’ at this time I wanted to note that the ‘right-minded teacher’ would choose this philosophical orientation because it appears to represent Canadian values of democracy, and goals of freedom and equality. In a survey of Canadian pre-service teachers, Thomas G. Ryan found that the “majority (+90%) of pre-service student teachers who completed the survey strongly agreed with the statements underpinning progressivism” (2008, p.247). Ryan defined ‘progressive’ as “involving the whole student, their interests and abilities, and endeavours to produce independent thinkers within a democratic society. Progressivism is activity based [sic] and inclusive as all students are prepared to live and contribute to a democratic society (Dewey, 1916)” (2008, p.251). In an analysis of three Canadian education commissions from the years 1950, 1968, and 1995, Scott Davies (2002) found that the term ‘progressive education’ was widely used, with most teachers identifying as progressive, but the term also “encompassed such a broad range, not just of different, but of contradictory ideas on education as to be meaningless” (p.269). Davies also notes that scholars have expressed concern about how ‘progressive education’ is used to initiate policy reform but often “misapplied and misinterpreted Dewey’s thought” (John Dewey will be discussed in depth in Chapter Three, but for now, he was a main 20<sup>th</sup> century contributor to progressivist theory) (2002, p.270). But he also notes that progressivism endures as “popular language in education” in societies such as Canada because of its “narrative fidelity” with “schools’ organizational realities” (Davies, 2002, p.271). The “narrative fidelity” corresponds to the core beliefs of “individualized, child-centred education” and “holistic curricula” that meets the “social, emotional, psychological, and biological needs” of children (Davies, 2002, p.271). Progressivism also “taps into emotive images of progress,” an education for the future, and offers a “counterframe of dated, inefficient, and inhumane traditional schools has historically offered progressives a common identity” (Davies, 2002, p.272). The confusion around what ‘progressive/progressivist education’ means and juxtaposing it to what is thought of as ‘traditional education’ is supported by a study of Samoan pre-service teachers in an education program through the University of Hawaii (Green et al, 2006). The pre-service teachers discussed their shifts in philosophical orientation away from ‘traditional’ and toward what they called ‘progressive’ (Green et al, 2006). Yet, also notable in this study was the lack of praxis and the disconnection between progressivist ‘belief statements’ and actual purported practice. One pre-service teacher, called Faleula, writes of how her approach managing challenging student behaviour was punitive until she adapted a “new” teaching strategy of employing praise and rewards to garner less misbehaviour (Green et al, 2006). She remarks that it “takes a lot more patience to teach this way, but it works” and yet, further on in her statement she describes the punitive measures the teacher education program’s coordinator took to manage student behaviour (Green et al, 2006, p.32). She reflects on how “it was painful, but we learned the hard way that when the doctor speaks, her words are law in the classroom” (Greene et al, 2006, 32). There is a clear association being made with punitive measures and ‘traditional’ education and in opposition to rewards and praise being used in progressivist approaches; yet the punitive practices are still employed by the faculty. What we mean by these terms and a progressive/progressivist philosophical orientation theoretically, and how these beliefs actually manifest in our practices (how we teach progressively) is a large part of what concerns me.

popular opinion, and provincial curricula are recommending a move away from the top-down, teacher-centred, and tyrannical approach that trains rather than teaches children<sup>70</sup> I was once in the shoes of my students and sitting in a teacher education course and thinking about my own philosophical orientation within my future profession and I clearly remember scoffing at the old guard and coveting the new methods; how lucky I felt to be a teacher in the progressivist era! There is the well-known single story of the trajectory of progress; when we reflect on what our predecessors did (or do) it usually seems strange and superficially outmoded compared to the modern attitudes and strategies. There is this belief that we are always progressing, invariably moving forward, ceaselessly improving and that our new ways are without exception superior to the old. The Story tells us this movement is natural and necessary; we have surpassed the conventional with more advanced thinking and technology. The practices being demonstrated in the presentation were different, that was clear, but whether or not the 'new' methods aligned with progressivist aims was assumed. There wasn't a reflective dialogue, this wasn't up for debate, but rather we were, with a lack of awareness or knowledge, being told a Story. Not only this, but I was concerned because supposedly outdated and unequivocally misguided schooling customs were being juxtaposed to progressivist ideology and its supposed 'practices' in a way that made it seem as though we had arrived. See how far we've come? Progressivist education has reached its destination. Does this 'arrival' mean that we settle in, put up our feet, and enjoy the fruits of the many contributing thinkers' (including Pesto's) labour? Doesn't the definition of 'progress' imply the forward or onward

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<sup>70</sup> The 19<sup>th</sup> century American philosopher of education, John Dewey, made the argument that there is a difference between teaching and training, but that training is more often what occurs in traditional education (1938/1997). Dewey and this distinction will be further discussed in Chapter Three.

movement toward a destination but not the destination itself? Was progressivist education based on separate goals and ideas than traditionist education? Or is it supposed to be the same goal but with softer voices, sweeter tones, more games, and carrots over sticks? I was disturbed by the presentation and what it said as well as what it didn't say *and* the questions it didn't ask. My surprise and even incredulity when the students gestured their endorsement of the dominant narrative that schooling was improved, and progressivist practices were the evidence of this advancement, was because I believed that they must be more aware of the problems in this argument than I had been when I was in their shoes. I had thought that surely this generation was more practiced in critical thinking than mine and would have picked up on the fact that the progressivist education movement has its problems. But this reasoning only revealed to me that I was caught up in my own relationship with the narrative of 'progress.' In my mind, my students had to be more modern and adept in progressivist thinking than teachers of my era; time had passed and therefore we had advanced, right? Letting go and embracing the pedagogical supposition that one cannot control the lesson proved to be fruitful. The students revealed that The Story that we have arrived, and that progressivist education has got us here, is still alive and well. And, we are *all* products of this story and unavoidably immersed in it. My own dependence on this thinking was revealed to me and it was in that moment that I knew my reflection was required. I needed to pull back, look into the dawn of this enlightened way of teaching, to the 'outdated' mindsets to which the thinkers of the time were reacting, and figure out what Story of progressivism was being told *to* me and *through* me.

Hobbes & Rousseau: Enlightenment stories of freedom and equality

While facilitating a parenting and teaching workshop on *Letting Go* and the ways in which re-envisioning parental/teacher authority and the autonomy of children can be empowering for all involved, I discuss how approaching children with a faith in their ability and desire to be self-governing is essential to meeting our own goals. I believe that our roles as parents and teachers keep us in a dance in which the steps are directed toward maintaining our dominance, and that this effort elicits an inevitable resistance from those being controlled *and* is a distraction from our real goals of supporting a personal growth oriented toward the ‘freedom to be fully human.’ I propose that we let go of this common hierarchy of roles and instead enter into a humanizing relationship based on dialogue and the acknowledgement of needs. At this point, it is not my intention to make the argument for a humanizing approach to parenting and teaching – although some of the above will make its way into this text – rather, I would like to address that during this presentation I am typically faced with two recurring concerns. These concerns are a reaction to the suggestion that *The Question of ‘How do we get kids to do what we want them to do?’* might be problematic when it comes to realizing our goals found in *The Answer*.<sup>71</sup> The first concern is brought up in many different ways, but my favourite wording goes something like this: “But if we let go, won’t it be just like *Lord of the Flies*?”

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<sup>71</sup> ‘The Answer’ is a term referenced in the previous chapter. When parents and teachers are asked what their long-term goal for their children/students may be, they often respond with an ‘Answer’ that is remarkably similar: they want their children/students to understand their own freedom and the freedom of others. The Answer also indicates a disconnection between our theory and practice in teaching and parenting when we consider that our Question of “How do I get them to do what I want them to do?” undermines our goals and beliefs with a practice focused on compliance.

In William Golding's 1954 novel, *Lord of the Flies*, a group of British schoolboys are stranded on a deserted island. After their plane crashes and until help arrives the children must try to survive without an adult to direct them. Their attempt to govern themselves is disastrous. The protagonist, Ralph, calls for self-governance and attempts to organize<sup>72</sup> the children with tasks such as collecting water and food, as well as maintaining a large fire for a smoke signal. Initially, the other children support the idea of acting with the needs of others in mind. But as time passes some of the children reject the order that Ralph attempts to bring and slip into a chaotic abandonment of humanization and embrace self-serving violence. At the end of the story, the smoke signal is extinguished and most of the children have joined the antagonist (Jack), a couple of boys have died through negligence and even murder, and an angry mob with spears is chasing down Ralph. Ralph is saved because, miraculously, an adult in the form of a naval officer<sup>73</sup> suddenly appears on the shore and rebukes the children for their behaviour and with his presence a state of order and rule is returned.

In my experience, referencing this novel is a very common reaction to the suggestion that children can self-govern and that our *letting go*, or reconciling the need to be the master in a dialectic, is integral to their abilities to explore their relationships with their own freedoms and the freedoms of others. At no point during my presentation do I suggest that adults allow children to do whatever they want to do. I am also not encouraging anyone to abandon

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<sup>72</sup> Ralph is organizing through leadership, which is group appointed. He is not governing others but leading them in service to a common goal. I would like to discern that it is my opinion that this is the difference between governing others and leadership: governing is in service to the goal of those who govern others, while leadership is in service to the collective goals. Self-governance is a collective governance with leadership that can be relinquished when it is no longer in service to the collective goals. Governance of others is held through dominance over others; leadership is temporary and transferable and not held with dominance but maintained in service to solidarity.

<sup>73</sup> The choice of the naval officer is not only paternal but also alarmingly indicative of the ubiquitous inevitability of control *and* of a 'humane' or civilized violence that is acceptable in the adult world.

children to figure life out on their own. I argue that when adults are focused on the behaviour of children, managing it becomes primary and both parties are dehumanized by this preoccupation with compliance.<sup>74</sup> Letting go of this fixation on how to get kids to do what we want them to do, especially at the expense of their autonomy, is not the same as withdrawing from interactions with them. There is a dominant narrative that the only options are control<sup>75</sup> or chaos and this dichotomous thinking is related to the not-so-distant Story that we either have power or we don't: we are master, or we are slave. Reflecting on these Stories and the ways in which they may undermine the goal of freedom through self-governance, which is essential to progressivist theory, may be helpful in developing *praxis* and thinking about the connections and possible disconnections among our own commitments to progressivist education.

When someone is concerned that children will behave in ways that are unruly, dangerous, and immoral without an adult in charge they are demonstrating that they subscribe to the narrative that people are not naturally moral<sup>76</sup> or capable of self-governance. This belief

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<sup>74</sup> I am not the only person voicing this concern: Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren (1994), bell hooks (1994), Paulo Freire (2005), and Alfie Kohn (2006) have all said similar things to sound the alarm.

<sup>75</sup> The conception of *control* that I want to evoke is related to Hegel's MSD; the only options are master or slave, to control others or be without control (self or otherwise). 'Control' is a substitute for 'dominance' with the belief or Story that without dominance, human nature is chaotic and inhumane. The art of control is to make it appear humanizing and necessary. There could be an argument made for Ralph having control (until the children choose to follow Jack), or that Jack has control (until the naval officer arrives), but I understand Ralph to have leadership rather than dominance. Ralph is not self-appointed and his leadership is temporary; his goals are in service to the group and not just himself. He is in a humanizing relationship with the group and himself. Jack takes on the role of the master and is in fear of losing control; he fears chaos and is dehumanized/dehumanizing by this dialectic. The naval officer exudes dominance with a ring of acceptability and entitlement that disguises his control and the control/chaos dichotomy; his control is by default of being an adult and a member of the military—the fight for control happened off-stage and within The Story—and his embodiment of this role is less aggressive but just as threatening.

<sup>76</sup> The conception of *moral* that I want to evoke is related to self-governance; moral standards or principles of right and wrong are derived from a consideration of the needs and freedoms of self *and* others. When I remark that there is a narrative that people are not naturally 'moral,' I am pointing to The Story that *some* people are not

aligns with another Enlightenment thinker, Thomas Hobbes, and his book on the subject entitled *Leviathan* (1651/2005). Golding's (1954) *Lord of the Flies* follows Hobbes' proposal quite closely. Like many Enlightenment thinkers, Hobbes is concerned with the role of the individual and one's own freedom and equality (although Hobbes has his own idea of what these terms mean). Hobbes argues that humans are naturally warring, living with an *each against all* mentality (Hobbes, 1651/2005, p.97), that projects the conviction that we are more often than not in a me-against-you situation; either my freedom or your freedom will be protected and not both. Hobbes (1651/2005) believes in equality in the sense that he sees all humans as having equal needs and equal vulnerabilities; we all need to eat and have shelter *and* we are all equally susceptible to harm. Because of this, in nature we must be on guard and in search of what will keep us protected and this leads to dominance over others or another's dominance over us. For Hobbes, equality does *not* mean equity.<sup>77</sup> Hobbes contends that when we are without an authority figure, we must be on our guard at all times; part of the problem is that if we are always warring, we have no room for morality (or self-governance). Hobbes' theory is that the children left to their own devices will revert to this warring state and a chaos void of communal goods and the values a society expounds. The answer to this problem is providing a "common power to keep them all in awe" (Hobbes, 1651/2005, p.95): enter the adult. When there is a sovereign,<sup>78</sup> and in the case of the group of children an adult authority figure is one, the so-called 'natural' predisposition to be self-serving and immoral is put aside

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considered capable of determining what is right or wrong by other people and that this is related to a lack of faith in the abilities of *some* people to self-govern, which justifies a *governance of* others.

<sup>77</sup> *Equity* is fair or just treatment, where *equality* is a belief in being equal to others.

<sup>78</sup> A *sovereign* is not static and the power they hold is transferable or shareable. A sovereign can be a leader who works with the self-governing *or* one who dominates or governs others in a dialectic.

and behaviour suitable to a society, and the rules and expectations that come along with it, can be enforced. In *Lord of the Flies*, the boys are without a suitable sovereign (one who is in control and governs those who cannot govern themselves) and revert to a wild and lawless existence (chaos). Ralph's attempt to lead fails because the children aren't able to self-govern, and Jack's efforts to control the group only builds on their unruliness. Morality turns to immorality and it is only with the appearance of an adult, and the possibility of (dis)incentives such as punishment or reward that are used to maintain adherence to the rules and expectations, that the children once again behave 'civilly' (or in accordance with the customs, laws, and morals developed within the society to which they belong).

For Hobbes, morality is *not* an intrinsic code we voluntarily follow. The rules and expectations are necessarily external; they are determined, introduced, and maintained by a sovereign. Outside of governance (being controlled by an external element) there is no right and wrong, but within a governed society (be it country or classroom or home) right and wrong are what is permitted or forbidden by the sovereign. Surely it is a poor view of the nature of children, and humans more generally, when one assumes that without fear of repercussions from an authority, or the promise of reward, we would resort to violence and/or a negligence of our own freedoms and the freedoms of others. The Hobbesian image of the child does not see the child (or adults for that matter) as capable of self-governance; the children require an adult to prepare them for a future role as sovereign (over a family, students, workers, or citizens). Do we believe our children, students, or ourselves to be self-serving unless there is an outside influence motivating more auspicious behavior? What aim does 'acceptable behaviour' of this sort achieve and whom does it serve? The example of the children in *Lord of the Flies* is

supposed to demonstrate what would happen if we were without a ruler (not without rules as the rules still exist)<sup>79</sup> and it is *fiction*. It is the *opinion* of Golding and Hobbes that when left to their own devices children/humans would be taken over by vices (desires), such as *the vice* of amour-propre, and live and act only for themselves. This novel and the words of Hobbes have made their way into our dominant narrative and echo in this concern that is frequently presented in response to the suggestion that bribes and threats don't make kids 'good' people but rather only 'obedient' people. The Story tells us that we require control lest our innate selves take over and wreak havoc; the message being that we are incapable of self-governance and require governance. When I present an argument that affirms the ability of children to self-govern, and am met with a control or chaos retort, I ask why the challenger believes this truth? More often than not, they respond with, "It's just human nature." I hear, 'It's just (my conception of) human nature.' This assertion has the effect of shutting down discussion because it is often employed to maintain the status quo, to state that there are no other possibilities, and when one is being critical of a dominant narrative or suggesting something new or innovative the opinion that human nature will not allow for such change is like kryptonite. Responses such as "It'll be just like *Lord of the Flies!*" or "It's just human nature..." need to be recognized for what they are: opinions. Judgements. Points of view. Stories (as in

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<sup>79</sup> Rules exist regardless of the presence of one who 'rules' or governs others to obey the rules. In the case of *Lord of the Flies* (Golding, 1954), the children still live in society with one another *and* they are presumably from the same society of origin and learned (through direct and indirect instruction) the societal agreements. For example, the children arrive on the island with an unspoken rule that people should not kill each other that is derived from their society of origin. On the island, as a new society takes shape, new rules form. Rules can be co-created without a ruler or assumed through actions. Ralph creates the rule that during group discussion they use a conch shell to moderate who is speaking; the one holding the shell is speaking while others listen (Golding, 1954). When Jack takes over, rules are not abandoned but modified; violence is celebrated and permitted. Jack has his own conception of social order. There is also the new rule that those who disagree with Jack are to be outcasts and face the consequences. Their behaviour is not dictated solely by whim but rather by new social agreements or rules. Also, each person may have their own internal rules informed by their own moral commitments.

“That’s my story and I’m sticking to it!”). What would happen if our jumping off point, the one that screams that some people (mostly kids) “just can’t handle their freedom,”<sup>80</sup> were to shift (Morrison & Morrison, 1999, p.6)? Rousseau, as well as other proponents of progressivist education such as John Dewey, make an effort to turn the common Hobbesian assumption about human nature on its head; Rousseau argues that *it is human nature* to self-govern and that society and its institutions are what cause us to become self-interested and manipulative/manipulatable. What separates the progressivist from the traditionalist is, in theory, the belief that people are capable of self-governance. The image of the child shifts from one that echoes the MSD, maintaining that the child must be managed or else, to the stance that we are born capable of self-governance, an opinion which modifies the point of departure to one of equality.

The second of the two concerns that are most often troubled when I talk about kids and their ‘freedom to be fully human’ is related to the first in that it has the effect of subverting it. I think that the connection between the two quandaries goes easily undetected because the control-or-chaos Story is so ingrained in our collective understanding. Alfie Kohn calls the second common concern “BGUTI” or “Better Get Used To It” (Kohn, 2005, para.8). I often hear folks ask how being humanizing to kids and treating them as though they are capable of self-governance will prepare them for the ‘real world’ because “the real world just isn’t like that.” They are concerned that children will be set-up to fail because the world is not designed for the consideration of the needs of others, or for people to question authority or make critical

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<sup>80</sup> In the introductory chapter of this text, I describe Toni Morrison’s (1999) book entitled *The Big Box* and the recurring line that the adults use in order to justify external control of the children: “They just can’t handle their freedom” (p.6).

change, and the solution is for children to “get used to it” through learning to deal with needs being ignored and self-governance being stifled when they are young. “Life isn’t fair,” they say, “and kids need to be prepared for that fact;” this is commonly said to justify treating children unfairly. A practice may be dehumanizing but it can be defended by saying ‘BGUTI.’<sup>81</sup> In these moments, my answer echoes Kohn’s; “‘You’d better get used to it’ not only assumes that life is pretty unpleasant, but that we ought not to bother trying to change the things that make it unpleasant. Rather than working to improve our schools, or other institutions, we should just get students ready for whatever is to come” (Kohn, 2005, para.22). In other words, things should remain static; there is no need to move forward when we can just accept how things are. Of course, this attitude undermines the core principle of the progressivist movement. It is a

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<sup>81</sup> The concern being raised and the use of BGUTI highlights a critical difference between the conventional Story and Rousseau’s social contract. Hobbes is suggesting that people are not inherently *good*, but rather that we are concerned with only our own freedom and that this develops into the need to rule over others: he writes that ‘natural men’ are found to “naturally love liberty, and dominion over others” (1651/2005, p.85). Hobbes contends that we should give up our rights, some of our freedoms, so that we may be protected by a sovereign from ourselves and others. Hobbes acknowledges that a sovereign may enact laws or regulations that are not beneficial to the people, he writes, “It is true that they that have sovereign power may commit iniquity, but not injustice or injury in the proper signification” (1651/2005, p.133). He points out that the immoral or grossly unfair behaviour committed by the sovereign has been consented to because all have collectively given up self-sovereignty for the protection by the sovereign (Hobbes, 1651/2005). Thus, a world that ‘isn’t fair’ is acceptable because the only other option is chaos and a state of war. In *On the Social Contract*, Rousseau (1762/1987) argues that when the world is unjust, or when the government or sovereign fails to secure or protect the best interests of the people (the *general will*), the citizens can countermand their commitment to obey the law and make a change that reflects the needs of the people. When the law is created by the people, the law cannot be unjust; self-governance is possible and will not result in a state of war because the social contract is self-correcting. Rousseau writes, “‘Can the law be unjust?’ (No, because nothing is unjust towards itself.) ‘How can we be both free and subject to the laws? (There’s no problem about this, because the laws are nothing but records of our volitions.)” (1762/2017, p.19). An important underlying feature of Rousseau’s theory is that people are generally good and capable of understanding their own freedoms *and* the freedoms of others. Rousseau is recommending that, because the general will reflects our freedoms and the freedoms of others, we gain rights by protecting the rights of others, and that a slip back into a focus on one’s own freedoms over the freedoms of others makes one less free. ‘Better Get Used To It’ is akin to accepting that people are not good or capable of self-governance, and giving up on democracy as an aim because democracy requires more faith in humanity and self-governance. Rousseau did not see democracy as perfect or utopian, but rather as a system that will inevitably encounter disagreement, “because there is none that has such a strong and continual tendency to change to another form, or that needs more vigilance and courage for its maintenance as it is” and then he quotes Count Palatine in Latin, saying “I prefer liberty with danger to peace with slavery” (Translation by Bennett, 1762/2017, p.34).

paradox to say we want change,<sup>82</sup> that we *believe* that self-governance is possible and that it is essential to freedom, but then to have our ‘doing’ remain fixed and rooted in methods that serve the traditionalist rationale that we seek to overturn. Believing in one thing and doing another is not going to help a cause to be realized. Teachers and parents have to ‘walk our talk’ and “*do what we say*” (Bellous, 1995, p.3). And it is difficult to know when our theory and practice are disconnected unless we reflect; after all, transformation is essential to progress.

Rousseau is responding to Hobbes’ assertion that human nature is each against all, a “war of every man against every man” (Hobbes, 1651/2005, p.97). If he had read *Lord of the Flies*, he would probably argue that Jack and the boys who follow him have *not* regressed into a state of nature but rather that they were mis-educated by a society preoccupied with control. If we are taught that the options are to obey or be obeyed, and that obedience and control are necessary to keep chaos at bay, then without control the only other option is chaos. And with external control as our only guiding force we are not and cannot be self-governing beings. Or, if we are self-governing we are very out of practice and distracted by The Story that tells us that those around us are incapable of recognizing and acting in service to their own freedoms *and* the freedoms of others. In traditionalist approaches, the rallying cry is arguably ‘order, at any cost!’ (Hobbes, 1651/2005). If the cost of order is freedom,<sup>83</sup> the aim conflicts with that of a

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<sup>82</sup> Not all change is progress, but with *praxis* there can be reflection and action when our methods undermine or are disconnected from our goals. Certainly, remaining static when the status quo subverts our aims is problematic. Part of being progressivist is praxis (this point will be discussed in depth in the next chapters).

<sup>83</sup> There is a distinction often made in liberal philosophy between what is called ‘negative freedom’ (or liberty) and ‘positive freedom’ (or liberty). Negative freedom is the lack of barrier(s) or coercion from others; “You lack political liberty of freedom only if you are prevented from attaining a goal by other human beings” (Berlin, 1969, p.122). If one is without barrier(s)—or negative in barriers—in place by others, then one is ‘free’ in the sense that they have *freedom from* barriers to self-govern. Rousseau, and others, have argued that negative freedom is insufficient and that one is not truly free until one can act in accordance to one’s own will (self-governing for the general will). According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, “a person is only free if she [sic] is self-directed or autonomous” and “[r]unning throughout liberal political theory is an idea of a free person as one whose actions

progressivist. For Hobbes, the goal is a morality that is classified as an obedience to the laws of the sovereign (1651/2005); being 'good' for the student is doing what the teacher has ordained to be 'good.' This is 'freedom' within parameters that can provide a deliverance from a certain type of chaos. But Rousseau is suggesting that the goal should shift and that if we are to be free there may be the occasional and acceptable 'chaos' because freedom<sup>84</sup> is self-governance and self-governance is a tricky business.

Rousseau is not immune from the complications embedded in our dominant narratives. His own effort to provide a pedagogy for self-governance seems to fall into a similar trap. He believes that man is capable of self-governance and should be educated to protect this innate ability and encourage its application to life in society, which in turn has the potential to make progress. But in his prescribed actions toward this end there is paradox. He argues for the progressivist goal but his methods are self-contradictory. The same year (1762) as publishing *On the Social Contract*, a book describing Rousseau's ideal human society of free and equal men (and he means men and only certain men), he also released its companion text: *Émile* (Rousseau, 1762/1974). In *Émile*, Rousseau guides the reader through the fictional education of a baby boy into manhood as well as a brief final chapter on the rearing of the consummate female mate for this self-governing man.<sup>85</sup> Rousseau describes in detail the role of the tutor or

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are in some sense her [sic] *own*" (Carter, 2016, 1.3). This is 'positive freedom,' in which one has *freedom to* self-govern.

<sup>84</sup> Rousseau was clear that freedom is not perfect, and not without a fight, but that the fight is part of freedom. I say that it is 'tricky business' because it is difficult to do well when we are engulfed in the Stories that undermine it, and, as will be discussed in more detail later, when we are dysregulated, we are more prone to an unproductive *fight, flight, or freeze* response (Shanker, 2017b).

<sup>85</sup> Rousseau is concerned with bringing up those considered 'male' to be self-governing; his assessment of those considered 'female' is separate. The final book of *Émile*, that is a chapter dedicated to the tutelage of the female child known as 'Sophie,' is often overlooked. I am uncomfortable with disregarding her role entirely, but I will not be giving that chapter the full treatment it deserves. This is in part because 'Sophie' is not raised to become a self-

'master' and gives an account of hypothetical situations in which the teacher and his pupil may find themselves.<sup>86</sup> Rousseau contends that the aim needs to shift from trying to get other people to do what we want them to do (or doing what we are told)—being governing or governable—to entering into a social contract in which we agree to defend the security of each person and ensure mutual protection of self and property through the *general will*. Rousseau believed that if one was self-governing and lived in accordance to this commitment to one's own freedoms and the freedoms of others, then "each person obeys only himself and remains as free as before" (Rousseau, 1762/1987, p.24). To some, this may seem like a leap of faith; won't some people take advantage of others? How can one person be free while being concerned with the freedom of others? How can others be free when I only obey myself? These concerns harken back to the Hobbesian belief that "each individual has a deep-rooted interest in securing the conditions of their own liberty" (Smith, 2006, ch.3, para.5, line 4). Because

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governing woman, but rather a counterpart or helpmate to her husband and an arguably essential element to his ability to be the man Rousseau desires him to become (Martin, 1985). 'Sophie' is not destined to be free in the same way as 'Émile' and her education reflects this; the practice of educating a woman to be an obedient wife and nurturing mother does not veer from the 'traditional' in a way that serves to answer the questions concerning the philosophy and practice of a progressivist education being troubled here (Martin, 1985). Although I am digging into a paradox located in Rousseau's interpretation of progressivist education, I will not be covering the way in which he "posits autonomy as a universal ideal" is undermined by his treatment of Sophie as being "educated not to rule but to obey" (Martin, 1985, p.42). In contemporary settings, much of what Rousseau discusses he has in mind for 'Émile' has come to be applied regardless of sex or gender; a move which thus neglects the problematic role of Sophie. My aim is not to neglect Sophie, but rather *she has already been neglected*; if I am to pull on The Story of progressivist education drawn from Rousseau, I must do what others have done and "scarcely acknowledge" her and "present Émile's education as Rousseau's ideal for both [sic] sexes" (Martin, 1981, p.358). Jane Roland Martin argues that "Rousseau's account of Sophie's education raises serious questions about the interpretation of *Émile* to which they subscribe" (1981, p.358). Specifically, Martin sheds light on how Sophie's education veers from 'nature' and shines light on how Rousseau's pedagogy follows "*a production model of education*" rather than the "standard growth interpretation" that *Émile* usually garners (1981, p.358, *emphasis original*). Removing sex or gender roles from *Émile* raises other problems as well, not least of which is that it ignores male privilege and patriarchy while also fails to acknowledge that Émile is being ill-prepared for domestic life, family, and love (Martin, 1981). My intention is to tell The Story of progressivist education and progressivist education has *not* taken the above problems up in a significant way.

<sup>86</sup> It should be noted that, in this discussion, I am shifting between two texts: Rousseau's *The Social Contract* (1762/1987) and *Émile* (1762/1979). They are different texts, but the former is a description of the ideal society for which Émile is being raised to live in the latter.

Rousseau understands the *general will* as the only sovereign, meaning that no one is dependent on the will of another but rather each self-governing individual contributes to the communal order, we do no more than obey ourselves. Rousseau claims that it is through one's civil liberty, "which is limited by the general will," that one gains a state of moral liberty and a sense of freedom, "which alone makes man truly the master of himself" (1762/1987, p.27). In this sense, we are free to the extent that we are participating citizens and we obey the laws that we have had a hand in creating; the true citizen<sup>87</sup> (a term Rousseau hoped to revive and separate from the *bourgeois*, or those he argued to be warped by a self-absorbed vanity and a need for control) is first a self-governing man. This appeal for self-governance and the freedom that comes with it is not based on an idealism about human beings; it is not a claim of altruism but rather an acknowledgment of the innate human flaw of self-interest. The assumption that *men as they are* promote freedom from dependence is evident by our "desire to preserve our freedom and resist the willful domination of others upon it" (Smith, 2006, ch.1, para. 13, line 8). The natural man, and a true citizen, is described as the consummate self-determined, autonomous individual; in *Émile*, Rousseau writes that "[t]he natural man lives for himself; he is the unit, the whole, dependent only on himself and on his like" (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.7). The self-governing person is both an individual *and* a social being; we are not ourselves without being in relation to others and we are not free unless others are free.

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<sup>87</sup> Rousseau describes the 'citizen' as "the numerator of a fraction, whose value depends on its denominator; his value depends upon the whole, that is, on the community" (1762/1974, p.7). A citizen is one who is committed to the whole and sees one's self as part of the whole—both individual and social being—or as Rousseau remarks, one who "contrives to be both" (1762/1974, p.8). He tells the story of a Spartan man who presents himself to be on a "council of Three Hundred and was rejected; he went away rejoicing that there were three hundred Spartans better than himself" (1762/1974,p.8). To reinforce this point, Rousseau also employs the story of a woman who receives word that all five of her sons were killed in battle, but her main concern is whether their side had "won the victory," for which she thanks the gods, to describe a citizen (1762/1974,p.8).

*Émile* is the story of how Rousseau envisions the social contract coming to life; a recommended course of action for the production of self-governing men, as well as the women<sup>88</sup> to support them, so that the progressivist aim of freedom can be realized. No more tyrants or obedient ones;<sup>89</sup> raising people who understand their own freedoms and the freedoms of others will move society toward a more 'natural' state (socially) while maintaining modern conveniences and scientific advancements. *Émile* was primarily a work of educational reform and was not the only one in its day; there had been a rash of written responses that argued for a change to the ways in which many Europeans were raising children, which was influenced by the political shifts in thinking about society and the role of the individual in it but also the high rates of infant mortality. The popular practice in 18<sup>th</sup> century middle- and upper-class France was to farm babies out to peasant wet-nurses where they would more often than not experience neglect (Jimjack, 1974, p.xiii). The movement of these children was severely restricted, from swaddling newborns and babies so that the working women who nursed them could tend to their other responsibilities, to childhoods spent indoors with tutors and their sense of inquiry being confined to the study of subjects that were remote to the child's experience or interest (Jimjack, 1974). Rousseau found the traditional approach to preparing

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<sup>88</sup> For Rousseau, the role of women had little to do with being self-governing themselves; their role was more of a supporting one for their husbands and sons (Martin, 1985; Okin, 1979; Oksenberg Rorty, 1998). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century West, many philosophers and their messages are read as more universally applicable and not just for upper-class, white male children. As stated earlier, *Émile* was written with only the male children of the elite in mind, but Rousseau's message in contemporary philosophy of education is understood to be applicable to all children regardless of class, race, gender identity, etc. This erasure of Rousseau's misogyny and the patriarchy of the time is problematic for many reasons that won't be taken up here.

<sup>89</sup> Except perhaps women and servants and people who are not the *right* religion or ethnic background. Rousseau was definitely problematic when it comes to gender, race, class, and other intersecting identities that were met with oppression and inequality in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (and today). The problem of equality in progressivist education will be addressed later, but for now my point is that Rousseau's thinking surrounding his critique of society and the need to teach self-governance is something that still resembles progressivist education of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

the young for adulthood to be counterproductive to his progressivist political ideals and questioned its validity. In addition, traditional approaches see children as merely “miniature, imperfect adults” (Jimjack, 1974, p.xiii); the period between birth and adulthood was a waiting game and the approaches employed to prepare the child for adulthood reflected this thinking. Treating children as under-functioning adults did not leave room to foster the sort of growth that Rousseau believed was possible. Rousseau saw children as young seedlings that needed the right environment in which to grow; the seedlings know what to do—the capability to self-govern is inside of us—and the role of the teacher is like the gardener who makes space<sup>90</sup> and provides opportunities (water and nutrients) for what is naturally there to mature. For Rousseau, in order to become self-governing individuals, children need the space to experience their own strengths and test their own abilities. In *Émile*, the child by the same name is being raised “[t]o be something, to be himself, and always at one with himself” and “act as he speaks,” “know what course he ought to take,” and “follow that course with vigour and persistence” and to become a true citizen and fulfill a new social contract (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.8).

So, the question on everyone’s mind is “[w]hat must be done to train this exceptional man!” to which Rousseau responds: “We can do much, but the chief thing is to prevent anything being done” (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.9). Throughout *Émile*, the theory of Rousseau is made clear; stave off the false narratives that negate self-governance while supporting the

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<sup>90</sup> Like ‘negative freedom,’ this approach of removing barriers and not externally directing or controlling education is called ‘negative education,’ which is a form of ‘child-centred education’ (Bertram, 2017). Rousseau’s belief was that “education should be carried out, so far as possible, in harmony with the development of the child’s natural capacities by a process of apparently autonomous discovery” (Bertram, 2017, 5.0).

growth of a person who can know and act in accordance with the general will and there will be freedom. But what is Rousseau's *method*? And how is it connected or disconnected to his ideology? 'Émile' is to be raised without coercion or force, learning that "[f]reedom, not power, is the greatest good" (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.48). He is to be outdoors and free to move rather than swaddled or kept from the exploration that comes with being in nature. This is his theory put into practice. But there are times in which his practice seems to get in the way of theory. Rousseau recommends that the tutor be always deliberately preparing "the way for [the pupil's] control of his own liberty" (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.30). He advises that the master be constantly one step ahead of his pupil, knowing what he will do or say in the next moment, so as to avoid lording over the child. This massaged existence begins before Émile is even awake. Rather than putting oneself in a place that may require engaging in coercive practice, or anything that may be mistaken for restraining the liberty of one's pupil, the stage is set so that the child can be let to his own devices. Rousseau suggests that the tutor prepare Émile's room, remove items that are breakable or precious, and explains that "[w]hile the child is still unconscious there is time to prepare his surroundings, so that nothing shall strike his eye but what is fit for his sight" (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.59). Without a valuable item in arm's reach, or an attractive distraction from what the Master intends, there will be no need to use force or threats or bribes. The student is primed by having his world and all that is shown to him "carefully chosen" (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.30). Émile does not experience external governance if there is nothing for him to do that could potentially goad the tutor into such an interaction. The pupil is set-up to perceive himself as autonomous; it is *not* as though he is being steered by another but rather that only he is at the helm of his own ship.

By teaching Émile to self-govern in this contrived way he is duped into believing he has freedom but without the experiences of the responsibilities that come with it. It is not only unrealistic that the master can predict and eliminate all distractions or temptations, but also it is impractical and does not serve the purpose of the lesson. If the aim is to teach one self-governance, or to prepare one to mature into a self-governing person, then encountering problems and conflicts as well as being forced to contend with the needs of other free people is essential to the learning experience. Surely a self-governing person must learn to hear another self-governing person say something to the effect of 'No, I can't tolerate that action because that infringes on my freedom' and then act in accordance to ensuing conflict. In a Hobbesian world, little learning would be required as one could simply respond, 'So what! I'll do what serves me and you can piss off!' Self-governance requires practice. Self-governance involves a consideration of freedoms and what one can do to support those freedoms. It is not about being a slave or a tyrant but rather a human reconciling that dichotomy. Being authoritative or permissive is not the purpose of self-governance and a person is not an island. After all, Rousseau calls it the *social* contract for a reason. In addition, the master is manipulating the environment so that Émile's behaviour is befitting to external expectations; the room that is being prepared is unnatural. Rousseau's master is in command and, so that the master can control the lesson, 'nature' is feigned rather than spontaneous. The message is that without the extraneous orchestration of the child's experience by the adult the child's conduct would be inappropriate or possibly immoral. Is self-governance only tenable if a sovereign sets one up to be self-governing? Do the actions of the master undermine the supposed belief that Émile is even capable of self-governance?

Rousseau wants to carefully avoid making a tyrant or a slave out of a child. He wants to eliminate the Hobbesian external rule-or-obey paradigm and employ an education that cultivates an internalized 'nature,' one of reason and sound judgement, utilising impartiality and disciplined emotion, while promoting independence and self-sufficiency as the root of personal power. The disconnections between what Rousseau says he believes and what he counsels the progressivist parent or teacher to do are more startling than the setting up of a room; there appears to be someone sneaking into it. Rousseau warns that the "child's first tears are prayers, beware lest they become commands; he begins by asking for aid, he ends by demanding service. Thus from his own weakness, the source of his first consciousness of dependence, springs the later idea of rule and tyranny" (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.33). He suggests that when a baby wants an item that is out of reach and they cannot yet crawl or move to retrieve it, one needs to be wary of how one reacts. The child is crying out an order for another to bring the item to them; this is the voice of a tyrant. Rather than bringing the item to the child, a progressivist tutor should bring the child to the item, thus teaching the baby not to command others but rather to do things within one's own power. The master should also refrain from giving orders because this teaches the child to be governable (a slave). Rousseau writes, "[g]ive him no orders at all, absolutely none. Do not even let him think that you claim any authority over him. Let him only know that he is weak and you are strong, that his condition and yours puts him at your mercy; let this be perceived, learned, and felt" (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.55). While Hobbes openly calls for an authority figure to subdue others with their presence, Rousseau encourages the 'sovereign' to creep in by a means almost undetectable.

Under the flag of the progressivist are the actions of a traditionalist; there is still a tyrant and a slave in the room.

Like in Hobbes' (1651/2005) *Leviathan*, in *Émile* it is the master who decides what behaviour is *good* or *acceptable*. For example, Rousseau wants his student to learn to be without fear because fear interferes with freedom and self-governance. He contends that any habit is to be avoided and fear is a habit that invites external control through manipulation. To teach one to have "control of his liberty" and to make one capable of "lasting self-control," one must learn to be comfortable with newly encountered things even if they are "ugly [or] repulsive" (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.30). Rousseau argues that the best way to teach is without direct instruction but rather through role-modelling and other experience; "Experience precedes instruction" (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.29). Bribes and threats, punishment and praise, are also to be avoided; self-discovery and student-led learning are essential to one garnering the features of a self-governing person. Yet, like *Émile's* environment, his experiences are also expertly managed. The tutor designs the experience of exposure to masks;

I begin by showing *Émile* a mask with a pleasant face, then someone puts this mask before his face; I begin to laugh, they all laugh too, and the child with them. By degrees I accustom him to less pleasing masks, and at last hideous ones. If I have arranged my stages skillfully, far from being afraid of the last mask, he will laugh at it as he did at the first. (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.30)

The tutor has decided how *Émile* should behave when shown a frightening mask. Rather than instructing the child he suggests the behaviour with his own behaviour; it is to the tutor's reaction the child looks for a clue on how to behave, to laugh rather than be frightened, because no matter how hideous the mask the expression on his tutor's face is a pleasant one. The Master is the architect of the pupil's response to spiders, masks, and guns; "[b]y slow and

careful stages man and child learn to fear nothing” (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.31). This diligent orchestration appears to have the best intentions in mind and yet there is something about it that undermines any faith in another’s ability to navigate their own feelings, needs, or behaviour. And what happens if the child *is* frightened of something that seems to diminish their independence or potential for autonomy, such as the dark?

Rousseau relays a story that begins with the repetition of his aim; “You speak of childish caprice; you are mistaken. Children’s caprices are never the work of nature, but of bad discipline; they have either obeyed or given orders, and I have said again and again, they must do neither” (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.85). He speaks of a time when he took care of a child for a few weeks and the child got him up in the middle of the night to light a candle, “which was all he wanted” (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.86). Rousseau relates how he returned the child to his own bed and told him not to wake him again. He states that the child’s “curiosity was aroused by this, and the very next day he did not fail to get up at the same time and woke me to see whether I should dare to disobey him” (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.86). Again, the child wanted a light, but this time his caretaker refused; the child attempted to get his own light and failed and then panicked by “screaming loudly” and “knocking against chairs and tables” (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.86). Rousseau responded by lighting the candle and calmly taking the child to a small dressing room that had the “shutters firmly fastened, and nothing he could break” and locking him inside without a light (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.86). He accuses the child’s mother of creating a “little tyrant” by giving into his caprices, but he undermines his own effort to encourage self-sufficiency and deter being governable by turning into a tyrant himself

(Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.87). The way in which the so-called 'lesson' is taught contradicts its very aim; the child learns obedience and that it is better to be the tyrant than the slave.

A practice based on the belief that children or other humans cannot self-govern and require external, coercive control in order to behave appropriately is not progressivist; just because the child isn't being shouted at by a stern character with a dark mustache does not a progressivist method make. It is traditionalist education 'lite.' When theory and practice are assessed for connection/disconnection, it becomes apparent that Rousseau, like Hobbes, proports power and authority as necessary and liberty as something that must be "well-regulated" (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.56). Rousseau writes that "[t]o lead them as you will, they must be led as they will" (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.47); if you desire a certain behaviour then you need to make the child think it was their own ideas and freedoms that led them to that behavior. They cannot know that their 'ideas' are being screened and approved by an authority. Rousseau explains that the liberty that is allotted to his pupil, such as letting him play in the snow until he decides he is finished, even when he is blue with cold, "makes up for the slight hardships to which he is exposed...I secure his present good by leaving him his freedom, and his future good by arming him against the evils he will have to bear" (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.51). In other words, as long as he is reminded of his 'freedom' he will not mind his constraints; they are for his own good (as determined by the master) and experiencing this externally managed freedom will prepare him for his future role as an ideal man for an ideal society.

There is paradox in the disconnection between theory and practice when the method seems to weaken or disrupt philosophical goals. Rousseau's approach is fighting fire with fire. He swaps a blatant form of external control for another more sinister one. Although the goal is

to make a self-sufficient and autonomous man, the methods employed could mean that Émile emerges from his education not as the autonomous man Rousseau desires, but rather as the governing/governable, self-serving, and dependent man the progressivist aim seeks to overcome. Rousseau cannot seem to escape the Hobbesian narrative he endeavors to disprove. He is distracted by The Story that we require an external authority and he undermines his effort to promote *nature* as having dominion. Rousseau's recommended practice indicates that Émile will not *naturally* self-govern, at least not in the way the master desires, unless he is led through it and guided by his dependence on the tutor. The role of the sovereign remains firmly in the hands of another person. Émile is trained to be governed; he cannot function morally without the interference of his tutor and after his coming of age he must follow the lead of his wife (Martin, 1985). One well-quoted 21<sup>st</sup> century philosophical theorist contends that Émile "emerges from his education with a warped and idealized view of authority" (Peters, 1981, p.21). A progressivist education that relies on practices that remain entrenched in traditionalist understandings of the need for external control, which undermines the belief that the student is even capable of self-governance, is problematic and counterproductive. Is this disconnection of thinking and doing indicative of the progressivist education movement itself? The aim may be liberty but the message behind many progressivist practices screams that "Those kids can't handle their freedom" (Morrison & Morrison, 1999, p.6). This is certainly a paradox.

# Chapter Two—Transformative Calling, Static Reality

*We can choose courage or we can choose comfort, but we can't have both.*

*– Brené Brown, 2017, p.4*

A Conversation-Stopper and a Palpable Shift: Letting go of 'Good Job!'

Shift is difficult to pin-point. When it happens, we are seldom aware. We can't always sense it; what does transformation look like? What does it sound like and how does it feel? If someone were to ask me, 'When did you become a progressivist educator?' or 'Can you recall a moment of shift toward progressivism?' I would not hesitate to say that I can't recall and there was no moment. I absorbed progressivist ideology from everything around me. And when I sat in pre-service teaching courses, listening to my professors speak about 'best practice' and the theory behind the newest methods, rarely did I question what I heard or what I read because everything being said aligned well with the ways in which I viewed the world. They spoke of the 'whole student' and engaging each individual and their interests and abilities with the development of critical and independent thinking. They demonstrated lessons that incorporated real-world experiential learning, problem solving, and opportunities to explore tangible and substantial moral and social issues through guided questions and discussion. My classmates and I discussed the call for teachers who consider the needs of students and the student role as an active participant in the learning process, the importance of social interactions in learning, and the essential role we would play in moving social justice into our

classrooms. The teachers-to-be and I were excited to incorporate group work and hands-on learning, create assignments that had some relevance to the lives of our students, and work with them to explore their own points of inquiry. The management<sup>91</sup> of students, or creating an environment in which we could facilitate all of the above, was not problematized – perhaps this was due to The Story that if a teacher was good enough (engaging enough, creative enough, innovative enough), they would not encounter the sort of problems that lead to the need for the management of students.<sup>92</sup> And if we encountered the tough stuff, such as what we called a ‘high-needs kid’ or a ‘challenging class,’ we would find *inclusive* and *positive* ways to work through the challenge because that is the progressivist way. In the classroom, of course, it was a different reality. It was quickly apparent that many things were easier said than done.

My commitment to be a progressivist educator did not disappear when I entered the field. But it was certainly challenged. I entered teaching from a summer camp background; I was a game encyclopedia and already excelled at managing large groups of excited school-aged children. There were times when I had my back patted for how focused and calm my classroom would be: *‘They’re so quiet!’* the principal remarked with pride; *‘You always have the kids on task without an ask!’* a mentor once said as a compliment. I remember my sureness in the need for uniformity; how important it was for me to have everyone on the same page both literally and figuratively. I know now, with time and reflection, that I was deeply concerned about order and how other teachers, parents, and administration viewed my ability to manage my class; the

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<sup>91</sup> The meaning of ‘management’ will be discussed more deeply in the next chapter, but one can see here that the term is easily used as a euphemism for keeping compliance, disciplining, or maintaining control.

<sup>92</sup> The expectation for teachers to ‘manage’ students, and for managed students to behave in a certain way, is also a form of management of the teachers. This aspect of control through ‘normalization’ or making certain behaviour ‘normal,’ as well as other elements of covert control, will be discussed deeply in the next chapter.

message was that this was a clear marker of my ability as a teacher.<sup>93</sup> I was performing well but nevertheless I was exhausted at the end of each day. I still struggled and I was often searching out new ways of doing things. There were always kids who couldn't keep up. There were often students who didn't seem to care, who wouldn't do the work, who were consistently disruptive. I recall the heat in my face when I sent a grade two child out to the hall because he was disrupting *my* lesson. I can still feel the pit in my stomach after I had made a speech to a group of grade sevens and eights about respect and their lack of it. I spent many lunches and preparation time lamenting with other teachers across the table or around the photocopier. There were many sighs and *'He just won't listen, won't slow down, won't do the work!'* and *'She never stops talking, so I have to separate her from her friends! I have to stand right behind her to get her to do anything.'* This was met with empathetic responses and similar stories of my colleagues' experiences reflected back to me. The stories we told were remarkably similar, our responses always supportive of each other's tactics, and accompanied by knowing and concerned faces and shrugs, and something like, 'Well, what else can we do?' We'd all been there, or were there, and part of our collective problem were our struggles to feel good/confident/satisfied with our response to certain *behaviours* as well as our impacts on reinforcing certain *behaviours*.

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<sup>93</sup> More than a decade later, in the role of a practicum supervisor, supporting teacher candidates during the classroom experience, I find that this is still the case. Many of my conversations with mentor teachers surround their concerns about the teacher candidates' struggles or successes in classroom management. A struggling candidate "lets the students talk over them" or "doesn't watch the whole room," while the successful candidate "knows how to get the students to listen" and is "aware of who the problem is and controls the situation." This is not to say that anyone should be comfortable with being talked over or with disrespectful or hurtful behaviour. My point is only that a teacher candidate's ability to 'manage' certain behaviours and gain compliance are often at the centre of how their success is determined, rather than concerns about teaching and learning.

Over the first decade of working with children in many capacities, I developed a sense of certainty in my management style. My approach was affirmed and upheld by others at every turn. And when I felt uncertainty in my handling of difficult situations with kids, I didn't have to go far to find someone who would meet my concerns with validation and justification for my thoughts and actions. I was a 'success' at classroom management; my letters of reference always remarked on my ability to manage challenging classroom dynamics. From my practicum days, mentor teachers and practicum supervisors wrote of my strengths in this area: it was said by a 30-year veteran teacher who mentored me in a primary classroom that I had "very effective classroom management techniques, always being able to gain and maintain the children's interest and attention during lessons and instructions." Another teacher mentor described my "confidence" and the way I presented myself as "in-charge" and how I used a "variety of classroom management strategies" to ease students from activity to activity and motivate them at the same time. A teacher with whom I worked for a term remarked that my approach was to create a "calm and positive learning environment" and that I used both "Fred Jones' and Harry K. Wong's theories of classroom management" like a more seasoned teacher. At the time, I had not read any classroom management texts but rather I relied on replicating the methods I had experienced in schools as a student and through observations as a teacher candidate; also, I emulated the successful camp staff I had admired for years. I made being managed fun; it didn't feel like 'discipline' because I set it up to be that way. I didn't want to be the mean teacher from films and books who barked at the students and had unreasonable rules. I wanted to be the fun teacher who had a genuine connection with the students. I have since looked up Wong's theories on classroom management and discovered that I was very

much in line with his recommended approach; “Effective teachers MANAGE their classrooms. Ineffective teachers DISCIPLINE their classrooms” (2005, p. 83, emphasis original). Establishing procedures and routines, expectations, rules, and predictable responses was essential in my effort to make management almost undetectable and this is what Wong (2005) and nearly every classroom management (or ‘discipline’) book<sup>94</sup> I have surveyed recommends.

Management is ‘preventative’ so that discipline, such as sending a student to the hallway or sharing your disappointment with the entire class’ behaviour, doesn’t have to happen – at least not often; the “effective teacher has a minimum of student misbehavior problems to handle” (Wong, 2005, p.91). In a well-managed, task-oriented and predictable environment, students “know what is expected of them and how to succeed” and will be motivated to behave so that they can do their best work (Wong, 2005, p.88). The ‘good’ teacher has students who want to behave for them.

I became fascinated with this framing of the good teacher/bad teacher dichotomy—or as Wong describes it, “effective” and “ineffective” teachers (2005, p. 87)—and the role that a progressivist management style plays in mainstream Canadian classrooms. I wanted to blend what I had learned in classroom teaching and what I loved about the campy approach to managing kids. Between teaching assignments, I was a summer coordinator for a city day camp. I ran a workshop for a group of summer camp staff entitled ‘Discipline is Not a Dirty Word’ that instructed them to co-construct ‘rules’ with groups of children on the first day, praise heavily,

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<sup>94</sup> At this time, I have focused my survey of classroom management texts on 13 books and one website. A list of their titles is in the bibliography with an asterisk (\*) beside them. They range in publication dates from the early 1960s to 2018. The books are mostly originating from the United States of America but have many copies sold world-wide. Fred Jones’ “Tools for Teaching” website shows that their video and text resources for classroom management have won Teacher’s Choice awards, The Mom’s Choice Award, was a runner-up for the Eric Hoffer Award, among other nominations and accolades, hence indicating their widely popular and positive reception.

give 'choices,' use incentives like stickers and high fives, and point out the good deeds of one child to the other kids with rewards of collectable 'good deed beads.' Much of what I directed my staff to do was considered 'very progressive,' both by the counsellors themselves and other supervisors, and the best part was how much the kids seemed to like our approach. One staff member commented to me that she was so happy that she had learned "how not to be the bad guy with the kids."

My teaching degree took me outside of the classroom and into the temperate rainforests of British Columbia. My role was to manage a staff of outdoor education instructors and coordinate programming with teachers and administrators that connected provincial curricula to the camp experience. Leading a group of peers was, in some ways, markedly different from leading a classroom of children. But at the same time, many of the markers of my approach to guiding children remained in place in this new role, as did some of the challenges. There were staff members who seemed to lack motivation unless I was around. Some appeared less serious or lacking the dedication of others. There were canoes put away lazily; there were lessons being taught that missed out on important points connecting to the curriculum. How could I get all staff members to buy-in? How could I motivate them to take ownership over our programming and site so that it was tidy, set-up, and reflecting the best of what we had to offer? I wanted to be positive, inspiring, and reach them at an intrinsic level; I wanted them to do their best even when I wasn't standing over their shoulders. I also wanted to have good relationships with the people with whom I worked. I sought some new methods and more management specific resources to help me succeed in these goals.

In 2008, at a conference for outdoor educators and folks in the camping industry, I picked up a book entitled *Super Staff SuperVision*, by Michael Brandwein (2002). The contents immediately spoke to the progressivist in me; the role of the supervisor is to support the staff members and should be motivated by this most important question: “*What can I do to help staff do their very best work?*” (Brandwein, 2002, p.7). The parallels with my approach as a classroom teacher did not stop there. I wanted to be the sort of leader who people were happy to see and one who was not perceived as trying to catch others doing what they were not supposed to do. Brandwein encouraged me to see my role as the camp gardener, but rather than simply weeding out what shouldn’t be there, or “pruning away conflict to make sure everything remained in its proper place” (2002, p.10), I needed to do some planting. Of course, I thought, just like in my classrooms, and in managing children in outdoor education and summer camp, I needed to foster growth in the right places so that the undesirable stuff didn’t take over. I needed to make it my job to catch people doing something good and praise positive staff behaviour so as to “reinforce and grow more of the skills and choices” that I valued most (Brandwein, 2002, p.11). On the wall beside my desk in the camp office, I had a poster that listed 99 ways to say ‘Good Job!’ I encouraged the staff members to think in terms of their ‘ownership’ over the reputation of our programs and their roles as ‘outdoor education professionals.’ I read staff member specific positive feedback from client surveys out loud at meetings. I made up funny awards and presented a few at the end of each week with special treats from the kitchen. And when it came to the difficult times, when one’s ‘very best work’ didn’t meet my expectations, I had tactics so that I could “handle undesired staff behavior in positive ways” (Brandwein, 2002, back of book). This consisted of meeting about a problem but

sandwiching it between my thoughts on what the staff member was doing well. The thinking behind this being that if a person heard about what they were successful at, they would feel good about themselves and know that I was on their side, which in turn would intrinsically motivate them to adjust their behaviour and bring areas in need of improvement up to snuff. Being *positive* with a staff member meant making careful choices in language – using terms like ‘areas for growth’ and ‘challenging yourself’ – and being friendly and supportive even if my aim was to get them to colour coordinate the canoes and teach the parts of the arrow before the parts of the bow. I thought I was a progressivist teacher and manager; cheerful in my approach and committed to building self-esteem, encouraging good decision-making, supporting my students and staff in their own goals, helping to navigate others through challenges, and maintaining motivation even when it came to unappealing tasks. I believed that my methods supported these beliefs and goals. Much like my experience in pre-service teaching and in the classroom, my current approach was reinforced only partially by what I was reading because my ‘new’ tactics were also supported by my heavily self-reinforcing worldview. Nothing that I read startled me or concerned me. I was excited and motivated to chase down staff and praise them, to reward them with pizza and brownies and more responsibilities and silly certificates that showed that I cared. The goal was to use positive actions to get folks to behave in a way that met or exceeded my expectations. I did not reflect on the goal itself but rather on how well my tactics helped me to achieve it. I focused on the practice and didn’t see any reason to critically examine what my actions said about my beliefs.

I was making strides toward my objectives; staff members seemed to appreciate my efforts to catch them in the act of doing an expected behaviour and then sing their praises.

They told me they felt that their hard work was valued and recognized – although sometimes there were folks who needed to tell me about their good deeds and there were others who felt unnoticed because their biggest achievements occurred when I was not around. Staff evaluations were still a challenge; despite the changed language and the focus on the positives, there were still objections to what we termed ‘constructive feedback’ or ‘recommended goal-setting.’ And, the canoes were still in a jumble. I was also struggling with a lack of recognition from my own supervisor. I was upset that my innovative and refreshingly positive approach and the atmosphere that I was creating had gone unacknowledged and therefore presumably unnoticed. I wanted praise, and hopefully of the public kind! *I wanted the director to catch me doing something good.* Instead of approaching him to discuss my concerns, I spent some time searching for research that supports the use of praise; I wanted to show how essential regularly saying ‘Good Job’ and its variations was in motivation, self-esteem, and in supporting staff members (and kids) in doing the right thing. I found many websites and articles that said just that, but I also came across an essay that upended everything. Alfie Kohn’s short article entitled “Five Reasons to Stop Saying Good Job” (2001) immediately startled me; I could feel my stomach drop and my face turn hot as I read the first few lines. I was instantly uncomfortable as I absorbed the opening sentences:

Hang out at a playground, visit a school, or show up at a child’s birthday party, and there’s one phrase you can count on hearing repeatedly: “Good job!” Even tiny infants are praised for smacking their hands together (“Good clapping!”). Many of us blurt out these judgments of our children to the point that it has become almost a verbal tic.

Plenty of books and articles advise us against relying on punishment, from spanking to forcible isolation (“time out”). Occasionally someone will even ask us to rethink the practice of bribing children with stickers or food. But you’ll

have to look awfully hard to find a discouraging word about what is euphemistically called positive reinforcement.

Lest there be any misunderstanding, the point here is not to call into question the importance of supporting and encouraging children, the need to love them and hug them and help them feel good about themselves. Praise, however, is a different story entirely. Here's why. (Kohn, 2001, para.1-3)

*A verbal tic? A judgment?* These assessments of praise didn't fit my narrative. I stared up at my poster of 99 ways to say 'Good Job!' and asked myself, "Wasn't I building self-esteem and motivating kids and staff?" I wondered how else one could reinforce good behaviour? Without *positive* reinforcement, wouldn't we be relying on *negative* reinforcement? That didn't sound right (or progressivist). Without praise, wouldn't our interactions be cold and distant? I pictured the traditional teacher, the traditional boss—without praise—and I shook my head. I felt as though my well-intentioned, thoroughly researched, and skillfully executed practices, and my enduring commitment to the goal of helping people to be better people, were being harshly and thoughtlessly criticized. I made the quick decision to read on with the expectation that I would encounter a bogus argument full of holes and inconsistencies and that I would be able to reaffirm what I already knew to be true.

According to Kohn, the first reason to stop saying 'Good Job!' or praising people is that it is manipulative. This was difficult to hear because, and I assume I am not alone in this, parents and teachers don't wake up each day with the explicit aim of manipulating children. Kohn asks 'who benefits' from offering a "verbal reward" to the child who does as they are told (Kohn, 2001, para.4)? He asks one to consider the possibility that "telling kids they've done a good job may have less to do with their emotional needs than with our convenience" (Kohn, 2001, para.4). I was guilty of using praise to get kids and staff to do what I wanted them to do; I did

not question the idea of positive reinforcement. If I publicly awarded one staff member with a tinfoil crown and a piece of paper that said “Queen of Canoe Coordination” for always placing the red white-water boats on the left side of the dock and the aluminum lake boats on the right, I was rewarding her for doing what I expected. But what is so wrong about that? When manipulation is coupled with Kohn’s next point, the problem of creating what he terms “praise junkies” (2001, para.7), I felt a strange wave of relief; it was not the solace I expected because rather than having my beliefs confirmed I found my doubt shift and a crack form in my argument. The idea of praise junkies sounded familiar to me and my response was in part due to seeing *myself* as one. Kohn argues that rather than supporting self-esteem and motivation, praise has the effect of making kids more dependent on us and our evaluations of them. He writes, “The more we say, ‘I like the way you....’ or ‘Good \_\_\_\_\_ing,’ the more kids come to rely on *our evaluations*, our decisions, about what’s good and bad, rather than learning to form their own judgments. It leads them to measure their worth in terms of what will lead *us* to smile and dole out some more approval” (Kohn, 2001, para.7, *emphasis original*). Praise is addictive, the feeling of being acknowledged and judged positively is a reward and we are hardwired for rewards. Praise motivates kids (and others) to get more praise. This need for someone else to pat us on the back follows some of us into adulthood. As I was reading Kohn’s article for the first time, I thought of my need for external validation of my methods and my frustration with the lack of it. Why was I unsatisfied with my own feelings and judgements of the outcomes of my labour? Why did I need outside acknowledgment or approval? Extrinsic motivation has the impact of reinforcing behaviour, but at what cost? One such toll is what Kohn outlines as his third reason to stop saying ‘Good Job!’: “stealing a child’s pleasure” or

appropriating intrinsic reward by shifting the focus to an external one (2001, para.10). The intrinsic motivation and reward when one achieves an academic or artistic goal, or does something kind, is diminished by a dependence on the external recognition. The internal feelings of success and pride are overwritten by the need to have someone else evaluate us; Kohn says that “we may not have realized that ‘Good job!’ is just as much an evaluation as ‘Bad job!’ The most notable feature of a positive judgment isn’t that it’s positive, but that it’s a judgment. And people, including kids, don’t like being judged” (2001, para.11).

Kohn’s next point was the most concerning to me because of the camp’s value-based programming; our overall mission to pass on values such as respect, responsibility, honesty, caring, and teamwork. We wanted to help everyone to feel a sense of belonging and to go home with a better grasp on these values than when they arrived. There was also the aim of supporting healthy risk-taking, trying new things like kayaking or rock-climbing, or even just being outside for the day, which involves being open to discomfort and the possibility of failure. But Kohn points out that using praise to do this is counterproductive because it has the effect of making people lose interest: he explains that “an impressive body of scientific research has shown that the more we reward people for doing something, the more they tend to lose interest in whatever they had to do to get the reward” (2001, para.13). This has an effect on behaviours that we wish to encourage in our camp and school communities, as well as in family life and society, such as sharing, being helpful, open-mindedness, problem-solving, and considering the needs of self and others in decision-making (Kohn, 2001). Regularly saying ‘Good sharing!’ or ‘You are so helpful!’ or ‘I like the way you waited for your siblings,’ or subtly praising through comments that indicate what we want others to do, such as by showing more

excitement about certain contributions in a meeting or discussion, contribute to what Kohn counts as his final reason to rethink praise: “reducing achievement” (2001, para.16). Kohn points out that the research on the use of praise in schools and workplaces demonstrates that it does not achieve motivation nor does it encourage creativity and deep thinking; “[n]ow the point isn’t to draw, to read, to think, to create – the point is to get the goody, whether it’s an ice cream, a sticker, or a ‘Good job!’” (Kohn, 2001, para.16). Also, when praise is the focus, children (and adults) are less likely to take risks in their learning and are less inclined to choose challenging activities that are interesting or pleasurable (Kohn, 2001). How often did I take up a topic in a school assignment that I already had confidence in, that I knew would get me an ‘A,’ rather than take a chance of a lesser reward with an inquiry that challenged my thinking?

This is the precipice at which we often find ourselves; back away from the edge of uncertainty or be vulnerable and take the leap into the unknown. When faced with something that doesn’t quite match up with that of which we are sure, do we choose to remain comfortable and yet static in our worldview and methods? Or, do we get curious and open ourselves up to other possibilities and the potential for transformation? What I was reading did not support my well-ordered understanding of teaching, leading, or the nature of kids or people in general; my worldview was becoming more visible and this caused discomfort. My certainty was precariously near the edge and I couldn’t quite push it any further. As sociologist and researcher-storyteller, Brené Brown, articulates, “It feels good to have an explanation, especially one that conveniently makes us feel better about ourselves and places blame on *those people*” (Brown, 2012, p.47). I was not one of those “ineffective teachers” or leaders who rely on negativity, top-down approaches, and a large helping of fear to control others (Wong,

2005, p.91). I was progressivist in my heart and in my actions; I wanted to encourage others to be their best selves and I would do this through positivity and making connections. Although Kohn sets up his work to first provide a critical analysis of a topic and then to work through an alternative approach, I just couldn't see my way out of the traditionalist/progressivist dichotomy. My solution, or what I thought would help me return to my previous position with comfort and confidence, was to bring this Kohn article to the staff team and ask them to try it out and see what happens when we stop saying 'Good job!'

I was trying it before I even printed the article and called the meeting. I was conscious of my own bias and I didn't want to turn the staff against the idea. Their response was mixed; some rejected it outright, others dove in headfirst, and the rest were on the fence with me. We planned to try it out for the five-day work week and meet on the third day to see how it was going. For the most part, we all worked independently with student groups and didn't have the chance to interact with each other more than at meals and during large-group games and campfire sing-a-longs. How each other fared was difficult to detect without an explicit conversation. In my own role, I found my daily interactions with the staff changed. When I caught them in the act of something wonderful, something that made my heart sing, I smiled to myself instead of rushing at them with my approval. I realized that they probably already knew how I felt. When I checked-in with those instructors who I knew had a more challenging group or had taught a lesson about which they were less than enthusiastic, our interactions were longer than they had been before. I asked them to tell me about it and they told me stories and I learned more about how they felt about their struggles and successes. At first, I found myself at a loss when it came to my urge to correct unwelcome behaviour or challenge those who had

room for improvement. Without praise to sandwich what I really had to say, I felt naked. I had nothing to hide behind and the vulnerability was excruciating. But when I heard staff members talk about the challenges in their day, and their own evaluations of what they did and what they might try next time, I realized that there was very little I had to offer other than a listening ear and my support and guidance, if needed. At first, I had a sense of emptiness and the uneasy feeling that I was no longer sure of my role. My new approach almost felt insufficient. If I wasn't doling out praise, what was I doing? But I was doing *something*, because this approach felt challenging.

During this week without praise, one staff member had left the canoes in the water overnight, which was a problem for a few reasons and certainly needed to be addressed. I approached him with trepidation because I didn't have that buffer of praise; I couldn't insert my 'constructive feedback' between layers of recognition of his better attributes and actions. After some pleasantries, I came out with it and said, "So I am here to talk to you about a concern I have." He immediately sighed and nodded. I continued, "The canoes were left out last night. Can you tell me about that?" It was uncomfortable, but our discussion was direct. He told me what happened and why were they left out instead of being put away after the afternoon lesson. He already knew where I stood, and I listened to his reasons. We focused on the problem and didn't beat around the bush that it needed to be solved. I became suddenly aware of how dependent I had been on the so-called 'shit sandwich' rhetorical framework—presenting the difficult feedback between two slices of 'Good Job!'—because I wanted to make getting corrected less awkward, or at least more comfortable, and possibly even enjoyable. I didn't want to lose our connection. I didn't want the staff to think I wasn't on their side and I

didn't want to be perceived as power-hungry or overly critical,<sup>95</sup> I was trying to close the gap in the supervisor-supervised hierarchy, but praise had made my approach judgemental and undermined my goal. It turned out that when we cut the bullshit, and had a direct conversation, there was a palpable shift; it felt even less top-down and more respectful, less manipulative and more authentic. I found the challenge of removing praise from my approach caused me rethink and question other methods, and the aims they covertly espoused, and this meant that I was occasionally uncomfortable, but I was no longer on autopilot.

At our mid-week meeting, the staff offered similar reflections to mine. Many found themselves at a loss when it came to what to say to kids, how to get them to do what they wanted them to do, and many had to ask more directly. But the most startling revelation to come out of this experiment was brought up by the youngest and least experienced member of the group: a seventeen-year-old named Cecelia.<sup>96</sup> We were taking turns to tell our stories about our experiences and what it meant to each of us. Many of us were still having difficulty committing to either Kohn's argument or the status quo. When we came to Cecelia, she smiled nervously and said simply, "Good job was a conversation stopper." The rest of us leaned in and she continued, "Usually, when I run a rock-climbing block, I teach the basics and get kids hooked onto the rope and watch them go up the wall and then down the wall. When I unhook their carabiner I always say, 'Good job!' and send them back to the bench to wait for their next turn. This week, after each climb, I have been asking the kids, 'How was that for you?'" Cecelia paused and took a deep breath, she continued with a little more confidence, "I have heard so

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<sup>95</sup> I want to acknowledge that the concern about being perceived as power-hungry or overly critical is a gendered experience.

<sup>96</sup> The staff member's name has been changed.

many kids tell me it was fun, or awesome, or scary. Or they tell me the story of what happened; how they were scared at first but then tested the rope and felt secure and then just went for it. I never would have known how they felt about any of this if I had just said ‘Good job!’ It was a conversation stopper. I feel so much closer to this group of students. It was as though praise separated us.” There was a long silence. There were some audible exhales. The moment of shift was tangible; the transformation was beyond doubt. Those on the fence let their guard down and those who clung to praise opened up to other possibilities.

We did not become ‘progressivist teachers’ in this moment. I think many of us aligned with progressivist beliefs without really engaging with progressivism in any depth; without really *thinking* about it. Without praxis, we wore our progressivist badges and embraced ‘new’ or ‘innovative’ ideas and methods to incorporate into our practice. We talked the talk, but mostly that talk was about practice, our focus was centred on the best and most perfected techniques, and our most pressing concern was whether and how these ‘alternative’ approaches would work. What they would ‘work’ to accomplish, which aims they supported beyond fitting in with the prevailing ideology, was not up for discussion. If these methods fit our existing mindset, shored up our existing progressivist personas or identities, then they *must be* right. At camp, we wanted the campers to leave our programs ‘better people’—people who understand values like respect, responsibility, honesty, caring, teamwork, creativity, sharing, and so on—or people who understand their own freedoms *and* the freedoms of others. We wanted to support people in their *freedom to be fully human*. Much like *The Answer* that the parents and teachers in my workshops give, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s effort to improve everyone’s liberty through teaching self-governance, we wanted to be progressing toward

these aims. But, without reflection, and without the vulnerability and the discomfort that comes with it, we were unknowingly employing methods that undermined our goals. We are caught in the Progressivist Paradox; we've heard the transformative calling, but we remain in a static reality. That reality has a way of shielding us from question; we find certainty in dichotomous thinking. If *our way* is right, we are securely against an alternative because the *only* other option is made absurd. We find comfort in the certainty that accompanies practices that fit the narrative. What stops us from dropping our armour? What inhibits our assessment of our own disconnections between thinking and doing? What prevents our shift?

Praxis is an Action

*Deeply effective activism works at the level of story. In the long term, effective activism happens through changing the story.*

– Charles Eisenstein, 2013

There is a need to address our progressivist condition and the paradox in which we participate. I say 'participate' because we are not as passive as we may feel. What we think and what we do, our theory and our practice, cannot be separated. Our actions reflect what we believe, even when we haven't made the conscious connection between the two, and sometimes they have the effect of subverting our goals while our attention is elsewhere. It is easy to get distracted when the focus is on our practice; when our focal point is what we are doing/not doing the emphasis is on *how* we are achieving our aims and it becomes difficult to recognize the *who* and the *what* surrounding the action.<sup>97</sup> *Whose* aim is being supported? *Who*

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<sup>97</sup> Ingerid S. Straume's (2015) article, "Democracy, Education and the Need for Politics," uses the *how*, *who*, and *what* distinctions to discuss democracy and the roles of politics and 'the political' in democracy in education (politics and 'the political' are discussed as concepts below). I will discuss some of her work later in this chapter,

is affected by the aim and the method; *who* benefits?<sup>98</sup> *What* is the aim that this technique is supporting? *What* is The Story surrounding this aim? Does *what* one is trying to achieve align with one's actual goals? These aspects are deeply related to the *how* and need to be reflected upon; they help us to see the connections and disconnections between our theory and practice. The questions of *who* and *what*, in addition to *how*, also connect us to ourselves and others and to the collective relationship between us and what I'll call 'the political.'<sup>99</sup> These questions connect us to the stories-that-we-all-know and the politics of questioning their hold and their influence on us. This is the opportunity for shift; self-questioning and questioning the political are both essential elements and a "defining feature of a (real) democracy" and democracy,<sup>100</sup> like progressivism, is not static (Straume, 2015, p.31). So, it seems that both theory and politics

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but for now, I wanted to acknowledge that this approach is not my own, but I am making it my own for this topic of praxis and the need for both politics and theory/theorizing in it.

<sup>98</sup> In his work on parenting and teaching, Alfie Kohn presents the useful ongoing thought experiment of asking the Latin question "'Cui bono?'—Who benefits?" (2006, p.15). Kohn argues that even if "our only concern was to arrive at a more accurate assessment of what is really happening in a classroom, we would need to look hard at what we're asking students to do—and why... In whose interest is it to require students to do this or prohibit them from doing that?" (Kohn, 2006, p.15).

<sup>99</sup> "The political" has been described in any number of ways, so I feel it is necessary to clarify the way in which I am using it. Greek-French philosopher, Cornelius Castoriadis (1991, 2010), makes the distinction between 'the political' and 'politics,' and I would like to draw on his interpretation. 'The political' refers to the "general type of political arrangements that is instituted in all known societies" (Straume, 2017, p.31); Castoriadis describes *le politique* as "the power-related dimension within a society, how it is exerted and access thereto" (2010, p.216). The complex structure or system of a state, the state apparatus, such as systems of government, churches, media outlets, sports clubs, the family, and educational institutions are just of few examples of what makes up 'the political.' When it comes to 'politics,' or *la politique*, Castoriadis (1991) sees it as "the explicit activity of *putting the established institution of society into question*" (Straume, 2017, p.31). Although politics, or the questioning of the political, is not established or acceptable in all societies, it is essential to the development of democracies (Castoriadis, 1991). Straume (2017) writes in her interpretation of Castoriadis' work, "later democratic polities have, to a greater or lesser degree, sought to embody the project of autonomy—which for Castoriadis is always both an individual and a collective project—by instituting 'politics' as the capacity of a society to question itself: its laws, norms and institutions, and especially its relations of power (i.e. 'the political')" (p.31).

<sup>100</sup> Democracy and its relationship to progressivist education was discussed deeply in the previous chapter. At this time, I would like to reiterate that progressivists want people to be self-governing (to recognize and support their own freedoms and the freedoms of others) and that (real) democracy is about people governing themselves through participation in a *poleis* (body of citizens), which calls for "a well-educated *demos*" or people (Straume, 2017, p.30). How to educate people best for the democratic life has been taken up by many people in various ways, including progressivist theorists such as John Dewey (1916/2001) and A.S. Neill (1960).

are key in the effort to keep us moving in the direction of our progressivist goal; in a way, the goal *is* movement.<sup>101</sup>

Teachers and parents are charged with raising self-governing people who are active democratic citizens. But there is a Story that tells teachers and parents that it is *not* our role to engage in politics; we should be politically *neutral* and keep our opinions to ourselves. This sounds like a case of not being able to eat one's cake and have it, too.<sup>102</sup> We can't be charged with guiding and growing the next generation of thoughtful, responsible, caring, creative, critically-thinking, problem-solving, active citizens in a pluralistic democracy while avoiding politics. As stated in the introduction, it would be strange if parents or teachers openly proclaimed that children must learn to be docile and unquestioning drones who are strictly taught to memorize and regurgitate facts. I am aware of the dichotomous thinking loaded into this last statement. No, it isn't as simple as teaching kids in a way that supports self-governance *or* teaching them to be obedient robots. It is not my intention to make an either/or set of available options and to have one of those options appear ridiculous. My point is simply to say that no matter where we fall on the possibly infinite grid of political positions, we do fall somewhere. Also, I want to be careful of the possible ideological numbness that comes with saying that everything is political (if everything is political, does it feel like nothing is political?). I will attempt this by making some distinctions: what falls into the 'moral realm' and what's the

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<sup>101</sup> The progressivist goal, as was discussed in the previous chapter, is freedom through self-governance, but it is important to note that the 'means' is what keeps one moving and that there may not be an 'end' or an ideal to attain. This idea of progressivist education as a journey rather than a destination will be discussed more deeply during a section on John Dewey (in the next chapter).

<sup>102</sup> It was brought to my attention that the popular figure of speech that is colloquially said as 'you can't have your cake and eat it, too,' and that typically means 'you can't have it both ways,' is a derivative of the original. The more logical and correct way of using the saying to illustrate that one can't have it both ways, or that there are trade-offs, is to say 'you can't eat your cake and have it, too' *or* 'you can't eat your cake and *keep* it, too.'

difference between pluralism and relativism? Here, I would like to draw on philosopher of education, Claudia Ruitenberg (2007), and her paper “‘That’s Just Your Opinion’ – ‘American Idol’ and the Confusion Between Pluralism and Relativism.” In the article, Ruitenberg makes the distinction between preferences and judgments and the ways in which they are sometimes craftily conflated. One may be asked their opinion on another person’s singing, to which they may reply that they prefer it over other singing or that they have a distaste for that particular voice or rendition of a song (Ruitenberg, 2007). This *aesthetic* preference would be ‘just an opinion’ and nothing *morally or politically* would be amiss if one did not choose to provide reasons for this partiality within the aesthetic realm (Ruitenberg, 2007). But, if one is asked about their opinion on a topic that crosses into the moral realm, such as whether or not a school should require all students to sing the national anthem, this *opinion* would involve judgment and one may be asked to provide their reasons for said judgment (Ruitenberg, 2007). Ruitenberg argues that, “when it comes to judgments about issues of ‘more than slight moral consequence,’” we cannot simply agree to disagree because this leads to moral relativism, or the approach that takes all opinions as simply preferences and equally true, as well as “the belief that there are no objective or even intersubjective criteria for morality and that what counts as ‘moral’ is entirely dependent on one’s framework or perspective” (2007, p.58 & p.56). A teacher who agrees to disagree when a student suggests that chocolate ice-cream tastes better than vanilla is not being morally relativistic as this is not an issue that is part of the moral realm.<sup>103</sup> If a student argues that fairly traded chocolate ice-cream is better than the ice-cream

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<sup>103</sup> The moral realm can involve ‘the political’ and ‘the social.’ We are both political and social beings and we operate in political and social systems. Schooling and parenting often talk about ‘socializing’ children as part of their mandate. We want children to understand how to be social actors from basic manners (saying please and

made with chocolate that is sourced using child labour, it would be relativistic for a teacher to shrug it off and take a ‘politically neutral’ stance of “my values are mine, yours are yours, and if we clash, too bad, neither of us can claim to be right” (Berlin, 1998, part 2, para 19). Political neutrality doesn’t exist; a position may *appear* ‘neutral’ because it either reflects the status quo—a dominant narrative that is difficult to spot—or it is being approached in a way that is relativistic.

The Story that calls for political neutrality conflicts with a core belief of progressivist educators; teachers in particular are asked to do the impossible of preparing kids for a pluralistic<sup>104</sup> democracy while behaving in a relativistic manner. But we inevitably make political statements, our actions give away our political positions, and we operate within an apparatus of the political; education, teaching, and parenting *are political*. Democracy requires politics, the political must be put into question, and the argument has been made that for democracy to work we need citizens who are politically well-educated (Arendt, 1970; Castoriadis, 1991; Dewey, 1916; Mill, 1859/1991; Rancière, 2009; Rousseau, 1762/1987). This all sounds rather theoretical, which is another cue for teachers and parents to run in the other direction. In order to reflect on our theory/practice connection or disconnection, we would have to be able to address theory and even potentially theorize. Also, as part of engaging with theory, and the

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thank you, not putting our feet on the table, holding the door open for someone) but we also want them to be politically minded and see problems *and* address them through politics. For example, it would be strange if, in our current political climate, an adult came of age without knowing the politics of holding a door open for someone presenting as feminine vs. holding a door open for someone presenting as masculine.

<sup>104</sup> According to Ruitenberg (2007), pluralism is “the view that there is more than one set of values that is legitimate and worth pursuing, but not an infinite number” (p.56). Rather than saying there is only one way in which to judge an issue (absolutism) or saying ‘let’s just agree to disagree’—we can both be right—which is relativism, pluralism makes space for a diversity of views but still holds that they require debate, defence, reasons, and that some points may be truer than others.

beliefs that inform it, we would have to be able to *do* philosophy in the sense that we would need to be able to pull back and see the Stories around us and reflect on their origins and their impacts, and the ways in which they may be subverted, re-written, maintained, or arbitrary. There is a Story that prevails on us that we cannot theorize<sup>105</sup> or philosophize and that we are simply doers; we can only understand the *how* and we *should* focus on what we know. The idea that praxis *is* the problem, in that it overcomplicates a teacher's day-to-day decisions and interactions, has been addressed in a recent article entitled "Getting a Grip on the Classroom: From Psychological to Phenomenological Curricular Development in Teacher Education Programs" (Garcia & Lewis, 2014). The article problematizes the idea of an excellent teacher as "a critically self-reflective teacher," or one who engages in praxis, and insists that this is an "intellectualist" position and disconnected from "actual classrooms" (Garcia & Lewis, 2014, p.142). According to the authors, the problem with praxis is that the average teacher doesn't have time for it; practiced teachers who excel in classroom teaching (which is often measured

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<sup>105</sup> An article entitled "Enhancing Effective Classroom Management in Schools: Structures for Changing Teacher Behavior" (Hirn *et al.*, 2017) argues that focusing teachers on a new practice, one that is 'evidence-based' or provides certainty in its effectiveness, has a more predictable and positive outcome when it comes to changing teacher behaviour. In other words, a "change in teacher practice is thought to influence teacher beliefs" (p.142). They recommend professional development, specifically positive reinforcement and monitoring teachers through "direct technical assistance and performance feedback," for better implementation of 'new' classroom management techniques, such as the "Good Behaviour Game" and "Behavior Contracting" (Hirn *et al.*, 2017, p.144 & p.149). The "teachers' beliefs and attitudes" (Hirn *et al.*, 2017, p.143) that they are attempting to change are still focused on the *how*, as in *how* to get kids to do what they want them to do, and a shift in the *who* or *what*, *whose* goal and toward *what* aim, are not being discussed. Beliefs and attitudes in relation to our progressivist efforts to support children in their *freedom to be fully human* is not part of this study and The Story being retold *through* the research is that teachers cannot theorize, at least not on their own, but they can discuss the effectiveness of their practices (to gain student compliance) with colleagues (Hirn *et al.*, 2017). This "reflective dialogue" and feedback is essential for confirmation and justification of the current or 'new' practice (Hirn *et al.*, 2017, p.151). Hirn *et al.*'s study separates practice and theory, and focuses on the *how*, because of unaddressed dominant narratives and the drive for certainty. The study argues that teachers need to see "results" in student behaviour and learning in order to be convinced of effectiveness; the question of *what* these practices are effective in achieving is not asked. Also, it is interesting that this study is concerned with supporting teachers in garnering the "desired student behavior" through praise and the threat of punishment, but they describe a lack of faith in teachers being capable of achieving this without the same sort of monitoring and positive reinforcement (Hirn *et al.*, 2017, p.146).

by how the teacher feels about the 'grip' they have on the classroom) use "tact"<sup>106</sup> and are more concerned with "what matters" in the moment, both being grounded in context (of the classroom) rather than beliefs because "being in a world is not purely mental but also moody, embodied, and embedded" (Garcia & Lewis, 2014, p.144 & 145).

We cannot approach problems in education (or outside of it) through a strictly philosophical methodology, especially if that approach is entirely removed from the actual phenomena of the classroom. Other methods in the understanding of/working-through problems that are common in education, such as psychology, also need to balance or include our beliefs and practices, politics and our procedures, Stories, moods and feelings, stress, and goals both in the long-term and the short. We are more than 'doings' but also 'beings' and this is why the separation of what we think and what we do is problematic. In navigating our contexts, such as our classrooms or family dynamics, we cannot simply rely on a set of rules or guidelines and *do* without thinking. This would be impossible but also rather antithetical to *progressivism*; how could one learn or grow, innovate or move beyond, without reflection and making connections between thinking and doing? The argument that praxis is intellectualist and that the classroom, or the split-second and demanding nature of teaching or parenting, doesn't allow for it is a poor one. The position separates theory and practice and the alternative of "tactful coping" suggests that teachers and parents aren't likely to reflect while navigating difficult situations (Garcia & Lewis, 2014, p.157). Although the authors insist that teaching is a

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<sup>106</sup> According to Garcia & Lewis (2014), 'tact' "*bypasses the mental filter of beliefs*" (p.143, *emphasis original*) and is an automatic response. Tactfulness is "pretheoretical" and more of a "know-how/knack" (Garcia & Lewis, 2014, p.153) and is "what enables teacher practitioners to (1) be drawn into what matters within a context and (2) draw out what is best in that context through their practices" (Garcia & Lewis, 2014, p.156). Tact is what the authors argue practice is based upon (rather than beliefs or theory).

'thinking' profession, the day-to-day act of teaching is "on the level of motor intentional skills rather than the self-reflective practice of critical thinking" (Garcia & Lewis, 2014, p.157). For the authors, reflection is too "disembodied," too abstract, and "out of the flow of experience" (Garcia & Lewis, 2014, p.157, *emphasis original*). Rather than teacher excellence being measured through praxis, or the ability to find congruence between one's beliefs and practices through reflection, an approach that the article argues distracts teachers from the "heat of the moment" and puts the focus on unattainable "utopian" beliefs, teachers should instead be encouraged to hone their practical skills and shift the notion of excellence to one's ability to cope and "to achieve a certain maximal clarity, poise, and ease" or 'flow' in the classroom (Garcia & Lewis, 2014, pp.142, 147, 158).

I acknowledge that the classroom (and parenting) carry with them real-life complexity and that focusing *only* or even mostly on theory can have the effect of trivializing this and is less helpful than other options when it comes to preparing teachers or parents, helping them to grow, and supporting them in their goals. I agree that teaching is a tactful profession in the sense that it is "one that is not simply thinking or unthinking but rather sensitive, open, and attentive" and that the teacher is not merely conforming without thought but often "*responding* to what our embeddedness in the classroom calls us toward" (Garcia & Lewis, 2014, p.156). I also concur with the authors that teaching is a way of being-in-the-world, which is not just "a state of mind or a set of beliefs" to be aligned with a practice, but influenced by "a way of acting that embodies certain norms, goals, and roles" and this essentially means that a teacher is embedded in the context of the classroom, and must be open and responsive to that context (Garcia & Lewis, 2014, p.156). But, for me, this does not mean that teachers and

parents shouldn't and couldn't engage in praxis<sup>107</sup> or think about their thinking in relation to their doing. If the subject of this argument were to be replaced with a student, the student who is "too absorbed in coping" with a goal or challenge that they skirt or overlook the ways in which what they are doing may be harming others, we ask them to be more reflective (Garcia & Lewis, 2014, p.142). When my 5-year-old is absorbed in building a block tower and begins to dismantle the project of the kid next to them, without mal-intention but with damage done (both the other kid's tower and feelings now hurt), I draw their attention to what they are doing and ask them to reflect—I support them in seeing the disconnection—and my goal, however unconscious in that moment, is to support them in *being* one who engages in praxis. All of us, perhaps in different ways at different times, reflect on the connections and disconnections between our thinking and doing. We ask students to make these connections in the moment, sometimes during difficult moments, as this is part of learning to be self-governing. The article acknowledges that beliefs affect practice but argues that fumbling

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<sup>107</sup> American educator and feminist theorist, bell hooks (1991), would also disagree with the idea that praxis and theory, not to mention politics, is out of bounds for teachers. In hooks' article, entitled "Theory as Liberatory Practice," she quotes Terry Eagleton who writes, "Children make the best theorists, since they have not yet been educated into accepting our routine social practices as 'natural,' and so insist on posing to those practices the most embarrassingly general and fundamental questions, regarding them with a wondering estrangement which we adults have long forgotten. Since they do not yet grasp our social practices as inevitable, they do not see why we might not do things differently" (1990, p.34 as cited in hooks, 1991, p.1). For hooks, anyone can theorize, as theory is "making sense out of what was happening," it is a "lived" experience, and that "one may practice theorizing without ever knowing/possessing the term" (1991, p.2 & 3). But she also remarks on the ways in which theory is often made unattainable, or "highly abstract, jargonistic, difficult to read, and containing obscure references that may not be at all clear or explained" (hooks, 1991, p.4). This can create "hierarchies of thought which reinscribe the politics of domination" (hooks, 1991, p.4), or create a ranking system on ways of knowing with certain approaches (such as Western academics) at the top and other approaches (Indigenous ways of knowing, for example) at the bottom. This ordering and the ways in which theory is made inaccessible separates theory from practice, what we think and believe from our lived experiences, and the split between theory and practice has the effect of denying the empowering and healing elements of theory and theorizing (hooks, 1991). hooks also argues that "[p]ersonal testimony, personal experience, is such fertile ground" for theory and theorizing and that working to resolve the most pressing issues of daily life is to "engage in a critical process of theorizing that enables and empowers" (1991, p.8). Praxis is located in the everyday life, in the mundane and in the heat-of-the-moment, and it is something anyone can do.

around with the belief-practice connection causes teachers to miss out on “key ‘teachable moments’” (Garcia & Lewis, 2014, p.143). This sounds like a fear of uncertainty, an effort to maintain the flow rather than ask difficult questions, which sounds more *unrealistic* in the classroom—not to mention more counterproductive when it comes to *learning*—than taking time to reflect. Can “tactful coping” be based on anything other than the dominant narrative (Garcia & Lewis, 2014, p.157)? Can it support democracy? The article admits that there are times when praxis is necessary, but the authors recommend a focus on embodied skills that are *felt*<sup>108</sup> more than thought through; “motor intentionality” that is “*intuitively felt* as the approximation of an optimum grip on the situation at hand” (Garcia & Lewis, 2014, p.157). This article and this narrative justify our focus on the *how*, but even this argument negates the *what* and the *who*. *What* constitutes a ‘grip’ on the classroom? *Who* benefits from this grip? If one considers *how* this grip is maintained, is there a potential for them to be uncomfortable? What happens if these questions are not asked?

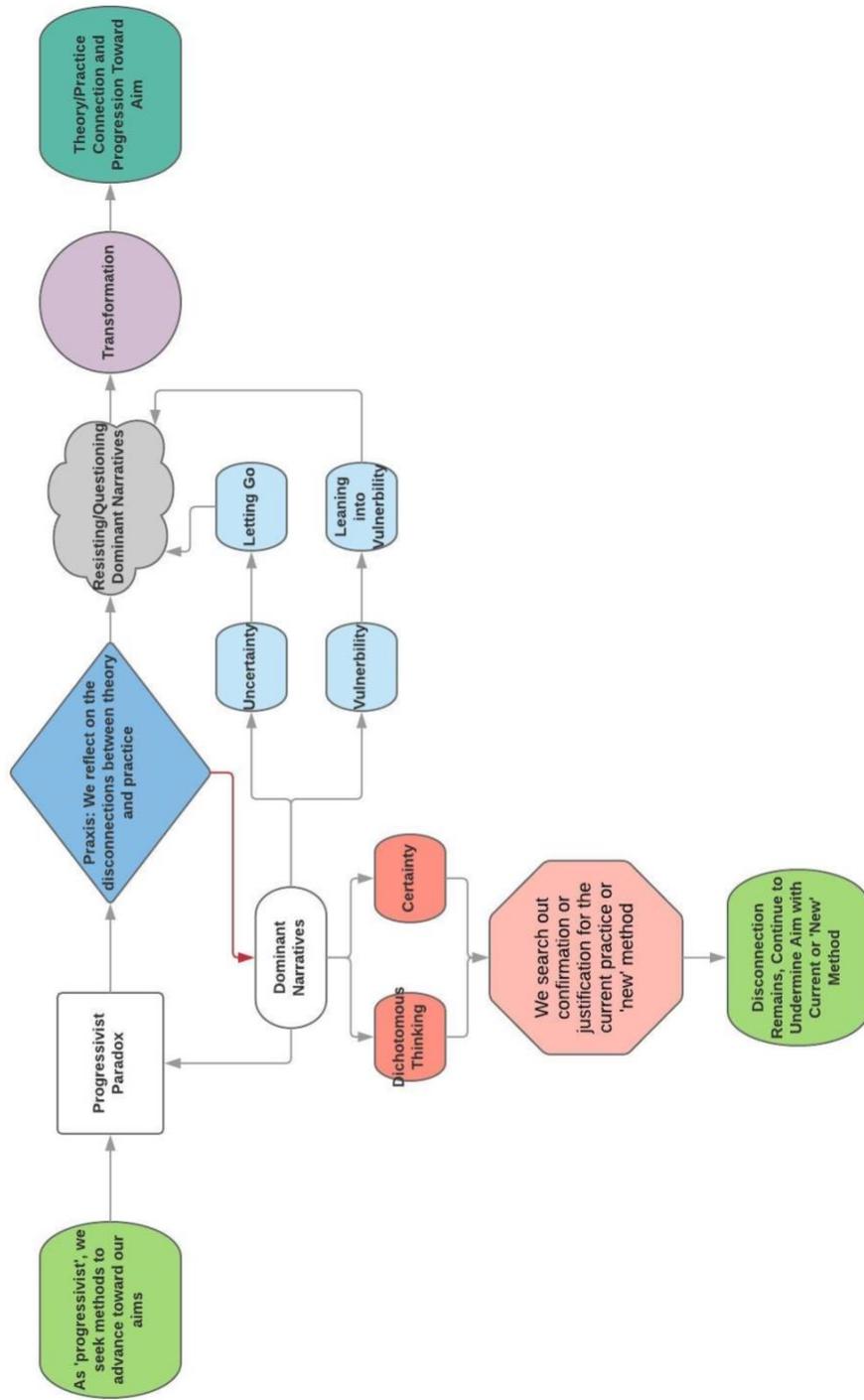
The uncertainty and vulnerability that comes along with the self-study, the careful dissection of what we think we know and/or what we believe is knowable can be excruciating. Also, we are prone to associate these feelings with a lack of development, we may even feel frozen, so that the concern becomes that this unsureness is a risk or a problem and *not* the aspect of our theory/practice that we are attempting to hold up to the light. It is easy to mistake The Story of our incapability to engage with theory for personal ineptitude, so we back away and try to find something a little more ‘safe,’ like more information on the *practical* stuff. So, The Story goes, getting into politics is a no-no (but inevitable and unavoidable), and it is

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<sup>108</sup> Again, hooks (1991) speaks to praxis being tied to emotions/feelings, as well as being somewhat intuitive.

certainly more comfortable if we stick with the status quo as that is rarely read as politics anyway. Along with this, we must maintain a theory-practice connection but our focus (and the focus of our training and professional development and resources, not to mention the dominant narrative) is on the *how* and the methods that should be employed to support the theory that we (so The Story goes) cannot really understand or work through. Or, at least we should continue with that theory of which we are certain; perhaps that one we picked up through osmosis in our teacher-education courses or through being a student in a school system dominated by that narrative. In an effort to move beyond, to progress, it is a prevalent reaction to feel discomfited, as though the ground beneath you may be slipping away, especially when a shift is about to happen. So, we back away from transformation and we hold tightly to certainty because dichotomous thinking tells us that we can either know (control) or not know (chaos). Despite our efforts as ‘progressivist’ educators, who are seeking methods to advance toward our aims, we find ourselves in search of confirmation or justification for the current practices or ‘new’ method. We take on an innovative technique because of *how* it works; questions such as *what* the technique ‘works’ to do or on *whom* it works (or for *whom*) is not up for discussion. Disconnection—or the undermining of our progressivist goals by our revised and even seemingly ‘trailblazing’ practice—remains and we haven’t moved any closer to our long-term goal. Praxis is unsettling. It seems that being unsettled, or encountering vulnerability or uncertainty, is part of progressivist education and its goals.

MOVING BEYOND THE PROGRESSIVIST PARADOX



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Moving Beyond the Progressivist Paradox - Figure 3.0

I have illustrated the above effort to move beyond the Progressivist Paradox in a flowchart depicted in figure 3.0.

Praxis is something we *are* doing, even when the heat-of-the-moment is scalding hot. We do it in the moment *and* sometimes we take it home with us. As parents, we occasionally take the trials of the day to bed with us. What could I have done differently? Why did they react in that way? What can I do that will change this pattern of me banging my head against a wall? We re-evaluate our long-term or big-picture goals, such as passing on a love of learning, encouraging problem-solving skills, supporting social skills, and fostering overall happiness. Sometimes, an invitation to resist or question one of those Stories comes along. This can be as simple (yet as disrupting) as noticing the circles in which we run. I want to move away from the narrative that tells us *effective* or *natural* teachers do/say/are \_\_\_\_\_ as I believe it has the effect of keeping us static. I want to invite reflection so that we can take our own thought-journeys and tell our own stories. The next chapter will take us through some of the stories-that-we-all-know about the 'good' teacher, the 'ideal' approach to classroom management, and the 'best' way to prepare future citizens in a democratic society. I want to let go of the dichotomous thinking that keeps us in an either/or state of mind, one that translates into a commitment to certain approaches even when, upon reflection, they cause us to undermine our own aims. I want to invoke shift.

So, what is the Progressivist Paradox in our contemporary context? What does this mean for progressivist teachers and parents of today? For me, it looks like an answer and a question that were mentioned in the introductory chapter: we want our kids to have the

*freedom to be fully human*, while we wrestle with a question continuously throughout our days that undermines that effort:

*How do I get them to do what I want them to do?*

Notice the *how* in this pervasive question. Also, observe that the *what* and the *who* are located in our answer. We want kids to know their own freedoms and the freedoms of others, we want them to know the value of equality and freedom, but our question says something different about our aim. When our Answer is the message, it tells us that *we believe that kids are capable of self-governance*. When The Question is the focus, it tells us that we think “Those kids can’t handle their freedom” (Morrison & Morrison, 1999, p.12). This is the paradox, the combination of contradictory intentions, two opposing efforts that cannot support one another because they are antithetical in nature. Why does this go unresolved? Why isn’t praxis working? What is in the way of progress and the *movement* that is essential to being progressivist?

I believe it has a lot to do with Stories.

It seems like a chicken or egg scenario when it comes to Stories and questioning them; do we need to see the Stories to question them or do we need to question the Stories to see them? And when it comes to theory, do we need to *know* it to see how it connects or disconnects to our practice, or can we take a deep survey of our collection of methods and follow their trails back to the thinking behind them? Can we feel disconnection in our guts? When the emotions arise and something deep within is telling us that *this isn’t working*, can we let go of our need for certainty and lean into vulnerability? Or is the fear that we will not be *effective* enough, or that the ‘flow’ might be disrupted, too strong? As the quotation at the

beginning of this chapter states, “We can choose courage or we can choose comfort, but we can’t have both” (Brown, 2017, p.4).

The Progressivist Paradox tells us that we can strive for one thing while doing another, all the while maintaining our poise, calm, and focus. Digging into the stories-that-we-all-know has the potential for breaking this cycle of self-contradiction, but questioning the *what*, *who*, and *how* can be excruciating or empowering. When I explain to children that a level is a tool used for detecting if something is flat or straight, am I trying to control what they know, am I saying to them that they cannot know something without me? What does this say about what I believe about the role of the teacher or parent? When I praise children after they’ve been rock-climbing, do I believe that they must be told which behaviours are ‘good’ or favourable? Is my goal to reinforce certain behaviours in a positive way because I think that if I don’t that others will choose to act inappropriately? What does this say about my image of the child? Do I think about the inequality of our roles? Would disconnections in praxis become more obvious if an eleven-year-old patted *me* on the head as I unclipped their carabiner and said, “Good Belaying!”<sup>109</sup> The change we seek is connection: the connection within ourselves and with others, our environments (contexts), and ideas. If we can tell our own stories, rather than having stories-that-we-all-know told through us, we live the self-governance we seek to impart.

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<sup>109</sup> A carabiner is a metal clip used to attach a top-rope to a climber’s harness. A belayer is the person who stays on the ground and is at the other end of the top-rope and controls how much rope or ‘slack’ is holding the climber.

## Chapter Three—Progressivist Interrupted

*If we don't watch out, stultification is going to become greater because less noticeable and easier to justify [sic].*

—Joseph Jacotot, 1829, p.21 as cited in Jacques Rancière, 1991, p.122

### What *Might* Be

A footnote is an interruption, a storytelling is an intervention, and ideas are “material forces” (Marx, 1859/1999). Jacques Rancière’s (2009) article entitled “A few remarks on the method of Jacques Rancière,” a paper written in the third person, is a curious example of this. A man often pegged as a ‘political philosopher,’ which is ironic and probably a little exasperating because his work critiques philosophers<sup>110</sup> and he has never said “what politics is but what it might be,” makes the effort to tell the story of his work as a systems intervention, an interruption to philosophy-as-usual, by describing the way in which ideas are invariably connected to ‘method’ (Rancière, 2009, p.119). He argues that “[i]deas always are material realities, taking over bodies, giving them a map of the visible and orientation for moving;” but

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<sup>110</sup> In Rancière’s (1983) book entitled *The Philosopher and His Poor*, he recounts The Story of philosophy and the ways in which it discounts many efforts to philosophize. The Story tells us that “a person can only do one thing at a time” (Rancière, 1983, p.4). Aptitudes are naturally distributed, and certain occupations are assigned to certain aptitudes; an artisan is an artisan, a shoemaker is a shoemaker (Rancière, 1983). A shoemaker is not one who makes shoes *and* does philosophy; the craftsperson sticks to their craft. This is drawn from what is known as the *Craft Analogy* that Socrates makes in *The Republic* (Barney, 2017). Rancière contends that the purpose of philosophy, according to the narrative, is to teach rulers and that anyone doing philosophy who is not a ‘true’ philosopher is undermining the “respected functions” (1983, p.11). Rancière argues that The Story tells us that there is a danger to just anyone doing philosophy. If anyone can philosophize then anyone can be free, and knowledge is unleashed and can be changed or created by anyone. This upsets the social order. Rancière doesn’t want to be a philosopher—he is critiquing the methods of philosophy that maintain it as only for an elite group, as inaccessible—he does not want to be one who preaches justice and wisdom in the form of “moderation” for the purpose of keeping the artisan, and all other ‘non-philosophers’ in their places. Philosophy as such is founded on inequality and Rancière despises The Story as it keeps us “false free” (1983, p.24).

what about the *invisible*, the elements which influence our ideas and whisper in what direction to go (Rancière, 2009, p.114)? Our movement is directed by our ideas, but we cannot press onward until we have paused to ask not only “where am I now?” but “where are we now?” (Rancière, 2009, p.115). After all, *my* ideas are related to my position as not only an individual but also a social being; I am influenced by my connection to *we* and by the stories-that-we-all-know. We must ask this question so that we might intervene, involve ourselves in an altering of our current state, “reconsider the framework we use to ‘see’ things and map situations, to move within this framework or get away from it” (Rancière, 2009, p.115). Looking at where it is that *we* are now, and gauging what Stories got us here and/or keep us here, does not have to separate us. Exploring the Stories that tell us where we are right now should not undermine our goals even if it may lead to us reframing these places or reworking the narrative.

Also, like Rancière, I have little interest in saying what *should* be a method in classroom teaching or *should* be a tactic used in day-to-day parenting. Rather, my efforts here are to consider some storytelling of what *might be* when equality is our point of departure. I want to explore what *might* happen when our focus shifts from compliance to connection. But before all of that, I want to acknowledge what *might be* holding us back or getting in the way. For one to believe that others are capable of self-governance one might need to begin with a belief in equality *and*<sup>111</sup> freedom. Our belief in our own self-worth and equality with others is deeply rooted in our sense of connection with ourselves, others, the environment, and ideas. Gregory Cajete, Tewa scholar, author, and innovator in synthesizing Indigenous perspectives with

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<sup>111</sup> As discussed earlier, equality and freedom are not antithetical but rather interdependent and interconnected; we aren’t free until we are *all* free.

Western ones, specifically in sciences, says that “a good life” is “to always think the highest thought” (1994, p.46). Cajete shows that in the West we tend to live and think outside of our bodies, in our own minds and disconnected from others and our natural world, and we push our hearts aside and focus on the rational, our reasoning. He argues that this is not ‘a good life’ (Cajete, 1994). Connection<sup>112</sup> is essential to thinking the highest thought; if we are wrought

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<sup>112</sup> I like to look at connection in four ways: connection with self, others, the environment, and ideas. As mentioned before, a lot of my influences and experience come from my years at summer camps, as both a camper and staff member, and I see my approach to connection as a revised dictum on the common secular camping motto known to some as the 3Rs. No, the 3Rs to which I’m referring are not ‘reading, ‘riting, and ‘rithmetic,’ nor are they ‘reduce, reuse, recycle.’ The 3Rs are usually presented to campers at the beginning of their camp experience as ‘Respect, Respect, Respect.’ In more detail, the first respect is for self (i.e. wear sunscreen, drink enough water, challenge yourself), the second is for others (listen when others speak, work together, be kind), and the third is for the environment (both human-made and natural: take care of the equipment, clean-up your messes, don’t litter, be conscious of large animals). As a new camp leader, I often referred back to them for any conflict with a camper, any behaviour issue could be approached by reminding the child of the 3Rs. Shortly after acknowledging that my goal was to connect with campers but that my focus was more often than not on their behaviours, I realized that the 3Rs didn’t seem to serve my aims. Of course, I wanted them to be safe and wear hats; it wasn’t that I thought being inattentive during instructions could be overlooked; I certainly wanted to preserve the forest floor and encourage others to do the same. But all of the above was being seen through a lens that showed with crispness the behaviour of the children and blurred the children themselves. The 3Rs seemed to be pressing us to ask ourselves, how is my *behaviour* affecting me, those around me, and the equipment and natural world. This is not a bad question to ask—and I want to steer clear of suggesting that these questions couldn’t or shouldn’t be asked at all—but I am curious as to *what* these questions may be overlooking and *why*? My attention was centred on the actions of those around me and hardly on the persons doing the actions; my ongoing questions surrounded *how* to most compellingly communicate instructions or requests. I didn’t notice that most of this communication was more or less one-sided. I started to ruminate on connection. What if ‘respect’ was replaced with ‘connection’? When I am present and listening to my own needs, I can take account of my connection within myself and notice how I am connected and/or disconnected. I feel disconnected when I am hungry or thirsty or tired, or when I am nervous about meeting a new person or sad about missing a friend. I know that I have a better chance of working through a difficult problem when I am well-rested, and I’ve dealt with the emotional baggage holding me down. When I consider my connection with others, I am conscious of the way that I am taking in or receiving others, how I am feeling about others and myself, and how other receive me. When I am connected with others, “I receive what the other conveys, and I want to respond in a way that furthers the other’s purpose or project” (Noddings, 2005, p.16). Sometimes, I can feel what another feels, and I am impelled by this; I feel excitement or dread with them, I have a sense that they are reading me and my feelings, too. American educationalist and philosopher, Nel Noddings, notes calls this ‘motivational displacement,’ or “the sense that our motive energy is flowing toward others and their projects” such as when “we watch a small child trying to tie her shoes, we often feel our own fingers moving in sympathetic response” (2005, p.16). This connection with others does not tell me how to behave or what to do. As Noddings argues, within her work on ‘caring’ in education, “Caring is a way of being in relation, not a set of specific behaviors” (2005, p.17). I feel that connection, and a state of being connected, is the same way. When I am disconnected from others, I struggle to meet their needs and support their freedoms. Being “in relation” with others really helps me to maintain my long-term aim of being fully human and supporting others to do the same (Noddings, 2005, p.17).

with disconnection, we are not primed to have equality in mind. Reason is an independent process, disconnected from others and done primarily in an isolated way. Sto:lo scholar Jo-Ann Archibald (2008) offers storytelling as an alternative to the Western primacy of reason because it has the effect of bringing people together. She writes, “[w]e must let our emotions surface. As the Elders say, it is important to listen with ‘three ears: two in the sides of our heads and the one that is in our heart’” (Archibald, 2008, p.9). This is not to say that one should go *without* reason—this is not a question of reason *or* emotion—but rather a proposal to invoke both without placing greater importance on either. One might allow for reason *and* emotion; they might require each other for there to be movement toward one’s goals or reconnection between theory and practice. One might engage with a rationale for equality and ready one’s self emotionally with an open heart. Cajete and Archibald are speaking to a relationship between equality and connection in an Indigenous context and this is simultaneously ancient *and* current and speaks to me as a person responding to the myth of modernity<sup>113</sup> and trying to piece together The Story of progressivist education. Another approach to thinking about the relationship between connection and equality (and possibly reason and emotion) came to me from the perspective of a (settler) child.

My eldest child, Finlay,<sup>114</sup> was interested in what I was doing all day in my office and what I was talking about when I went out in the evenings to present to parents or teachers. I sat down with him and brought up one of my slide shows and he was immediately interested in

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<sup>113</sup> The myth of modernity will be discussed further in this chapter through the work of Michel Foucault.

<sup>114</sup> Finlay has been consulted throughout the writing and revising of this work. He has given me permission to use these stories. My younger child has also approved the use of stories in which they appear but prefers that their name/gender not be used. The presence of my children in this work has also been approved through an application to the University of Victoria’s Human Research Ethics Board and consent through their other parent.

my stick figure drawings of Hegel's Master-Slave-Dialectic [MSD].<sup>115</sup> I walked him through a six-year-old-friendly version of this story and spoke about how I use it to show relationships between parents and kids, as well as teachers and students (although it could be related to nearly any relationship between people). As I often do when delivering this talk to adults, I used my hands to demonstrate that the master is at a different level than the slave by holding them out in front of me, palms down, and with one about six inches over and above the other. Both master and slave are in fear, the master fears losing their role as master and the slave fears punishment or losing any progress toward becoming a master;<sup>116</sup> neither are free or equal. The hand that I had raised at a higher level than the other exchanged places with the lower one to demonstrate that the roles of master and slave shift; the teacher or parent isn't always the master and the student or child isn't always the slave.<sup>117</sup> But within the dialectic, I told him,

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<sup>115</sup> The MSD was outlined and discussed in Chapter One.

<sup>116</sup> Because this would mean that the master would become the slave, this isn't a real destination. The slave cannot become the master through hard work and compliance to the master. The slave only becomes the master through a 'fight to the death.' Although I didn't get into this with my son, I think it is interesting to note that Paulo Freire argues that "during the initial stage of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, themselves tend to become oppressors, or 'sub-oppressors.' The very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped. Their ideal is to be men; but for them, to be men is to be oppressors. This is their model of humanity" (2005, p.27). But this is part of the narrative; it is essential for the master to maintain their role and one way to do that is to keep the slave compliant and a promise that compliance will someday lead to a new role does the trick. Being a 'sub-oppressor' may masquerade as power because one is oppressing others and so seemingly has power over others. But, the power to question directives, or to resist systemic expectations, is not within the sub-oppressor's reach. They are not free or equal, but rather just as controlled by The Story as the oppressor and oppressed. As Freire points out, for the sub-oppressors, "their perception of themselves as oppressed is impaired by their submersion in the reality of oppression. At this level, their perception of themselves as opposites of the oppressor does not yet signify engagement in a struggle to overcome the contradiction; the one pole aspires not to liberation, but to identification with its opposite pole" (2005, pp.27-28). The Story is told through us and The Story limits the possibilities.

<sup>117</sup> I make this point because, in my experience, folks often feel a sense of relief when they realize that they aren't being the 'bad guy'—the master—all of the time. We are in a dance in these roles. It is easier to picture when the adult is in the role of the master; we are often in a position where we feel that it is necessary to be in control. But it is important to note that with control comes a response of resistance. No one likes to have their own self-governance usurped: think of the child who refuses to wear a coat; or trying to get a room full of 7<sup>th</sup> graders to plod through a math problem on Valentine's Day; or the kid who crumples on the floor of the grocery store in protest over the cereal choice. We fluctuate back and forth between master and slave; sometimes we sense this

there are only these two options. There is no equality until they reconcile. This was when my fingertips touched, and my hands were level. Finlay smiled and said, "It's like they can't connect because they can't hear each other." I asked him to clarify what he meant. He raised his hands to be as mine were initially, with one hand higher than the other, but moved his thumbs so that they looked like shadow-puppets or mouths talking as he moved his fingers and thumb together and then apart again. "When the people are master and slave, they can't hear each other, they are talking to no one." Held at different levels, he made his hands 'talk' and indeed each one looked as though they were speaking into the abyss; there was no one on the other end. "But," he continued, "when they are equal," his shadow-puppets moved so that they came face to face, "they can hear each other and see each other. They are together." Indeed, equality and connection might be interdependent and interrelated; we might need to see each other as fully human for us to dialogue with "three ears: two in the sides of our heads and the one that is in our heart" (Archibald, 2008, p.9).

### Progressivist Myths

Michel Foucault (1926-1984) was a 20<sup>th</sup> century French political theorist and philosopher who challenged the ways in which we view history and understand progress. He argues that since the Enlightenment, the past has been seen in a vertical way rather than a relational one; there was this moment in time in which Western thinkers suddenly saw those who came before them as less 'enlightened' (Foucault, 2008). There became a common approach to thinking about history as remnants of a backward past (not to be repeated), or as a

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shift of positions and our faces flush and we grab for power. This is a reaction that self-regulation addresses and I will dig into this in the next chapter.

measuring stick to see how far a people, technology, profession, or society itself has come. In Foucault's first major work, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, he breaks down this view of modernity as a myth; the idea that the state of the contemporary represents what we have *progressed* toward and leaves behind the underdeveloped or unsophisticated 'traditional' ways is misleadingly uncomplicated and requires fleshing out (1965). He details the ways in which the status quo's approach<sup>118</sup> to mental illness in the modern era of the 1950's was understood as superior to previous times (Foucault, 1965). But, as Foucault demonstrates when he traces the unfolding of the notion of madness from the Renaissance through to his own time, relying on this mythology can be contradictory (1965). Prior to the Western *age of reason*, the mad were depicted in both art and literature as in possession of a special sort of knowledge, they were revered and understood as a demonstration of "all that is easy, joyous, frivolous in the world," as well as a reflection of the truth about being human<sup>119</sup> (Foucault, 1965, p.25). The 'village idiot' was allowed to roam freely and was taken care of by the people or chased out of town (Foucault, 1965). But, with the dawn of the Enlightenment the sin of sins became a lack of reason, and dichotomous thinking, such as reason/irrational (emotional), sane/insane (mad), order/chaos (subverting order), came to define systems of power. The narrative became that reason, sanity, and order are 'moral' and the mad exhibit a "social uselessness" that needs to be remedied not just

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<sup>118</sup> The 'status quo's approach' is informed by dominant narratives and supported by systems. In most cases, the status quo is supported by the 'authority' and has power within the existing state of affairs, especially within the social and political realms. Foucault details the approach to mental illness that, in the 1950's, was informed by the most accepted and typical viewpoints and methods and served the dominant narrative and those who benefit from that narrative.

<sup>119</sup> Foucault writes, "Madness deals not so much with truth and the world, as with man [sic] and whatever truth about himself he is able to perceive... It thus gives access to a completely moral universe, Evil is not punishment or the end of time, but only fault and flaw" (1965, p.27).

because “the madman [sic] comes from the world of the irrational and bears its stigmata; rather, it is because he [sic] crosses the frontiers of bourgeois order of his own accord, and alienates himself outside the sacred limits of its ethic” and undermines the “sacred powers of labour” with an “inability to work and to follow the rhythms of collective life” (Foucault, 1965, p.58). Madness was seen as a rejection of bourgeois order and something that must be corrected. The result, almost overnight, was to lock up those considered mad with the lepers and the poor (Foucault, 1965). This was seen as an improvement on running ‘beggars’ and ‘idiots’ out of city walls; “[f]or the first time, purely negative measures of exclusion were replaced by a measure of confinement” and rather than being driven away or punished, the madman was “taken in charge, at the expense of the nation but at the cost of his [sic] individual liberty” (Foucault, 1965, p.48). The Story became that the asylum was a modern miracle; a place of ordinance and regulation. Clean and tidy, it involves the intentional science of psychiatry and employs complex chemistry and carefully manicured spaces to maintain calmness and even restore the reason of the mad (Foucault, 1965). Power maintains itself through reason, sanity, and order.

In his work, Foucault was primarily concerned with the role of power; how it works, and the ways in which it impacts systems and ideas throughout history. *Madness and Civilization* demonstrates the rise of reason and the development of a hierarchy that places the reasonable over those seemingly without reason, as well as The Story that it is better to ‘cure’ the mad—through isolation, medicalization, and institutionalization rather than the traditional

approaches<sup>120</sup>—without regard for who benefits from these narratives and related techniques.

There is something problematic in The Story or history “where their function is to illustrate that happy age when madness [or anything else] was finally recognized and treated according to a truth to which we had too long remained blind” (Foucault, 1965, p.241). Foucault exposed the same Story with medicine and sexuality, but in his look at the myth of modernity and the role of power in prisons, there was another narrative being revealed that also relates to freedom.

In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault (1975) speaks to the modernization of state punishment; once public, it has been moved behind prison walls so that power perhaps looks more kind and certainly more palatable.<sup>121</sup> Foucault offers a commentary on the ways in which power operates in society through punitive measures, but these measures are not isolated to prisons; power circulates in all relationships and spaces, in language and culture, in knowledge and in Stories. Foucault notes that “[t]he same movement [as was found in the reorganization of state punishment] was to be found in the reorganization of elementary teaching: the details of surveillance were specified and integrated into the teaching relationship” (1975, p.175). Schools and classrooms, and the effort to make them more efficient, ordered, and productive, even with the progressivist call for freedom, are deeply affected by power; “it seems to be that in these mundane realities of classrooms, which are so commonplace that they are almost natural and invisible, is where power relations are played out” (Oral, 2013, p.114). What I am saying is probably uncomfortable, in that no one wants to

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<sup>120</sup> I am not saying that mental illness should go untreated—I don’t believe Foucault advocated that either—but rather that power is clearly problematic in the more ‘modern’ era of the asylum, where the confinement of those with mental illness serves those in authority, than the more antiquated approach of allowing those with mental illness to roam the village and sing hymns in the town square (Foucault, 1965).

<sup>121</sup> Palatability makes resistance less likely.

think of teachers as *intentionally* treating students as one would treat prisoners. But that is the thing: Foucault shows how power can operate in ways that are *unintentional* and *invisible*. And, as discussed throughout this text, when a Story is made visible or when paradox can be discerned, uncertainty and vulnerability can be embraced, and resistance is possible.

Foucault tells us how discipline and punishment changed with modernity. During the Renaissance, among other physically punishing practices, people were flogged in the street (Foucault, 1975). But, as Foucault points out, in more modern punitive measures,

...[o]ne no longer touched the body, or at least as little as possible, and then only to reach something other than the body itself. It might be objected that imprisonment, confinement, forced labour, penal servitude, prohibition from entering certain areas, deportation - which have occupied so important a place in modern penal systems - are 'physical' penalties. (Foucault, 1975, p.11)

What Foucault means by 'physical' is something to which I want to draw attention because, like much of what he writes, it is counter-intuitive and yet remarkably essential to the point.

Foucault is highlighting a shift in the way power operates. When a person was flogged in the street or slapped on the palms with a ruler in school, the ways in which power operates are more tangible and conceivable to resist as it is visibly out in the open and attacks the body. But, when it comes to punitive measures, the shift from an "art of unbearable sensations" to an "economy of suspended rights"—such as locking up the mentally ill in an asylum or sending the disruptive student to the 'thinking chair'<sup>122</sup>—aligned with a shift from 'Sovereign Power' to

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<sup>122</sup> The 'thinking chair' is a more palatable version of a 'time-out chair' that I have seen employed in families and classrooms within the last few years. A child who has transgressed is told by the teacher or parent (the authority) to physically remove themselves from the group or their preferred space and sit (often separately from others) in a chair that is designated as a space to 'think' about one's transgression.

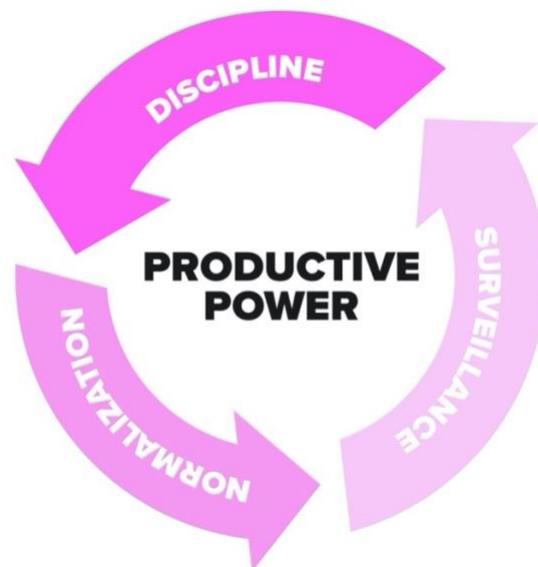
'Productive Power' (Foucault, 1975, p.11). Punitive measures are removed from public sight—or difficult to see because obscured by a dominant narrative—or they are made more palatable and power, too, becomes less visible and more acceptable.

When we talk about power in classrooms or within the parent-child relationship, we often start with “our [teacher/adult] perceived lack of power, or with a perceived misuse of power” (Ford, 2003, p.8). Another common discussion surrounding power are the potential ‘power struggles’ between adults and children, and the wisdom to *not allow* for such struggles to occur (i.e. I have been told to never enter into an argument with a child/student). Also included or absorbed in discussions of power is the legitimacy of authority as well as justifications and limits of the duty to obey authority. In her article entitled “Unveiling Technologies of Power in Classroom Organization Practice,” Maureen Ford (2003) speaks to how adult authority over children is justified and discussed “in terms that establish the means of controlling the behaviour of others, the ‘right’ to exert such control, and the nature and limits of that ‘right’” (p.8). But power is often thought of as something a person can possess—that is held by an authority—a ‘good’ teacher maintains control of the students; “power is again invoked as a measure of the force or influence teachers can bring to bear on students’ behaviour” (Ford, 2003, p.8). The more common understanding of power, Sovereign Power, involves the notion that it is something contained within a central authority figure, and perhaps distributed in shares among its sub-authorities or assistants, and that control is exercised through the imposed obedience to that dominant power along with the rules or laws that ‘they’ have authorised. But, for Foucault, there is another kind of power and this “power circulates; it exists only when put into action... reaches the very grain of individuals... and inserts itself into

their actions and attitudes, their discourse, learning processes, and everyday lives” (1975, p.201). Dubbed ‘Productive Power,’ this power is *not* located in the teacher’s role, but rather it inserts itself *physically* within each person or ‘subject.’ Because Productive Power influences our understanding of our own subjectivity or sense of self—our beliefs in what constitutes as ‘normal,’ our judgements, our sense of morality, and so much more—both its intended and unintended elements are important to its presence. Ford points out that Productive Power “is significant for educators because of its potential for unveiling forms of domination that more commonly used accounts of power obscure” (2003, p.9). Sovereign Power and its more obvious practices, such as the violence of corporal punishment, or even a teacher stating that they are in-charge and that the students must do whatever they are told, may make the progressivist teacher cringe and remind one of the ‘traditional’ approaches in schooling that we seek to move beyond. Much like how some of the stories-that-we-all-know are told through us, undermining our goals and intentions, Productive Power operates from within us and its actions and presence are concealed unless we unveil it as well as its ‘technologies’ (the ways in which it functions). Without consideration, Productive Power may have *unintended* impacts on our beliefs and practices.

Although ‘Sovereign Power’ is still present and relevant today, Foucault (1975) argues that Productive Power has become the more significant element that maintains the systemic hold on contemporary societies. Unlike Sovereign Power, Productive Power is not simply repressive but strategic in its dissemination and its presence; “[i]t is not held by certain individuals to be deployed against others, but circulates, which is to say, it is put into effect by particular folks situated in local contexts in response to local demands and strategies” (Ford,

2003, p.8). Its operation is exemplified in *discipline* (the use of punishment and reward), *normalization* (the production of a dominant narrative), and *surveillance* (both of others and of one's self) (Foucault, 1975). These three elements are interconnected and interdependent. In order to dole out punishment or reward, a behaviour needs to have been noted through surveillance. Surveillance feeds discipline and discipline feeds normalization. The more a behaviour is rewarded, the more the subjects come to see such behaviour as expected and 'normal' and internalize the judgment required to know what is 'good' or punishable. Normalization informs surveillance; I may be watched, so I should behave in a way that is considered 'good.' Normalization is also enacted through 'self-surveillance' or the act of observing and evaluating one's own behaviour so that it is in line with the norm and the possibility of reward or at least avoiding punishment. In the figure below, I show how these elements of Productive Power connect and feed into each other.



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Productive Power – Figure 4.0

Discipline, normalization, and surveillance may begin *externally*, but eventually they are embedded 'physically' and work *internally* through the subject. The need for an external authority or a Sovereign Power is reduced because, as Foucault points out, "[h]e [sic] who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (1975, pp.202-203).

It is the way in which the technologies of Productive Power operate in the practice of classroom organization or management that bears an uncanny similarity to Panopticism. Foucault writes that "[w]henver one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behaviour must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used" (Foucault, 1975, p.205). Jeremy Bentham, an English Enlightenment era philosopher, designed an institutional building that would function as a system of control (1843). The strategy of its configuration was to make it possible for all (pan-) people in an institution to be observed (-opticon) by just one custodian through making them come to believe that they are always being watched and/or they cannot know when they are not being watched. The custodian is housed in a tower in the centre of the ring of cells containing those being watched. The tower is darkened and therefore the one who watches is not visible to those observed, while the cells are lit and visible to the tower. The idea is that those being monitored are compelled to act as though they are always being watched (surveillance moves from external to internal); their behavior is directed (is normalized) by the possibility of being seen, judged, and punished or praised (discipline). The Panopticon exists to "maintain order;" with the use of effective

practices “among school-children, it makes it possible to observe performances (without there being any imitation or copying), to map aptitudes, to assess characters, to draw up rigorous classifications and, in relation to normal development, to distinguish ‘laziness and stubbornness’ from ‘incurable imbecility’” (Bentham, 1843, as cited by Foucault, 1975, p.203).

The progressivist scoffs at the traditionalist, who goes about teaching in a way that depends on a tyrannical Sovereign Power; the teacher openly demanding obedience and threatening with discipline that is wholly inappropriate. A child who obeys because they fear the strap is learning to obey or be obeyed, or how *not* to get caught, and this will not do for the progressivist who wants to raise a child with freedom and self-governance. But, does mobilizing power in a productive sense align with progressivist goals or thwart them? Layering praise (offering good-deed beads and 99 Ways to Say ‘Good Job!’) or training children to ‘Take 5’ so that their emotions no longer disrupt the flow of the classroom is certainly more palatable. If one’s action is in line with The Question of ‘How do I get them to do what I want them to do?’—but with subtlety, without being too ‘authoritative,’ and even through ‘fun’—there is a good possibility it is what Foucault describes as discipline. The behaviour that we require, the ‘acceptable’ or ‘normal’ traits or activities that we expect, we reinforce with discipline and “discipline (exemplified by Panopticism) had been the central technology of normalization” (Ford, 2003, p.11). When Productive Power circulates, it influences our understanding of ‘normal,’ The *Stories* are told through us, and without hearing their judgments the “judges of normality are present everywhere. We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the ‘social- worker’-judge; it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based; and each individual, wherever he [sic] may find himself, subjects to it

his body, his gestures, his behaviour, his aptitudes, his achievements” (Foucault, 1975, p.308).

In the classroom, power consists of the normalization of specific behaviours of the students, such as sitting quietly and working on the task assigned, and judgment (above example behaviour is ‘good’). But Productive Power also normalizes the teacher’s actions; an ‘effective’ teacher has fewer ‘behaviour problems’ and a ‘natural’ teacher appears confident and never needs to raise their voice. Normalisation, and the dominant narrative that maintains and reproduces its message, relies on surveillance (we confess or self-surveille, others judge and report us, we are documented through attendance or reporting) and discipline (fear of punishment or alternatively, a dependence upon praise). Foucault argues that Productive Power results in the control of behaviour through a means almost undetectable (1975). A Foucauldian analysis would point out that we are not truly in control of our own behavior, but rather we have learned through normalization what constitutes ‘good’ behavior. We perform ‘good’ behavior to avoid punishment or gain praise and, even if there is no one in the tower of the panopticon—even if we are not being surveilled by someone else—we are programmed to self-surveille; “perhaps in the desire to be seen as compliant, a ‘good’ prisoner, he [sic] moves further into the light” (Ford, 2003, p.10). The ‘gaze’ of the guard inside of the tower is in all of us; it is the “perfect disciplinary apparatus” (Foucault, 1975, p.173). In progressivist education, we often speak of children being able to do more for themselves, self-monitor, self-control, self-discipline, self-regulate, with the result being self-governance. Unfortunately, the outcome of the internal control of Productive Power is subversive to our aims; docility, unquestioning and uncritical obedience, manipulation, and subservience does not a participating democratic citizen make. It is possible that there are more than only these options.

Our State of Progress: 'conditional and can be changed'

The Story of 'progress' is that we are moving toward something *better*, more humanizing, and more in line with progressivist goals, but when questions surrounding power arise so can a paradox. This is the root of progressivist thinking: *progress toward freedom*. Foucault argues that the perception that our ancestors were less 'enlightened' or less 'free,' and that human societies are continuously climbing upward toward a utopian end, is problematic (1984). Is that which predates what constitutes the modern *always* 'primitive' and in need of improvement? There is a dangerous kind of dichotomous and hierarchical thinking that comes with this myth of modernity and it is embedded in a Western and colonial worldview in a way that places science, reason, certainty, and scaffolded explanation above philosophy, the role of emotion, what is 'unknowable' or uncertain, dialogue, and storytelling (Battiste, 2000). There is a call for order and a fear of chaos; the role of power is misunderstood and underrepresented. When we operate in binaries, there is little room left for other possibilities.

Our state of progress does not need to be laden down with binaries: the myth of modernity tells us that what we currently do is better than what we used to do;<sup>123</sup> the traditionalist/progressivist contradiction that makes the other side appear ridiculous; the Master-Slave Dialectic leaves us with only two options. We come by it honestly. Many of our influences, the bedrock of the stories-that-we-all-know, offer only the above. For example, both Hobbes and Rousseau are offering an either/or scenario, nature *or* society, in the quest for

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<sup>123</sup> Unless we are talking about what we did in "the good old days," which I would argue is nostalgia and not an analysis that is considering praxis.

'freedom.' One argues that the former is chaos, while the other reads the latter as so. As Battiste (2000) contends, the Eurocentric<sup>124</sup> quest for singularity over diversity aligns with a Hobbesian belief that the 'natural' is disordered and that humans are not self-governing but rather require explanation, the use of fear, and the presence of hierarchy. Although natural-law theorists, like Rousseau, often put Indigenous peoples in a "state of nature being the antithesis of civilized society," many Indigenous scholars reject this view and the dichotomous thinking that comes with it (Henderson, 2000, p.17).

How do we come to be able to *see* our reliance on dichotomous thinking? How might we open up to other possibilities? An Indigenous perspective does not juxtapose society and nature; the social can be natural and nature can be social. Battiste argues that binary thinking causes us to be trapped behind lines, with The Stories being told through us, and she brings up an Indigenous effort to see "the many sides of our confinement, our box" (2000, p.xvii). The effect of seeing The Story, of poking and prodding it, turning it over and looking at it from new angles, has the effect of reconciliation. The Western/Eurocentric dance of 'either/or' is an artificial context and, due to relaying on certain assumptions, does not allow for natural movement; when a context is viewed as 'normal' or 'natural,' it becomes resistant to reflection or change (Henderson, 2000). Battiste points out that artificial contexts, or stories-that-we-all-

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<sup>124</sup> Battiste writes that "[a]mong colonized peoples, the cognitive legacy of colonization is labelled 'Eurocentrism'" (2000, p.58). Eurocentrism "represents the cognitive force of artificial European thought, a differentiated consciousness, ever changing in its creativity to justify the oppression and domination of contemporary Indigenous peoples and their spiritual guardians" (Battiste, 2000, p.58). Battiste also offers a definition of the concept that she notes is typically accepted in the academy: Eurocentrism is "a dominant intellectual and educational movement that postulates the superiority of Europeans over non-Europeans" and she notes that it "has been the dominant artificial context for the last five centuries and it is an integral part of all scholarship, opinion, and law" (2000, p.58).

know, are *made up* and who or what they are benefiting needs to be challenged (2000). In Battiste's (2000) anthology, entitled *Reclaiming Indigenous Voices and Vision*, Henderson remarks that dominant narratives are "conditional and can be changed" (Henderson, 2000, p.12).

Educator and Blackfoot scientist Leroy Little Bear argues that Indigenous perspectives offer other options and dismantle or let go of the colonial effort "to maintain a singular social order by means of force and law, suppressing the diversity of human worldviews" (Little Bear, 2000, p.77). In a 'singular social order,' there is comparison and inevitably there is inequality (Little Bear, 2000). For example, Little Bear articulates that in Indigenous philosophy (and language, which holds space for philosophy<sup>125</sup>) there is no animate/inanimate binary (2000). He writes, "If everything is animate, then everything has spirit and knowledge. If everything has spirit and knowledge, then all are like me. If all are like me, then all are my relations;" indeed, a sense of equality is built-in to this non-binary worldview (Little Bear, 2000, p.78). It opens the door for emotions, experiences, storytelling, and transformation to enter into dialogue with reason, linear thinking, rhetoric, and static or objective positions.

Another upset to the myth of progress is an Indigenous notion of time. In Western thinking, and this includes progressivist theory, time is linear. This is reflected in the concept of progress; what came before now is *not* progress, but rather what needs to be left behind or overcome, and we are marching toward the future and our ideal. Western/Eurocentric

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<sup>125</sup> Little Bear notes that "[l]anguage embodies a way a society thinks. Through learning and speaking a particular language, an individual absorbs the collective thought processes of a people" (2000, p.78).

'progress' is focused on future outcomes and not on present moments or relations; the emphasis is on the product rather than process. But in Indigenous<sup>126</sup> thought the focus is on the present process and the connection being experienced (Little Bear, 2000). This reminds me of praxis; praxis is *process*, it is reflection-in-action, and it is about assessing and making connections. The way in which Little Bear describes time and language from an Indigenous perspective also upsets the trajectory of progress-as-linear; time is in "constant motion" and "cyclical or repetitive," and language is used to "describe 'happenings' rather than objects" (2000, p.78). As noted earlier, Western/Eurocentric thinking breaks ideas into parts that are then ordered in a linear way, or in a hierarchy showing value. What is an alternative to such an approach that is not disorder and chaos? Little Bear reflects on another possibility; he writes, "[i]f everything is constantly moving and changing, then one has to look at the whole to begin to see patterns" (Little Bear, 2000, p.78). The state of progress is trapped in a dialectic, static and focused on the product of the "either/or, black/white, saint/sinner" (Little Bear, 2000, p.78). Often the proposed solution is to find the 'grey area,' the acceptable in-between, such as the sweet spot in the middle of the spectrum of being 'authoritarian' or 'permissive,' so that the result is the most *effective* or *natural*.<sup>127</sup> Reconciliation is letting go of the need for

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<sup>126</sup> I am aware that making a blanket statement that groups all Indigenous peoples, each group being unique, into one homogeneous group is problematic. Little Bear makes the point that he is also careful about this slip into homogenization and yet he remarks that "there is enough similarity among North American Indian philosophies to apply the concepts [to which he is referring] generally, even though there may be individual differences or differing emphases" (2000, p.77).

<sup>127</sup> I would like to note here the interesting case of the words 'effective' and 'natural' being used throughout Classroom Management texts to describe the ideal teacher who inhabits the in-between state or happy medium. On the homepage of Fred Jones' *Tools for Teachers*, the methods being sold are promoted as "the teaching practices of highly effective teachers – the 'naturals' (Jones, 2018). In an article entitled "Environmental Reflections: Insights from Dewey and Freire," authors McDonough and Portelli (2004) argue that "*Effective* is a relational term" and one that requires "an adjective to qualify it as good, mediocre, or poor" (pp.59 & 60, *emphasis original*). Is the 'highly effective' teaching having a good effect? As McDonough and Portelli (2004) point out, "effects will always be happening in education" but that "the term 'effective' has become an empty

certainty, control, and a singularity of Truth and approaching one's self, others, places, and ideas with a holistic process of "noninterference" (Little Bear, 2000, p.80). The goal of Indigenous 'progress' is connection—unity, maintaining balance, and "sustaining harmony and cooperation"—but the focus is on the *process* and the process is past, present, and future *at the same time* (Little Bear, 2000, p.80). Societal norms and values are not thrown out the window, problems will need to be resolved, but rather than focusing on the components—time, on which end of a spectrum one is, the individual and their behaviour—attention is broadened and inclusive, the dichotomous spectrum abandoned, Truth and uncertainty cohabitate, and the Stories that creep in, the 'tricksters,'<sup>128</sup> are revealed and spoken so that their hold on us is slackened.

In teaching and parenting, the state of 'progress' has focused on the *how* for some time. *How* we practice and *how* we think reflects our progress when it is compared to *how* we (or our forerunners) used to practice or think. As discussed in Chapter One, The Story of what progressivist education is *not*—it is not traditional—is used for establishing what it *is*, and the binary becomes essential especially if we can't reflect on the narratives. As mentioned before, this may have something to do with The Story that teachers and parents can't philosophize, theorize, or understand the foundations of educational philosophy or theory. When teachers and parents are deemed unable to reflect, but more equipped to take directions or fulfil

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educational slogan" (pp.60 & 59). Of course, when speaking about educational outcomes for students, the goal is that what we do will have a good effect. But what is the goal?

<sup>128</sup> According to Youngblood Henderson (2000), the trickster "or imitator" is a being who "emphasizes Aboriginal thought and dramatizes human behavior in a world of flux" (p.58). A teacher, the trickster is "a paradoxical force in nature" (Youngblood Henderson, 2000, p.73). The trickster takes a different form for different peoples; the Anishinabe "call the force *Nanabush*, among the Cree the force is known as *wisakedjak* or coyote or crow...and the people of the western coast refer to this force as raven" (Youngblood Henderson, 2000, p.73).

prescriptive practice, theory and practice are separated and more focus is put onto the latter. With most of the emphasis on what teachers and parents are *doing*, 'progress' quickly gets diluted and turned into a measurement of what is 'effective.' The question of what teachers and parents—or their tactics—are 'effective' in accomplishing slips under the radar and goes unasked. The Progressivist Paradox is present, dominant narratives go unaddressed, and 'progress' is undermined as we are left static and no closer to our long-term goals. One essential *how* question goes unabated: *How* do we bring up, teach, encourage, support our students/children in being fully human and ready to participate in our collective vision of a society in which there is freedom and equality? The ruminations on this question are out there, but they are often combined with questions of *who* and *what*—theory and practice are interconnected and interdependent—but, when we are thirsty for simplicity and order, these considerations are crowded out of the conversation. Through our Western lens, the long-term goal seems far-fetched or unattainable. It is more appealing to stick with what you know gets 'results.' But the goal in these efforts to connect progressivist theory and practices is not some utopian vision but rather a question of how one can be humanizing and make connections in *this* moment; how one can reconcile a harmful dialectic *here*; how The Story is influencing my praxis and how one can resist or question it *now*. Our narrative of progress is not in *this-here-now*, it is locked in a past/future comparison and a false dilemma of either/or. I realize that it sounds clichéd, but I'll say it anyway: *the journey is the destination*.

Filling up Empty Vessels or Showing Us Where to Get the Water

"But, can you just tell us what to *do*?"

She was leaning over her desk, her elbow resting on her open textbook, and her eyes were slightly misty. She sounded exasperated. I knew that she wanted to be *the best* teacher. They all did. I looked around at their faces, many with furrowed brows and vexation in their expressions. But then I caught a slight smile on the face of one student. And then another. I smiled, too.

It's a funny thing that happens with the classes I teach. I've been told that folks arrive in the class with an idea of what sort of educator they want to be, or think that they are, and they are in search of the methods—what to *do*—and they expect to find them in a teacher education program. And they do; in many of their class they get fed what they desire: a how-to or prescription for the *perfect* math class or the *best* way to support young readers. Philosophy of education courses, at least not the ones I teach, do not appear to fill that need and, at least immediately or superficially, seem somewhat superfluous.

We were working through a mini-unit on democracy in education and studying the later 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century American philosopher, John Dewey, and his take on progressivist education in schooling. The students liked Dewey. They, too, wanted to be child-centred, to support a “cultivation of individuality,” they prized “learning from experience” and subject-matter that was based in real life and reflected the “changing world” (Dewey, 1938/1997, pp.19-20). When it came to how to enact these theories, or *being that teacher*, the complaint was that Dewey and I gave them nothing. Or, at least not what they were used to hearing and reading. If one isn't being told what to do, it is read as being told to do *nothing*. This wasn't the first time I had received this question; it comes from a place of vulnerability and the intense

need to feel certain and to have answers or a plan. I believe that the students who were smiling with me had probably noticed their discomfort and either acknowledged or even embraced the uncertainty. They might have been actively beating back The Story that teaching was training and that teachers could be trained. Dewey rejected that idea and wished to empower teachers to be part of a collaborative approach, one that included other stakeholders (such as students, families, citizens, administrators, scholars, etc.), because he wanted to avoid having “one expert dictating educational methods and subject-matter to a body of passive, recipient teachers” and saw merit, and “a more thoroughgoing democracy” in “the adoption of intellectual initiative, discussion, and decision throughout the entire school corps” (Dewey, 1903/2010, p.146). Teachers should have autonomy. Progressivist education depends on it.

Another student spoke; he began reading an excerpt from Dewey’s (1938/1997) *Education and Experience*, a short book that refined many of the philosopher’s thoughts on education. He read out,

Because the older education imposed the knowledge, methods, and the rules of conduct of the mature person upon the young, it does not follow, except upon the basis of the extreme Either-Or philosophy, that the knowledge and skill of the mature person has no directive value for the experience of the immature. On the contrary, basing education upon personal experience may mean more multiplied and more intimate contacts between the mature and the immature than ever existed in the traditional school and consequently more, rather than less, guidance by others. (Dewey, 1938/1997, p.21)

And then he remarked,

It’s not like being progressivist, or democratic, means that we, as teachers, have no role. It doesn’t mean that we sit back and let the students do whatever the heck they want. It’s just that rather than a ‘doing to’ model, we

shift to ‘working with’<sup>129</sup> the kids. The lack of direction about how to teach—from this course, or from some of the people we are reading—gives us space to think and question and make our own minds. Don’t get me wrong, this can feel shitty. How we teach, or I guess how I thought I was going to teach, is being critically questioned. Now, I feel like we all have to teach ourselves how to teach. We have to teach ourselves what to do.

There was a brief pause in the conversation. Some people shifted in their chairs. I looked around the room and caught the eyes of one of the folks who still wore a slight smile. She started, “It’s like, remember that whole thing about the ‘empty vessel’? And how we were all like, ‘yeah, I don’t see teaching that way’ and ‘I don’t want to be a *traditional* teacher?’” Her colleagues nodded; they knew this Story. She continued, “When we teach, are we trying to pass on these written symbols, or dates or places, *or* are we trying to pass on the ability to *learn* them? Are we filling up empty vessels or showing kids where to get the water? And *I* don’t want to be an empty vessel. I want to figure this out.” My stomach was in knots and I thought that I could feel the vulnerability in the room, and it was distressing. I wasn’t on dry land; I was on a rocking ship in stormy weather and I had the same questions and hesitations that my fellow passengers were articulating. I reached for my copy of Rancière’s (1991) *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* and read one of my favourite passages. It was a section to which I often found myself returning whenever I noticed vulnerability and my need to run away from it.

Here lies the paradox. For if you think about it a little, the ‘method’ he [Jacotot] was proposing is the oldest in the world, and it never stops being

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<sup>129</sup> In this class, we had discussed Alfie Kohn’s models of ‘doing to’ and ‘working with’ (1995). The ‘doing to’ approach is the status quo, they are strategies such as ‘consequences,’ ‘bribes and threats,’ and praise that are “about demanding obedience” (para.10). The idea is that for kids to be self-governing, “we have to work *with* them rather than doing things *to* them” (Kohn, 1995, para.8). ‘Working with’ is “about helping kids think their way through a problem—or pondering why what’s happening might even be a problem in the first place” (Kohn, 1995, para.10). Kohn argues that in a ‘working with’ classroom, “the teacher is more interested in creating a democratic community than in maintaining her [sic] position of authority...it’s the best way to help kids grow into good learners and good people” (1995, para.12).

verified every day, in all the circumstances where an individual must learn something without any means of having it explained to him [sic]. There is no one on earth who hasn't learned something by himself and without a master explicator... But this is the most difficult leap. This method is practiced of necessity by everyone, but no one wants to recognize it, no one wants to cope with the intellectual revolution it signifies. The social circle, the order of things, prevents it from being recognized for what it is: the true method by which everyone learns and by which everyone can take the measure of his capacity. One must dare to recognize it and pursue the open verification of its power— otherwise, the method of powerlessness, the Old Master, will last as long as the order of things. (Rancière, 1991, p.16).

I finished reading and took a deep breath. I looked up at the people in the room and said, “The Old Master lives in me. They tell me what my role is and this, in turn, tells me what to *do*. This is nice because I don't have to think much or feel as though I don't know what I'm doing. The 'Old Master' should be called the 'Modern Master;' it comes with that myth of certainty and, as Dewey says, an 'Either-Or Philosophy,' as well as a whole bunch of paradoxical Stories that distract us from what we are really aiming for. It is so difficult to let that stuff go and trust myself. To trust you. To trust my kids. To reconcile a dialectic and enter into a dialogue. Sometimes, I just don't have the words. So, I just say 'no!'" They looked a little confused at that last part, so I ask them,

“Is it your role to be the 'knowledge keeper'? Do you have to know everything about the war of 1812 in order to teach it?" A few of them relaxed and most of the class responded, with confidence, “No.”

“Is it your role to be infallible? Is it true that you will never make mistakes?" Again, the class responded with a 'no.' And then the student with the initial question, the one who wanted to know what to *do*, piped up. She spoke,

“Is it your role to know exactly what to do all of the time? To be the director of all things in the classroom?” She smiled, and the class answered with a resounding ‘no.’

“Okay,” I said, “so, we don’t have to know everything, but we can model and guide students on where to find information. We can show them that we are thirsty for knowledge and that we are learners too, and that we are teachers of ourselves. We are going to make mistakes, and say or do the wrong thing, *and* we are going to reconcile; when it inevitably happens, when we screw up with our students, we can admit it, we can apologize, we can make corrections and move forward. How freeing is that? And, we don’t have to plan and manage every person in our classroom every moment of every day. What if a student’s question takes us on a detour, and we follow that line of inquiry, and it’s a bit messy and our lesson is tossed out the window? What if our lesson plan doesn’t work because there are a few kids who just can’t focus, just can’t engage? Is our role to stick to the script or is it to listen to our students? Can we ask them what we could do? Can we find an alternative together? Is it our role to manage their behaviour or to help them to manage their own stress? Is it reasonable to expect 30 people in one room to always be quiet and focused? What is our revised role if we are not ‘the director of all things in the classroom’ because we do, indeed, share it with 29 other humans?” There was some nodding. Then a student caught my eye and brought out his book—not our text—from another class. He began to read,

I spend the first six weeks of school teaching children how to behave. It rarely takes less time; sometimes it takes more. It takes six weeks even when many of the students were in the same class last year and have been in the same school for several years. I cannot presume that what was so clear last year is remembered and accepted this year. I start again.

I do not apologize for this use of time. It is not a waste, not a way station along a more important course of educational mastery. It is the critical foundation of learning. It is the first curriculum. I call it 'classroom management.' The emphasis is not on the three Rs of readin', 'ritin', and 'rithmetic, but instead on 'reinforcin', remindin', and redirectin'.<sup>130</sup>

He looked up from the text and we locked eyes. He leaned back in his chair and said, "This is why we don't know what to *do*. We *are* being told what to do. And on our practicums, in the schools, we are expected to *do* this." He pointed to the open pages on his desk. "The thing is, what Dewey said, as much as I buy into it, is not what is happening in schools today." I knew he was right. I didn't mean to come across as such an idealist. I responded with a nod and said,

"You remind me of a quotation from this book about the history of educational research. It goes something like, in the battle to reform schooling in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Dewey lost, and Thorndike won."<sup>131</sup> Then, someone from the back called out,

"Who's Thorndike?"

Dewey lost, and Thorndike won

Late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the United States, psychology was a burgeoning field and not fully separated from philosophy or some other social sciences (Lagemann, 2000). John Dewey (1859-1952) was one voice that called for it to remain closely tied to philosophy, especially in relation to education (Lagemann, 2000). In his 1899 presidential address to the American

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<sup>130</sup> This excerpt, I later discovered, was from an assigned textbook in a prosocial learning course. It is the first lines of "Chapter 2: I See You, I See Everything" in Ruth Sidney Charney's *Teaching Children to Care: Classroom Management for Ethical and Academic Growth, K-8* (2002, p.27).

<sup>131</sup> The actual quotation is, "One cannot understand the history of education in the United States during the twentieth century unless one realizes that Edward L. Thorndike won and John Dewey lost" found in Lagemann, 1989, p.185.

Psychology Association, Dewey said that “education science is first of all a social science” (Dewey, 1899/2008, p.131). He saw it as essential in educational research to include many facets of thought; he believed in the promise of psychology and he had a scientific interest, but he thought it best for it to be blended with philosophy. At the time, there was an intensifying interest in science; an elevation of the sciences and a belief in their ability to expound Truth was met with the growing view that education was simply “instruction in a particular *teche*” (Diener, 2008, p.68). This was not unique to the 1890’s; the question that Jacotot<sup>132</sup> faced from the progressivists of his time was on the science of that instruction: could one perfect pedagogy? In an era of rapid social change and innovations in knowledge, there was a call for methods to keep one from slipping back into the old ways. As The Story goes, in the past,

...the human species was like a child left to the caprices and terrors of his [sic] imagination, rocked to sleep with ignorant nursemaids’ fairytales, subjected to the brutal force of despots and priestly superstition. Now, minds are enlightened, customs are civilized, and industry spreads its benefits; people know their rights, and education will reveal to them their duties with science. *Capacity* must from now on decide social ranks. And it is education that will reveal and develop it. (Rancière, 1991, p.118, *emphasis original*)

The old and the new are compared for a contrasting effect, making the former appear ridiculous and backward. Education is offered as the answer to the question of how to keep us

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<sup>132</sup> The 18<sup>th</sup> century educator in Rancière’s (1991) *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Joseph Jacotot, found there were many competing interests and approaches in education around him in his day. Rancière writes, “progressives wished to narrow, through instruction, the gap between the classes; industrialists dreamed of giving, through instruction, the most intelligent among the people the means of social promotion... Among progressives and industrialists the favored method was mutual teaching. This allowed a great number of students, assembled from a vast locale, to be divided up into smaller groups headed by the more advanced among them, who were promoted to the rank of monitors. In this way, the master’s orders and lessons radiated out, relayed by the monitors, into the whole population to be instructed. Friends of progress liked what they saw: this was how science extended from the summits to the most modest levels of intelligence. Happiness and liberty would trickle down in its wake” (Rancière, 1991, p.17)

on the path of progress. The progressivists approached Jacotot for the optimum mode, the ideal technique, for teaching and learning. But Jacotot saw progress, at least in this sense, as “the new way of saying inequality” (1991, p.119). Fast forward about 90 years, and the Age of Reason still echoes in the question being asked of Dewey and other researchers of education: “Is there a *science* of pedagogy that future teachers can study in order to develop the skill of teaching?” (Diener, 2008, p.68, *emphasis added*). Dewey spent his career not only arguing that pedagogy couldn’t be perfected, but also dismantling and rejecting many of the dualisms that maintained this Story that he believed stood in the way of a more diverse and connected approach to education.

After a brief stint as a high school teacher, Dewey, who had a keen interest in philosophy, left the classroom and pursued his PhD, writing his dissertation on “The Psychology of Kant”.<sup>133</sup> After graduation, he quickly joined the newly emerging area of pragmatic philosophy,<sup>134</sup> and wrote a book on what came to be known as ‘functional psychology,’ but he was still drawn to education. In her book, *An Elusive Science: The Troubling History of Educational Research*, Ellen Condliffe Lageman (2000) writes, “Dewey’s interest in education was not primarily theoretical and did not have merely intellectual origins” but, rather, he was heavily influenced by his time as a teacher, his wife Alice (also an educator), and their six children (p.46). In 1894, Dewey joined the faculty of the newly formed University of Chicago,

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<sup>133</sup> Immanuel Kant was a German philosopher of the Enlightenment. Dewey’s dissertation was never published and is now lost (Hildebrand, 2018).

<sup>134</sup> Pragmatic philosophy is a rejection of dualistic ways of thinking and reasoning with a more representational approach that sees knowledge as emanating from human interactions with their environment. Rather than seeing inquiry as minds “passively observing the world,” pragmatism understands minds to be “actively adapting, experimenting, and innovating; ideas and theories are not rational fulcrums to get us beyond culture, but rather function experimentally within culture and are evaluated on situated, pragmatic bases” (Hildebrand, 2018).

taking the position of Chair of Education and starting a Laboratory School to begin practicing and experiencing in reality many of his theoretical and philosophical thoughts on schooling, teaching, and learning (Lagemann, 2000). His time in Chicago, in the school with his wife at the helm as principal, was very influential to his books *The School and Society* (1900), *Democracy and Education* (1916), and *Experience and Education* (1938). The school, which his children attended, was “said to be an exciting place. Visitors reported in amazement that students talked seriously to one another about the problems in which they were engaged and that they seemed able to work on their own, without much adult supervision”<sup>135</sup> (Lagemann, 2000, p.48). To an outsider, the school may have appeared as though there was a lack of adult supervision, but Dewey was keenly aware of the argument that the ‘new’ education, a progressivist approach to teaching and learning, was not simply “springing from the idea that about all which is required is *not* to do what is done in traditional schools” (1938/1997, p.30). Dewey saw that humankind “likes to think in terms of extreme opposites...between which it recognizes no intermediate possibilities” (1938/1997, p.17). For him, progressivist education has to move beyond thinking in “*Either-Ors*,” traditionalist education relies on stories-that-we-all-know and “could get along without any consistently developed philosophy of education” (Dewey, 1938/1997, p.17 & 28). Progressivist educators “cannot rely upon established traditions and

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<sup>135</sup> It is interesting to me that Rancière notes that in Jacotot’s day, those who visited his schools, where the practice was *Universal Teaching* and based on equality, had a similar response; they were skeptical when confronted by the “marvelous simplification brought to the job of teaching” (1991, p.114). Students were performing oral and written tasks with surprising skills, their interest in their tasks and their commitment to learning was remarked on with astonishment; to Jacotot, this ‘surprise’ and ‘astonishment’ was evidence that the Old Master’s image of the child was one of “intellectual inferiority” (Rancière, 1991, p.27). A.S. Neill (1960), author of *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing*, and founder and educator of the Summerhill School, also remarks on the way in which outsiders—those of the old guard—view his students. Visitors to Summerhill often “cannot tell who is staff and who is pupil... the unity is that strong when children are approved of” (Neill, 1960, pp.11-12). In both of the above examples, students and teachers must “obey the same community laws” and are dedicated to equality and yet there isn’t chaos but rather calm, creativity, and learning (Neill, 1960, p.12).

institutional habits, they must either proceed more or less haphazardly or be directed by ideas which, when they are made articulate and coherent, form a philosophy of education” (Dewey, 1938/1997, pp.28-29).

Dewey writes that education is necessary for enculturation: “Education, in its broadest sense, is the means of [the] social continuity of life,” but he also understands it to support the goal of “social efficiency” through transformation: “Continuity of life means continual readaptation [sic] of the environment to the needs of living organisms” (1916/2012, p.5). He was wary of a lack of philosophical reflection and the nature of traditional approaches to teaching and learning; without accepting that “change is the rule, not the exception” we would be “static” or even revert to anti-social behaviour (Dewey, 1938/1997, p.19). In response, Dewey advocates a philosophy of education that supports the development of a “moral public life” and he shares the progressivist flare of conspicuous advocacy for self-governance and a call for democratic participation (Covaleskic, 2011, p.173). For Dewey, the motive behind schooling is unabashedly political; a socially efficient society is a democratic one. And not one that is simply *governed* democratically, but rather one that inculcates democratic “habits of cooperation and public spiritedness, productive of an organized, self-conscious community of individuals responding to society's needs by experimental and inventive, rather than dogmatic, means” (Tarman, 2011, p.53).

Prioritizing the democratic life in his work in the laboratory schools was influenced by the broader political circumstances of his time. Arriving in Chicago when “the city was still in

the throes of the Pullman Strike,<sup>136</sup> Dewey and his colleagues were deeply concerned about growing social divisions in American society” (Lagemann, 2000, p.48). Dewey often incorporates elements of psychology; his work on what he termed a “reflex arc” (1894) was concerned with “approaching psychology in terms of behavioral units or ‘acts’ rather than as discrete stimulus and responses” (Lagemann, 2000, p.53). He was concerned about the trend in education that promoted the social control of the people. He writes extensively about the role of authority, power, and freedom in relation to thinking and behaviour, and how “the new education emphasizes the freedom of the learner” and he goes on to ask “[w]hat does freedom mean and what are the conditions under which it is capable of realization?” (Dewey, 1938/1997, p.22). In a chapter in *Experience and Education*, entitled “The Nature of Freedom,” Dewey articulates that the ‘freedom’ he is most concerned with is “freedom of intelligence,<sup>137</sup> that is to say, freedom of observation and of judgment exercised in [sic] behalf of purposes that are intrinsically worth while [sic]” (1938/1997, p.61). The “freedom of thought, desire, and purpose” are not necessarily separate from physical freedom, this sort of freedom is not to be confused with “freedom of movement” (Dewey, 1938/1997, p.61). Dewey expounds that there

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<sup>136</sup> The Pullman Strike was a nationwide railroad strike and boycott in the United States in 1894 and a turning point for US labor law (Danver, 2010).

<sup>137</sup> In the Introductory chapter, I discussed freedom as the ‘freedom to be fully human’ or our need to act in accordance with our own freedoms and the freedoms of others. I differentiate freedom from ‘licence’ in that we can’t do whatever we want as long as it is in service to our ‘freedom,’ but rather our freedom and the freedoms of others are interconnected and interdependent. Freedom and equality need each other and can’t be separated. When I think about Dewey’s words about freedom, I think about self-governance; it is through self-governance that we engage with a praxis of freedom and equality. Freedom is not an end but a means, a process and not a product. Dewey’s “freedom of intelligence” reminds me of Rancière’s (1991) equality of intelligence (1938/1997, p.61). If my intelligence, my “thought, desire, and purpose” are seen to be equal to the intelligence of others, then the belief that my intelligence requires external control makes little sense (Dewey, 1938/1997, p.61). The “freedom of intelligence” that Dewey is highlighting is not simply about being self-directed or being able to think without restraints, but also being able to see intelligence as equal and self-governing (1938/1997, p.61). This reading of Dewey is supported by his commitment to democracy and education as the means of democratic life.

is “no greater mistake, however, than to treat such freedom as an end in itself;” children are not being trained for a future as a free adult, but rather they are to experience freedom so that they understand it is a mode of living and the means of democratic life (1938/1997, p.63). An individual’s freedom from external restraint is not Dewey’s goal as this freedom ignores the role of community and the importance of the self-as-social-being. Freedom is something with which we must constantly interact and evaluate, as well as consider and reconsider its impact on the individual and society. The focus on a removal of external control of the individual “tends to be destructive of the shared cooperative activities of the normal source of order” (Dewey, 1938/1997, p.63). Lagemann argues that Dewey maintained that “[f]reedom combined with intellectual cooperation provided a better way to ensure effective teaching than ‘close supervision’” (2000, p.50-51). He places a strong emphasis on teacher planning and the role of communal and engaging activities “in which all [who] participate are the chief carrier of control” (Dewey, 1938/1997, p.56). Freedom and order are not juxtaposed. Rather than ‘Either/Or,’ Dewey opts for a ‘Yes, and’ approach and promotes a “Stop and think” method of making time to reframe, rethink, reconstruct, and make connections between our beliefs/goals and our impulses (1938/1997, p.64). This becomes our internal authority, what Dewey calls the “ideal aim of education,” and although he uses the term “self-control,” I interpret his meaning to be akin to how I have used ‘self-governance’ (1938/1997, p.64). He is not speaking of the ability to stop oneself from certain impulses to appease an external power, but rather an effort to reflect, to think about one’s needs and the needs of the community, and to make choices to support freedom. Dewey insists that a removal of external control does not mean one will be in control of themselves, but rather may find themselves under more external control; he writes,

“A person whose conduct is controlled in this way has at most only the illusion of freedom. Actually, he [sic] is directed by forces over which he has no command” (1938/1997, p.65). For Dewey, ‘freedom’ and self-governance are essential to the ‘new’ progressivist education and democratic life; in this way, teaching and learning demands more than simply *not* being traditionalist or removing barriers or constraints to freedom (also referred to as negative freedom in liberal theory).

Dewey writes extensively about what he terms ‘traditional’ education and its framing of the role of the adult and, in turn, the image of the child. He argues that, although this approach to education passes on “subject-matter as well as standards of proper conduct,” it does so in a way that is not supportive of ‘freedom,’ self-governance, or democratic participation, but rather it demands that pupils adopt an attitude of “docility, receptivity, and obedience” (Dewey, 1938/1997, p.18). In a traditional approach, teachers and students occupy opposing sides of the dualistic condition; Dewey writes that “[t]eachers are the agents through which knowledge and skills are communicated and rules of conduct enforced” and that the “traditional scheme is, in essence, one of imposition from above and from outside. It imposes adult standards, subject-matter, and methods upon those who are only growing slowly toward maturity” (1938/1997, pp.18 & 18-19). In traditionalism, the image of the child is one on whom learning is to be instituted or urged; a selection of information is fed to the learner, and a ‘good’ child or student will memorize and regurgitate appropriately. Dewey contends that because the concepts being taught are sometimes “beyond the reach of the experience the young learners already possess... they must be imposed; even though good teachers will use

devices of art to cover up the imposition so as to relieve it of obvious brutal features”<sup>138</sup> (1938/1997, p.19). The traditionalist role of the teacher says less about how learning works and more about the projected image of the child: the image of the child tells us how to ‘teach.’ The child is to be prepared for adulthood, the immature must be led on the “right road to maturity,” and their lack of experience makes them incapable of engaging in education in the proper way (Rancière, 1991, p.120). The teacher decides what the students learn and how they learn it because they are not adept or qualified to learn without this guidance. Students require ongoing external control so that they conform to the norm, otherwise learning cannot occur. The Story tells us that the young need to learn from “texts and teachers,” “external discipline,” and gain “isolated skills and techniques by drill;” they are being prepared for a “remote future” with “static aims” rather than “making the most of the opportunities of present life” or acknowledging the “changing world” (Dewey, 1938/1997, pp.19-20). The image of the child is one of inferiority, incapacity, immaturity, and even not quite human.

The traditionalist calls for a pedagogical Truth, for a perfect method, so that a teacher can lead their students out of their “delay,”<sup>139</sup> but this is “pedagogical fiction” (Rancière, 1991, p.119). The progressivists have been calling for the same perfected pedagogy but without the

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<sup>138</sup> As discussed at the beginning of Chapter Two, CM theorists argue that engaging teachers will not encounter behaviour problems. One theorist remarks that “Effective teachers MANAGE their classrooms. Ineffective teachers DISCIPLINE their classrooms” (Wong, 2005, p.83, emphasis original). Control needs to become more palatable through technologies of power; language is an essential element of systems of control (Foucault, 1975).

<sup>139</sup> The ‘delay’ that Rancière is pointing out is a delay in equality. The Story tells us that if we just learn *this* thing than we will reach our destination, but the teacher decides what to teach and what to hold back. The delay is artificial and based on control: he writes, “having thrown a veil of ignorance over everything that is to be learned, he [sic] appoints himself to the task of lifting it. Until he came along, the child has been groping blindly, figuring out riddles. Now he will learn. He heard words and repeated them. But now it is time to read, and he will not understand words if he doesn’t understand syllables, and he won’t understand syllables if he doesn’t understand letters that neither the book nor his parents can make him understand—only the master’s word” (Rancière, 1991, pp.6-7).

tyranny of the 'traditional;' a cheerful method to have students remain seated, or a new approach to scaffolding fractions that leads the learner to the correct mathematics procedure.<sup>140</sup> Dewey responds that "[w]e shall operate blindly and in confusion until we recognize this fact; until we thoroughly appreciate that departure from the old solves no problems;" the 'old' method cannot be replaced with progressivist methods *without* addressing philosophy (1938/1997, p.25). Rancière tells us that Jacotot saw a dangerous repetitive circle in the progressivist's call for a better way to teach "a particular *techne*" to, or establish the 'right' behaviour within, the student (Diener, 2008, p.68). He writes,

At the heart of the pedagogical fiction is the representation of inequality as a retard in one's development: inferiority, in its innocence, lets itself be taken in; neither a lie nor violence, inferiority is only a lateness, a delay, that is posited so one can put oneself in the position of curing it. Of course, this will never happen: nature itself makes sure of it; there will always be delay, always inequality. But one can thus continually exercise the privilege of reducing it, and there are double benefits to be gained from this. (Rancière, 1991, p.119)

Like Jacotot, Dewey called for an end to inequality. If the image of the child is one of inferiority, and the role of the adult is to lead the child out of ignorance, then equality can never be reached. The point of departure must shift. Progressivists look down on traditionalists as harsh, authoritarian, and undemocratic; we aren't like them! But what do our progressivist methods say about *our* image of the child and the role of the adult? For Dewey, our "social organization"

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<sup>140</sup> Rancière (1991) points out that problem of control and domination is not limited to the traditionalist. He writes: "Above all, he [sic] will say, the student must understand, and for that we must explain even better. Such is the concern of the enlightened pedagogue: does the little one understand? He doesn't understand. I will find new ways to explain it to him, ways more rigorous in principle, more attractive in form—and I will verify that he has understood" (Rancière, 1991, pp.7-8).

is undermining democracy when schooling is concerned with conformity, compliance,<sup>141</sup> and preparing children for an intangible future. Progressivist education is not immune to disconnection and is commonly distracted by The Story that product demonstrates effectiveness. Process, or education being the journey, and the importance of connection, doesn't exactly fit into the narrative of accountability, scientific advancement, certainty, the importance of reason, or the destination to be reached. And, a method that relies on stimulus-response does not align well with the belief in an ability to self-govern. Also, as Dewey emphasized throughout his work, "the road of the new education is not an easier one to follow than the old road but a more strenuous and difficult one" (1938/1997, p.90). He believed that inequality was not just affecting students, but teachers, too. Dewey had a lot of faith in teachers and believed that teacher autonomy was essential to the progressivist education movement. He was frustrated by the system of scholars and experts bequeathing best practice to administrators, and administrators passing on this information to teachers, and then the external control of teaching practice through their supervision<sup>142</sup> (Lagemann, 2000). Lagemann comments that, "[i]nstead of having 'one expert dictating educational methods and subject-matter to a body of passive, recipient teachers,'" Dewey "became more and more convinced that educational scholarship and educational practice should be fused not merely in the same institution, but also in each and every person who worked in the school" (2000, p.50). Teachers

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<sup>141</sup> This is not to say that conformity and compliance are *always* undemocratic or anti-democratic. This is where praxis can be helpful; reflecting and asking a question such as 'does my action (my request or expectation) align with or connect to my belief that we are individual *and* social beings and that we are all in need of the freedom to be fully human, to self-govern, to be free and equal?' Or, 'is uniformity and obedience being kept at the expense of equality and freedom? Does it undermine self-governance?'

<sup>142</sup> It should be noted that this transfer of ideal teaching methods often came from men (in roles of academic, researcher, or administrator), who usually had little experience in teaching, to women, who *did* have this experience in the field (in the role of elementary teachers) (Lageman, 2000).

could contribute to the body of research as well as the growing knowledge surrounding teaching and learning. Especially because their experience and action were in response to their current roles and interactions with children of the day, Dewey believed that they had much to offer (Lagemann, 2000). Dewey didn't believe that teachers wanted to be authoritarians, but rather he saw it as a role that was being "forced" upon the teacher; it was situational because the school was not set up as a community, with communal goals, but rather as a group that required uniformity and order being kept at the expense of equality (1938/1997, p.55). When the teacher fulfills this role—the one drawn from a traditionalist standpoint—and does it well, they demonstrate the use of power in a personal way, for personal benefit, and they must maintain their position because the Either/Or thinking doesn't leave any other possibilities (Dewey, 1938/1997).

Dewey's very social approach to the study of education was "quickly eclipsed" when, after nearly ten years in its service, he resigned (Lagemann suggests he was pushed out) from the University of Chicago and left the Laboratory School (Lagemann, 2000, p.42). His unique approach to educational research as both a social *and* scientific field was not well aligned with the "increasing specialization and professionalization so evident in the worlds of learning of the early twentieth century" (Lagemann, 2000, p.43). Psychology had come to trump philosophy; Dewey's scientific method was no longer scientific enough. The man who followed him as Chair of Education at the University of Chicago, "which at the time was a trendsetting institution," adopted an approach developed by Edward L. Thorndike (Lagemann, 2000, p.42), which was drawn from a psychological standpoint that centred on stimulus and response in relation to learning and set aside philosophical ruminations on raising democratic citizens.

Edward Lee Thorndike (1874-1949) was a prominent and pioneering educational psychologist of the 20th century. Thorndike's "mechanistic view of learning" and his positivist<sup>143</sup> approach that promoted the "possibility of a science of education so powerful that experts alone would be able to decide what to teach, how to teach it, and how to evaluate it" was supported by another contingent of educational researchers supporting goals of a 'new' approach to teaching and learning (Gibboney, 2006, p.170). Thorndike preferred the "separation of philosophy and psychology" and, Lagemann remarks, carried "an extremely imperialistic view of psychology, which he thought supreme for studying and controlling human affairs" (2000, p.56). Dewey's blending of scientific method and a 'social approach' that left room for the context of the classroom was set aside for the 'progress' of positivist science and its conclusions on human nature, presumably by the forces of evolution (Saari, 2016). Thorndike's mode uses 'objective' research methods, and by "cleansing the language of education of non-empirical content" he could uncover the truth about human nature and how to control it in educational settings (Saari, 2016, p.591). Dewey's "highly contextualized, holistic, deeply social and pragmatic understanding of educational research" was overturned for Thorndike's "'technocratic', 'scientist' view which emulated the hard sciences and thus threw the 'situated' forms of knowing into the margins" (Saari, 2016, p.590). Thorndike offered something Dewey would not: efficiency. For Thorndike, science could offer more *effective*

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<sup>143</sup> Positivism, or a positivist approach, is the application of theory to the context of research to determine how relevant or appropriate a claim may be (DiVanna, 2010). In positivism, there is the push for research to focus on the observable, quantitative, and measurable data or evidence, and the nature of causality is central to conclusions. In educational research, positivists employ a "'scientific' research paradigm [that] strives to investigate, confirm and predict law-like patterns of behaviour" (Taylor & Medina, 2013, p.2).

teaching methods, at least in terms of academic success,<sup>144</sup> because they would be tested through learning outcomes and constructed based on the laws of learning and the child's nature<sup>145</sup> (Joncich, 1962).

In the opening line of an article entitled, *Knowledge Without Contexts? A Foucauldian Analysis of E.L. Thorndike's Positivist Educational Research*, Antti Saari states that "[t]here seems to be a specter of positivism haunting educational research" (2016, p.589). It was, and still is, comforting to believe that through measurement and science one can locate the answer with certainty.<sup>146</sup> Under positivism, and Thorndike's approach to education, the role of the teacher or adult and the image of the child fit well into The Stories that Dewey "warred against, including what he would have called unreconstructed individualism and competition" (Lagemann, 2000, p.43). Thorndike did not shy away from what he saw as scientific fact; like Dewey, he knew that each learner was unique and that this was a major challenge in education (Joncich, 1962). But this problem could be solved through "Connectionism," or stimulus-response psychology (also known as the Law of Effect), as well as the Law of Exercise combined with highly scientific testing (Joncich, 1962, p.10). Thorndike preferred the term 'situation' as opposed to 'stimulus' in stimulus-response and argued that learning was the effect of making connections or "joining things together" and that "linking of a particular perception or

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<sup>144</sup> The testing and measurement of 'academic success' occurred in a system that was relatively more closed (not allowing for many variables and created for efficiency) than Dewey's democratic school (Lageman, 2000). Within his experimental controls, Thorndike's measure of success was limited to a subject's ability to memorize terms or skills deemed scholarly and to demonstrate memorization as understanding (Lageman, 2000).

<sup>145</sup> Dewey's Laboratory school was more focused on being an "experimental site for theories in instrumental logic and psychological functionalism. This school also became a site for democratic expression by the local community" (Hildebrand, 2018).

<sup>146</sup> This is not to say that Thorndike believed that there could be a singular, overarching theory of education. He wrote that "there is no chance for any simple general theory," but rather that he saw empirical data as essential to knowing what works and doesn't work in practice (Thorndike, 1903).

sensation with some action,” or a stimulus/situation with a response, was essential for learning skills of literacy or mathematics but also for forming “habits of good citizenship” (Joncich, 1962, pp.10, 10, & 12). His Law of Exercise, or the rule that repetition can strengthen a connection between stimulus and response, was not as prominent as his Law of Effect (Joncich, 1962). After much research, Thorndike’s Law of Effect became a “decisive force in the arsenal of progressive education” and has stood the test of time (Joncich, 1962, p.15). Simply reading his description of it, its simplicity and familiarity stands out: “When a modifiable connection between a situation [stimulus] and a response is made and is accompanied or followed by a satisfying state of affairs, that connection’s strength is increased; when made and accompanied or followed by an annoying state of affairs, its strength is decreased” (Thorndike, 1913, p.43). If a teacher wants a student to learn the alphabet, how to button their coat, the names of major cities, or the details of an historical event, they can motivate and promote learning through reward and punishment.<sup>147</sup> Thorndike was most concerned with efficiency, and the data told him that positive reinforcement was more effective than negative responses (punishment); he remarked that “satisfaction is in general preferable to the elimination of bad responses by pain or deprivation” (Thorndike, 1912, p.201). Naturally, there was the critique that this sort of teaching would be “an education that would produce automatons, individuals whose behavior is narrowed, nonthinking, and drill-induced,” and yet the results of the teaching spoke for themselves (Joncich, 1962, p.14). Standardized tests, many created by Thorndike,

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<sup>147</sup> It is interesting to note that the work of B.F. Skinner, in what is known as ‘behaviourism’, was influenced by Thorndike’s work and the Law of Effect (Lagemann, 2000). Better known as a behavioural model, this broadly applied approach to learning is founded on the principle that behaviour is a function of its consequences. The focus of the work of both Thorndike and Skinner was behaviour; how to increase certain behaviours, decrease other behaviours, teach specific behaviours, and maintain desired behaviours.

demonstrated that students ‘learned,’ or could regurgitate the required information, when the teaching methods reflected the Law of Effect. Dewey questioned what was being learned; was knowledge being passed on, or stultification? You will recall the use of the same word<sup>148</sup> by Rancière; Dewey writes, “In memorizing this simulated cut and dried copy of the logic of an adult, the child generally is induced to stultify his [sic] own subtle and vital logical movement” (Dewey, 1910/2008, p.60). Thorndike was not perfecting the science of teaching and learning, but rather the act of inducing a desired response.

It is probably not a surprise to hear that Thorndike started his career in psychology testing his theories on non-human animals. He subscribed to functionalism, or the concern with the way an individual organism’s behaviour reflects a response to one’s environment, and “preoccupied himself with how man [sic] functions, with behaviour, rather than with the description or analysis of abstract mental states”<sup>149</sup> (Joncich, 1962, p.11). Thorndike’s generalizations about human learning were drawn from what he observed in experiments on non-human animals. Of course, treating children like rats in a maze would be considered

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<sup>148</sup> As mentioned in the Introductory chapter, the translator of Rancière’s *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Kristin Ross, selected the word ‘stultification’ as a translation for “the French term *abrutir* (to render stupid, to treat like a brute)” because she says that the word ‘stultify’ “carries the connotations of numbing and deadening better than the word ‘stupify,’ which implies a sense of wonderment or amazement absent in the French” (Translator’s notes in Rancière, 1991, p.7). The Oxford English Dictionary defines ‘stultification’ as being made to appear foolish, or reduced to absurdity, or to seem of “unsound mind” and therefore less responsible than those who are not stultified, which leads to synonyms such as “to frustrate, to stifle, to neutralize” (OED, 2018).

<sup>149</sup> The belief that intellectual capability is hereditary and gendered, which Thorndike tested and espoused, is now considered antiquated. Thorndike did not dismiss women and girls; he looked into the behaviour of women and found that there were differences between men and women in terms of intellect and morality. He viewed these differences as inborn and “inherited and cannot be changed through education” (Saari, 2016, p.598). His conclusions appear to play into misogynist inferences drawn less from science and more from the role of women in society in his time (such as being more “nursing” and “submissive”) (Saari, 2016, p.598). This is a prime example of science without philosophy, without a consideration for culture or systems (of oppression or the impacts of stories on our social structures), and how this separation only gives a partial, and often problematic, answer.

inappropriate today; this is not to say that Thorndike demeaned children, but he did believe that anything that couldn't be measured didn't exist<sup>150</sup> and he relied on a very scientific view that made human qualities difficult to count. At least in terms of learning academic skills, the 'Drill and Kill' approach, or learning by rote repetition and positive reinforcement, is currently considered outdated and alternatives have been developed when it comes to transferring knowledge such as "deliberate practice" and self-regulated learning strategies<sup>151</sup> (Brabeck et al., 2019). Although the use of stimulus-response in academic learning has been put into question by the changing landscape of educational research, the focus on behaviour, and the use of rewards and punishments to control the ways in which students conduct themselves in classrooms, have barely been upset by these forces and are arguably most present when the goal is to get kids to do what we want them to do. This speaks volumes about the image of the child and the role of the adult. Thorndike's interest in the role of stimulus-response in learning and teaching, as well as an underlying martial approach to children that focuses on obedience, has a contempt for softness and undermined some of the core aims of progressivist education.

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<sup>150</sup> In *Educational Psychology: Volume 3*, Thorndike (1914) wrote, "If a thing exists, it exists in some amount; and if it exists in some amount, it can be measured" (p.141).

<sup>151</sup> The terms 'Self-Regulation' and 'Self-Regulated Learning' are distinct and yet are occasionally conflated or confused for one another. This is understandable as they have overlapping elements and are drawn from a long history of theoretical and philosophical discussions surrounding learning and teaching. The term 'self-regulation' was only introduced to PsycINFO, an online database produced by the American Psychological Association, in 2003, and is defined as the "[p]rocess of adjusting one's behaviour to achieve or avoid a particular outcome" (2016a). 'Self-regulated learning' was also added in 2003 and is distinguished as an "[a]pproach to learning that involves self adjustment, self monitoring, strategy use, and goal setting" (2016b). Although both SR and SRL are understood to be individually managed methods or strategies that relate to behaviour, the former is centred on the regulation of how one responds to stress (environmental, situational, emotional, social, or cognitive) and the ways in which one modifies their own behaviour with certain results in mind (Shanker, 2013b). The latter theory emphasizes a focus on learning; Barry Zimmerman, a prominent researcher on SRL, explains that it is not "a mental ability or an academic performance skill; rather it is the self-directive process by which learners transform their mental abilities into academic skills" (2002, p. 65). Self-regulated learning strategies have been developed to help students learn skills that support them to "persevere and persist, to remain positive and resolute in the face of failure, and to adapt or change their behaviors when not performing successfully" so that they can achieve academic success (Cleary, 2018, p.2).

In a book of the selected writings of Thorndike, entitled *Psychology and the Science of Education*, editor Geraldine M. Joncich (1962) remarks that Thorndike’s “explanation of the sources of differences between men was unacceptable to those who believed that education can create a democracy of equals” (p.22). And, although Dewey objected to a reward/punishment approach to eliciting correct answers or right behaviour (Hildebrand, 2018), today’s progressivist teachers—and many of our supporting resources and research—often still accept this method without critically questioning its impacts on the goal of self-governance.<sup>152</sup>

Thorndike was part of a movement of innovation and change; the “Progressive Era” was then as it is today an effort to make education—and in turn society—better than it was before. Like earlier progressivists, folks at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were engrossed in an effort to make teaching and learning more effective and productive. Thorndike and others “equated science and efficiency” and believed that research “would aid in the creation of a more rational,

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<sup>152</sup> Hildebrand argues that Dewey’s revisioning of the role of the teacher calls us to let go of “Traditional motivational strategies” and that “relying on rewards or punishments” needed to be “reimagined” (2018, 5.1, para 3). In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey (1916/2001) argues that in education we need to be concerned with the long-term goal of democracy; “education as preparation” is about a process that is a “continuous process of growth” (p.58). But we are prepared for democracy by living democratically and not by being put on a “waiting list” until we are adults (Dewey, 1916/2002, p.58). Through a traditional lens, the image of the child is one who is in need of control or management, or motivation be act or be ‘good’ (compliant). Dewey notes that “[e]verybody knows how largely systems of punishment have had to be resorted to by educational systems which neglect to present possibilities in behalf of preparation for a future. Then, in disgust with the harshness and impotency of this method, the pendulum swings to the opposite extreme, and the dose of information required against some later day is sugar-coated, so that pupils may be fooled into taking something which they do not care for” (1916/2002, p.60). Hence, Dewey contends that rewards and punishment do not support growth toward democratic citizenship but rather The Question of ‘how do I get them to do what I want them to do;’ when it comes to the use of rewards and punishments, we are manipulating rather than motivating. In the next section, I will be going through many CM resources meant for contemporary teachers that speak to the desire to support democratic citizenship but also rely on reward/punishment models. Also, Alfie Kohn (2006) has written extensively on the contemporary progressivist educator and our addiction to praise, punishment, bribes, threats, giving ‘pseudo-choice,’ etc. in our efforts to get kids to comply without thinking about the negative effects on our long-term goals for social and political growth.

orderly, beneficent society” (Beatty, 1998, p.1146). Thorndike’s prescriptions for teaching and learning tell us that the child is considered irrational, and the enemy of efficiency, but when it came to being supportive to the movement the teacher was also understood to be less than capable. For Thorndike, a better understanding of the laws of learning and its scientific assessment would mean that the teacher would no longer have to make the difficult evaluation of where each student was or where to lead them (Joncich, 1962, p.10). Although Dewey is often considered the “father of progressive education,” and inspired many, in the end he was more of a cultural icon than a reformer because his approach failed to catch on (Lagemann, 2000, p.42). Teachers admired his work and understood the principle of making connections in the classroom (with self/others/environment/ideas), but administrators valued the message of efficiency and other stakeholders found comfort in the hard ‘facts,’ order, and certainty delivered by connectionism (relationship between behaviour and consequence). Despite Thorndike’s “considerable disdain for educators,” and his explicit effort to control children in a way that weakens the aims of progressivist education, his version of perfected pedagogy was marketed successfully and still has influence in schools today, while “Dewey’s conception of science of education failed to thrive” (Lagemann, 2000, pp.56 & 43). So, why is the word ‘progressive’ associated with Thorndike at all? It has been suggested that “there is no agreement in the present as to whether a progressive education *movement* ever existed. What have been identified instead are movements in which educators defined their work as ‘progressive’” (Baker, 1999, p.814). How one defines ‘progressive’ depends on what goal one associates with the movement. Is the goal to efficiently achieve desirable behaviour from teachers and students, parents and children? Is the aim to locate the most perfected way in

which to garner obedience or get kids to do what we want them to do? Without praxis, the ‘progressivist educator’ designation is indeterminate and the lines between connection and connectionism are blurred.

### Classroom Management Narrative

Research shows that the most common concern among teachers, especially novice teachers, is classroom management [CM] (Eisenman et al., 2015; Ganser, 1999; Garcia & Lewis, 2014; Hirn et al., 2017; Jacques, 2000; Kohn, 2006; McCormacke, 2001). Born of progressivism, in the classroom management narrative [CMN], The Story is that we are progressing away from outdated and uninformed tactics, leaving behind a backward past, and moving toward a modern, more sophisticated, research-informed, gentler, and innovative approach that will bring us closer to realizing our aim: freedom.

But they are not yet ready for freedom.<sup>153</sup> The children, our students, just can’t handle it. We need to get them ready, because we are the adults in the room<sup>154</sup> and because when they are adults, they need to have self-control.<sup>155</sup> A teacher is many things, but “surely one of

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<sup>153</sup> In CM texts, the long-term goal is often “autonomy” as in ‘positive freedom’ or one’s capacity to exercise one’s free will (Bear, 2010, p.2), or students learning “to establish their own identity” (Ponte et al., 2009, p.xiv) and learn “responsibility” and “self-esteem” (Watson, 1996, p.xii) as well as “self-reliance” (Bianco, 2002, p.4). But before students can be any of the above, they first must learn “social behavior success” (Hirn et al., 2017, p.141) through CM techniques.

<sup>154</sup> Our roles are clear, the children require a sovereign, it is in their *nature*; they are not capable of self-governance, and the adult is needed to prepare them for maturity and steer them in the right direction. *How* do we steer them? One CM text states that it is “imperative that teachers maintain control of their classrooms if they are to be effective” (Watson, 1998, p.ix).

<sup>155</sup> Self-control vs. self-governance – the self-control that is being demanded of students is the control of one’s self to adhere to the rules and expectations of the teacher. Self-control only requires the student to be obedient and unquestioning. Self-governance is relying on one’s own ability to determine one’s own needs (and freedoms) and the needs (and freedoms) of those around them. Within the CMN, students are not being asked to think through problems and self-govern, they are framed as incapable of self-governance, any attempt might lead to chaos, but rather they need to learn to “inhibit or manage” their behaviours, “battling ‘weaknesses,’” and there is a focus on “being judged;” “self-control focuses solely on the individual” (MEHRIT, 2016b).

the most important is that of a classroom manager” (Marzano, 2003, p.1). A classroom must be handled with efficiency, and if “students are disorderly, and disrespectful, and no apparent rules and procedures guide behavior, chaos becomes the norm” (Marzano, 2003, p.1). But running a classroom ‘effectively’ does not mean taking on “*teacher-centred* strategies; rules, behavioral expectations, and the consequences of misbehaviour, either punitive or positive,” at least these methods shouldn’t “receive primary, exclusive, attention” (Bear, 2010, p.1). Rather, a good classroom manager enacts discipline, in the sense of “self-discipline—developing *within*<sup>156</sup> students the cognitions, emotions, and behaviors associated with self-control, self-regulation,<sup>157</sup> character, autonomy, and social and moral responsibility” (Bear, 2010, p.2, *emphasis original*). We want to focus on the “long-term aim of developing self-discipline” as it is “critical to American democracy<sup>158</sup> grounded in individual rights and self-governance<sup>159</sup>” (Bear, 2010, p.2).

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<sup>156</sup> There is a common argument in CM texts that a teacher should use tactics that induce ‘intrinsic motivation’ rather than ‘extrinsic motivation;’ motivation should come from within the student. A Foucauldian analysis would caution against confusing ‘intrinsic motivation’ with the internal expression of external control through Productive Power. If the rules or behaviours are normalized, and I am aware of the possible punishments or rewards, and I believe that I may be caught (being good or bad), I will make a decision to behave. This decision is internal but not motivated by an intrinsic sense of what is right or what respects my freedom or the freedom of others. One CM text suggests that teachers “routinely average around 500 management decisions a day. The trick here is to decrease these ‘transactions’ and ‘transform’ dependant students into independent and self-reliant learners” who know the rules and have some self-control, so that you don’t need to control them (Bianco, 2002, p.4). Another CM text swears by “The Swearing Stopper,” a tactic in which “students are made to have ownership of the swearing problem as it occurs. They quickly realize that there will be larger consequences if there is a repeat performance” (Watson, 1998, p.4). The solution promotes student ‘ownership,’ which sounds as though there is internal motivation and autonomy, but there are also consequences or punishment being threatened and, through a Foucauldian lens, it appears that the behaviour is externally motivated.

<sup>157</sup> Bear (2010) does not define what he means by ‘self-regulation’ and it only comes up once in the entire book. But he does speak to self-control throughout the text.

<sup>158</sup> Kohn (2006) notes that in the effort to induce compliance and conformity, democracy is threatened. Democracy carries with it a risk of non-compliance; a self-governing and democratic student might challenge arbitrary and problematic rules or standards, questioning the teacher, and in the CMN this is to be avoided.

<sup>159</sup> Again, Bear (2010) does not define what he means by ‘self-governance’ and it does not come up again in his text.

The prevalence of the term ‘classroom management’ in and of itself shows that there is a belief that the teacher’s role is to ‘manage’ what makes up the classroom, which is by default the students (Kohn, 2006). But eliciting the sort of behaviour that is most conducive to learning, or creating a classroom that is calm, focused, on-task, and productive, is hard work and needs the right sort of teacher at the helm. Good classroom managers are not born, “effective classroom managers are made;” they are teachers “who understand and use specific techniques...[and] training<sup>160</sup> in these techniques can change teacher behavior, which in turn changes student behavior and ultimately affects student achievement positively” (Marzano, 2003, p.11). There is plenty of “research evidence [that] supports this assertion” (Marzano, 2003, p.11). But what is a ‘natural’ teacher to *do*? What techniques will help a teacher to “strike the balance between classroom chaos and prison regimentation” (Carter, 1974, p.1)? How does one find a “healthy balance between dominance and cooperation” and avoid the traditional role that is overly authoritative and yet steer clear of the other end of the spectrum and become permissive, laissez-faire, and ‘ineffective’ (Marzano, 2003, p.49)? What does the ideal classroom manager look like when “the most effective teachers (and parents) are both *responsive and demanding*” (Bear, 2010, p.151, *emphasis original*)?

Responsive, yes: we want our approach to be a positive and caring one. Many of the books on classroom management and discipline mention these words in their titles: *Positive Classroom Management: A step-by-step guide to successfully running the show without*

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<sup>160</sup> Teachers need not think too much about CM, but like the student, simply follow directions; one CM text insists that “the hard work has already been done. Teachers need only read the various tactics or techniques to understand how they can be directly or indirectly adapted to the individual classroom...solving those classroom management and control issues we all face” (Watson, 1998, p.4).

*destroying student dignity*, by Robert DiGiulio (1995), *Toward Positive Classroom Discipline*, by Harvey F. Clarizio (1971), and *Teaching Children to Care: Classroom Management for Ethical and Academic Growth, K-8*, by Ruth Sidney Charney (2002) are among the many examples. But we also need to be *demanding*; when a teacher institutes “[c]lear, simple rules and expectations which are consistently and fairly applied... [p]redictability of events and activities through established routines, cues and signals about forthcoming transitions and changes,” a norm is established (Parsonson, 2012, p.17). We can eliminate a lot of “problem situations before they start” by building relationships with students, establishing classroom rules and expectations<sup>161</sup> that include “student input,” “standards,” “consistency,” and are “positive” so that acceptable behaviour is understood and students *want*<sup>162</sup> to behave (Bianco, 2002, p.88). Aside from students *requiring* being taught what is acceptable or appropriate behaviour—

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<sup>161</sup> In a study by Reupert and Woodcock (2010) that examines “effective classroom management strategies” and their use by pre-service teachers, there is a focus on “preventative strategies” such as establishing rules, seating arrangements, and the creation of routines (2010, p.1261 &1263). The study also notes that the most commonly used and acceptably practiced CM techniques included praise (discipline), rewards such as “tokens” towards privileges (discipline), “scanning” the room (surveillance), “feedback” (normalization, surveillance, and discipline), “close proximity to students” (more surveillance), “threats, warnings” (discipline), “ignoring inappropriate behaviour” (withdrawal of care/punishment), and punishments such as “removing privileges” (Reupert & Woodcock, 2010, p.1262). Even if the instituted rules are written in bright colours and full of positive language, or made into a game, these tactics are still meant to regulate behaviour and so must be enforced in some way or another (echoing Dewey’s remark that “good teachers will use devices of art to cover up the imposition so as to relieve it of obvious brutal features”) (1938/1997, p.19). One CM text suggests a “Reward Spinner” to use when you “Catch ‘em being good” (Bianco, 2002, p.195). Simply “[s]ingle out a student for special recognition,” “[t]ell the class why the behavior is being rewarded. (This reinforces the behavior),” and then let the student spin and win something (Bianco, 2002, p.195). Note that the ‘behavior’ is being rewarded, and that the ‘reinforcement’ is not just for that student but all those watching the one being rewarded. Another CM text recommends that students be required to keep an “Assignment Notepad” that documents their assignments and homework to be shown to parents/guardians at home (Watson, 1998, p.x). In-class behaviour can also be monitored with an “Interaction Tally Sheet” that lists student names and has a place for “Positive Interactions” and “Negative Interactions” to be tallied by another student (Bianco, 2002, p.186). Students are briefed on “what constitutes a negative or positive interaction,” such as the teacher having to ask a student to sit down, or alternatively, getting verbal praise or appreciation from the teacher (Bianco, 2002, p.186).

<sup>162</sup> Is the desire to be ‘good’ because the child is free to self-govern, or “perhaps in the desire to be seen as compliant, a ‘good’ prisoner, he [sic] moves further into the light” (Ford, 2003, p.10).

“before we can expect children to do right, we must teach them what we mean by ‘right’”<sup>163</sup> (Charney, 2002, p.31)—children often need to be coaxed and motivated because they lack self-discipline; “they will not work unless they are continually under some sort of deadline or time pressure” (Watson, 1996, p.25). Where the school institutes control, the student *manipulates*; they’ll ask to use the washroom even when they “do not really need to go at all” (Watson, 1996, p.13). We need to be on guard, children require “strongly defined limits;”<sup>164</sup> their needs and individuality must be considered, but not if it breaks the conformity required for our method (Watson, 1996, p.5). In the end, as a teacher, “you are in a situation of crowd control, behaviour management and finally, some teaching” (Watson, 1996, p.34).

What we *know* is that “[a]mple research supports the use of common techniques of applied behavior analysis... behavioral techniques found in nearly every classroom;” these include “positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement... and punishment involving aversive consequences” (Bear, 2010, p.151). Teachers and parents should try to “catch them being good” and reward kids with anything from a verbal ‘Good Job!’ or saying ‘I like the way Sasha is sitting still and quietly!’ to physical prizes such as a sticker at the grocery store check-out for being ‘well-behaved.’ A simple knowing smile to the kids that are waiting along with the teacher for the disruptive students to notice their antics and settle down is also a way to

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<sup>163</sup> The Story tells us that students don’t know what is ‘right,’ but the teacher or parent has an idea. Kohn remarks that “ensuring that children internalize our values isn’t the same thing as helping them to develop their own” (2014, p.155).

<sup>164</sup> A ‘lack of self-discipline,’ ‘manipulative,’ and in need of ‘strongly defined limits’ sounds as though there is a need for control or else there will be chaos. I am reminded of the stick figure of the master (in Chapter One, figure 2.6), who throws up their hands and shrugs as if to say, ‘I *have to* be the master, the slaves aren’t capable of doing what I expect them to do without me.’ In Yasemine Oral’s (2013) microethnographic study of Panopticism in a Turkish classroom, she writes, the “teacher argues that, in addition to some other actions such as warnings, surveillance is needed and justified because although ‘what they are meant to do’ is to complete their worksheets, some students start dealing with something else as soon as he turns around” (p.102).

reinforce desired behaviour. Classroom management and classroom discipline texts that I surveyed, dating from 1960 to the present, defined desired or appropriate behaviours in remarkably similar terms, such as “compliance,” “engagement,” “[a]cademic or social behaviour that complies with posted criteria,” “complete silence,” “respect others,” “solve problems responsibly,” and “remaining on-task”<sup>165</sup> (Parsonson, 2012, p.16). A recent article in *Professionally Speaking*, the magazine of the Ontario College of Teachers (September 2018), suggests that “students learn best in a comfortable environment” and that classroom management is “about developing routines and a culture that encourages positivity,<sup>166</sup> it’s about consistency and it’s the foundation of everything. Without it, there would be constant chaos” (Van de Geyn, 2018, p.31). Evidence-based ‘strategies’ are “intended to help minimise

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<sup>165</sup> These behaviours may support an efficiency that creates and maintains “maximally effective learning opportunities,” but the question of how these expectations are reasonable (expecting an adult to remain on-task or in complete silence is often a stretch), student-centred (are the needs of students being considered?), or in service to long-term goals of self-governance and democratic participation is up for debate (Hirn et al., 2017, p.143). Kohn argues that the overriding goal in CM is to get students to do “what they are supposed to be doing” and “learn what is acceptable [to the teacher] and what’s not” (2006, p.59). Kohn states that he has “reluctantly concluded... that the New Disciplines [Progressivists] are just as much about getting compliance as is the more traditional approach” (2006, p.59).

<sup>166</sup> ‘Positivity’ is not to be confused with ‘positivism,’ which is a term discussed in footnote 143. In progressivist language around CM, positivity (being positive or optimistic or pleasant in attitude) is often mixed with control to make being controlled more palatable. One CM text says that as “a direct function of a changing value system, many of the parameters of discipline and control that once existed are no longer accepted” (Watson, 1998, p.4); traditional punitive measures have had to give way to student well-being and teachers are “expected to meet the social/emotional needs of students who present daily challenges in the classroom” (Hirn et al., 2017, p.140). Kohn notes that in many CM books, the authors often reference the need for democracy and the “importance of replacing crude coercion with modern methods such as mutual respect and dialogue,” but then present practices that are still coercive (2006, p.60). Alongside the call for a gentler and more ‘positive’ approach to CM, there are recommendations for tactics such as “using a class meeting to drive ‘a wedge between the participants, splitting them up [so as] to weaken their power’” in order to strengthen the teacher’s position (Kohn, 2006, p.60). This is a pretty overt example of using a democratic approach (meeting) with a coercive or manipulative practice. It is more common for one to hear that CM is ‘shifting’ from a focus on “controlling student behavior to enhancing student learning;” however, this quotation is drawn from the same paper that argues that “effective” CM consists of tactics that have students alert, quiet, focused, seated, and on-task by threatening them with punishment, timing students as they prepare for the next lesson, randomly calling on students (instead of volunteering answers by raising a hand) so that they must always be “ready to participate,” and clearly stating *teacher* expectations (Eisenman et al., 2015, pp.10-11, 1, 6).

the emergence of problematic behaviours and a range of those which provide *positive consequences* for appropriate student behaviours” (Parsonson, 2012, p.16, *emphasis added*).

The ‘evidence’ used to support these interventions stem from the science “which involves the application of the principles of operant conditioning,” previously known as behaviour modification (Parsonson, 2012, p.17). Although positive reinforcement<sup>167</sup> is certainly more palatable to most of us, “[i]t would be naïve and utopian to think that punishment, ranging from verbal reprimands to suspensions, should never be used in schools” (Bear, 2010, p.4). They can’t just do whatever they want! And students want to do things like “talking out-of-turn,” “low-level disruptions,” “excessive noise,” not following classroom rules, “disruption, non-compliance, aggression,” and “task avoidance”<sup>168</sup> (Parsonson, 2012, p.16). And “chewing gum, wearing hats and eating loads of candy,” among other disruptive and disrespectful conduct, needs to be addressed with consequences (or seeing others being penalized) or students will never learn (Watson, 1996, p.9). All correction can be done, all consequences can be delivered, with “respect, involvement, warmth, and caring” (Bear, 2010, p.152).

Once expectations are established, and discipline (rewards and punishments) is enacted so that there is motivation (bribes and threats) for students to stay on track, there is another essential element to classroom management that is expected and almost natural. Kohn articulates that “one of many things that punishments and rewards share... [is that] both require surveillance” (2006, p.32). We want kids to do the ‘right’ thing even when we aren’t

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<sup>167</sup> Positive reinforcement is also not to be confused with positivism. Rather, it is in reference to reinforcing behaviour with positive attention (such as praise or rewards) rather than negative attention (negative reinforcement being punishment).

<sup>168</sup> Once again, the CMN convinces us that the nature of children requires our control and justifies punishment. But, in the last sentence of the paragraph, Bear once again groups punishment with positivity and kindness.

looking, but we can establish what is right through letting them know “I see you, I see everything” (Charney, 2002, p.27). The placement of one’s desk “where I can see the entire classroom” is a common recommendation in classroom management texts that seems quite obvious<sup>169</sup> (Charney, 2002, p.30). Charney remarks that when “I work with a small group, my chair is turned so that I see the room... I walk in the back—not the front—of the line. I want to see everyone. And students know that I see because I let them know with my comments, over and over” (2002, p.30). But, when a teacher’s eyes are *not* on the back of their head, they have other eyes around the classroom, schoolyard, hallways, etc.. Parsonson recommends “Peer Support” and explores the merits of the “peer control of reinforcement, use of peers as aides, and pupil self-evaluation strategies for on-task behaviour” (2012, p.20). Students are instructed and praised for monitoring other students, which encourages them to inform on their peers and appraise their own behaviour. Another recommendation is a public reward system or competition for a reward, such as “The Good Behaviour Game” (Parsonson, 2012, p.19). In the game, students are grouped and compete for points that they can earn by adhering to classroom rules or a community agreement (Parsonson, 2012). When a team or student from a team does what the teacher expects, they are praised and awarded a point on a public score

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<sup>169</sup> Ford takes up the progressivist effort to modify classroom environments to meet theoretical goals, such as moving desk arrangements from rows of individuals to circles and groups. Through a Foucauldian analysis, Ford notes that in a traditional classroom, “the unidirectional gaze of the teacher observing from her [sic] desk area at the back, to the isolation of students in their individual desks, to the self-surveillance engendered (‘I must not turn and ask Jack for an eraser’), the push toward normalization in classroom organization seems to be self-evident” (2003, p.12). But, in a progressivist, or what she terms an ‘open concept’ classroom, “[s]omething has to have been doing the work of those straight rows, the teacher’s gaze, and the work of inducing self-surveillance” (Ford, 2003, p.13). Although the groups of desks and the rugs in an open concept classroom soften the “spatial regimen” from the traditional era, there are still rules “governing the correct conduct in these segmented spaces are the subject of drill and/or reward schedules,” documentation and self-surveillance replaces the “obvious disciplinary gaze,” other students assist as the teacher’s “proxy,” and sometimes with “no capacity to ‘close the door,’ teachers, no less than students, are open to constant and unscheduled observation” (Ford, 2003, p.15 & 16).

card that will lead to the ultimate prize of “extra time on the playground” or a “pizza party” (Parsonson, 2012, p.19). Parsonson presents evidence of the game’s ability to lower levels of classroom non-compliance and showed “that pupils applied peer pressure to the more disruptive members of their teams to reduce their disruptive behaviour in order for the team to have a chance to win” (2012, p.19). And although there is a scientific basis for all of the above, its justification is also based in our experiences as teachers that tell us that classroom management is necessary. Where would we be without it?

Where are we now?

We are not ready for freedom. Putting the piles of books and the pages of Pinterest on ‘classroom management’ aside, the power of Stories runs through our veins. Progressivist educators want to move away from traditionalist tactics, and the role of teacher-as-sovereign makes many of us uncomfortable. Although we genuinely care about our students *and* want to have positive relationships with them, our aims of freedom and equality require *connection*, while Thorndike’s connectionism and the CMN disconnect us. Reinforcing our roles, our inequality as master and slave, our belief in The Story that students and children are incapable of self-governance without our carefully perfected explanations, is dialectical and leaves us talking into the abyss. We are separated by it.

The CMN does not require an explanation. It is tied to the many stories discussed so far. Part of the invisible, it is that low voice that influences our conduct. There is inequality that justifies a postponement of freedom. It murmurs in dichotomous language about structure and children’s natural aversion to it. There is a continuous chant in the background that reminds us

of ‘control or chaos.’ Hegel’s Master-Slave-Dialectic, Hobbes’ argument about the need for a sovereign, and Thorndike’s science of control all emerge in this narrative. Rousseau was distracted by it. Dewey couldn’t be heard over it. Any alternative will lead to a loss of *my* freedom, certain disorder and chaos, and the kids will learn immorality and a lack of preparedness for the ‘real world.’ A disconnection with ideas is generated and undermines our transformation.

In thinking about and expanding on the 3Rs (‘respect’ for self, others, and the environment), and making the modification of exchanging ‘respect’ for ‘connection,’ I found the need for a 4<sup>th</sup> ‘C’: ideas. Remembering that ideas are “material forces,” and intricately interwoven with action, there is a difference between feeling connected and disconnected with ideas (Marx, 1859/1999). Ideas have an effect on what we believe and may make it easier *or* more difficult to feel connected. If an idea is new, and disconcerting because it disrupts pre-existing beliefs, one might feel disconnected. But even an idea that fits a dominant narrative could be unsettling and unsupportive to connection. An idea may not fit with ‘best practice,’ be undermined by the existing possibilities (especially if they are limited by a dichotomy or a situation of either/or), and/or cause one to feel disconnection from core beliefs or ideas that support one’s own identity. That being said, when I am connected within myself, with others, and with my environment—and when my sense of equality is intact and my ability to be fully human is supported—new ideas can be worked through and revised connections can be formed.

I wish to return to Rancière’s question: “where are *we* now?” (Rancière, 2009, p.115). The stories-that-we-all-know have us between a rock and a hard place. We can stick with the

certainty of CM, and the temporary compliance that we can achieve with the right lighting, the perfect schedule, the model carrot dangling just so. Or, we can engage in praxis, wade through the *what, who, and how*,<sup>170</sup> lean into vulnerability, and still possibly find disconnection. But, the CMN and CM tactics, no matter how ‘progressive,’ do not fit with what I see as always thinking “the highest thought” (Cajete, 1994, p.46). They are a distraction from what *might* be. They are an interruption to praxis. They limit us to either/or and disempower us in our efforts to be the teachers and parents we aspire to be. There is no perfected pedagogy or ‘best practice’ other than the reflective one. We need philosophy. We need dialogue. And we need equality. As my son said, we can’t connect if we can’t hear or see each other. Where are *we* right now in terms of connection? With the dawn of newer and purportedly better techniques on the horizon, such as ‘self-regulation’ [SR], is there an opportunity for progress and transformation? Or, will teachers and parents who subscribe to the goals of progressivist education remain static and distracted by the CMN? Will the materials and resources that promote and support progressivist tools, such as SR, address the CMN? Can SR, and other progressivist tools designed to promote/teach/support self-governance and supporting cultural aims be enacted without addressing philosophically the presence and possible impact of the CMN? Does the progressivist classroom practice of teaching SR support the progressivist goal of preparing people to be self-governing participates in a democratic society?

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<sup>170</sup> In Chapter Two, I consider the questions of *what, who, and how* when it comes to reflection in praxis.

# Chapter 4—A Progressivist Tool and a Philosophical Footnote

*Footnotes are, if not the truth, the appendix in which is shown that which must not be said.*

*—Jacques Derrida, 1980/1987, p.446*

Self-Regulation: Say What You Mean

“A PhD, huh? So, what are you studying? What’s your PhD *in*?”

I get this question a lot.

I like to think that the people who ask it are generally interested, but I hesitate to really get into it just in case they are only making conversation. In this moment, it was an intermission and I had a glass of wine in my hand as I waited for the next act; there was limited time and we didn’t really know each other outside of our kids. I chose to offer my short answer, the one I have been using to test the waters, which is simply,

“Education.” In this instance, the man asking me, and the woman beside him, both stood up a little straighter. His face broadened with a smile and she looked over and up at him.

“Well, we’re both teachers. I work in special education, with Educational Assistants, at this point. Was a classroom teacher for 15 years.” He looked to her and then she took the torch, saying,

“And I’m a grade four teacher. Have been for nine years. Grades one and two before that. So, what about education? What aspects?” She cocked her head to the side and leaned toward me slightly. It seemed that they were, indeed, intrigued. So, I offered my long answer.

“I’m interested in the connections and disconnections between what we think about teaching and learning, and our practices and techniques. In particular, I am curious about Self-Regulation...” they both began nodding, I continued, “...and how this new resource may correspond well to our beliefs and goals but also how its potential may be misunderstood.” The woman was suddenly very enthusiastic. She jumped in with a vigorous nod and said,

“Self-regulation is something we’re using a lot at our school. You should come and see what we are up to! We’ve got stationary bikes, most classrooms have adaptive seating...”<sup>171</sup> her partner broke in,

“—What’s ‘adaptive seating’?” He asked. She smiled up at him and said,

“It’s more than just chairs at desks. You know, standing desks, disc cushions, and yoga balls. That sort of thing.” She looked back to me and continued, “In my classroom, we also have a Cozy Corner with a little tent and a big pillow for the kids to hang out.”

“That’s where she sends the problem kids.” He grinned. He was being sarcastic. She lightly elbowed him and explained that, for her students, “The Cozy Corner is more of a reward. Kids who stay on task and get their work done can get there first. I mean, sometimes certain kids ask for it, but I will say ‘no’ to them if I think they’re abusing it or just doing it to avoid their

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<sup>171</sup> Adaptive seating, sometimes called ‘preferential seating,’ is an approach to reducing biological stress in students (Shanker, 2013b). The students who are sensitive to the standard hard plastic chairs might have a substitute, such as yoga balls or disc cushions (“air-filled cushions with soft spikes on the bottom and a pebbled pattern on the top”), or there may be standing desks or couches as alternative to sitting at regular tables or desks and chairs (Shanker, 2013b, p.15).

jobs.” I nodded on the outside but grimaced on the inside. This was sounding like the Classroom Management Narrative [CMN] with some Self-Regulation-inspired furniture choices. I smiled and asked,

“So, how does stress play into how the ‘Cozy Corner’ is used?”

“Stress?” She didn’t seem to see the correlation right away. She looked up at her partner and back to me. She proceeded with some hesitation. “We’ve got some activities set-up for when kids are stressed, so I usually send them to one of those. The Cozy Corner doesn’t work for those kids because then I can’t see them.”

“Well, not being able to see the kid would cause *me* some stress.” The man piped in and chuckled. He went on, “I mean, maybe I’m a little confused. What exactly do *you* mean by ‘Self-Regulation’? With special ed., we need to teach these kids how to control their outbursts. We have problems with violence and some EAs are getting hurt. How would a ‘Cozy Corner’ teach kids to better control themselves?”

“Well, the difficulty with what ‘Self-Regulation’ means is part of my concern. Self-regulation is about regulating our stress and helping kids to regulate their stress. We often talk about self-discipline or self-control, teaching kids to keep their emotions in check and ‘use their words,’ or coaching them toward what we see as a reasonable response. The literature tells us that Self-Regulation is what we need *before* we can do any of that. It is being able to find our calm and reduce our stress so that the parts of our brains that help us to communicate, problem-solve, create, and make decisions, among other things, stays ‘online.’” I could have gone on. She was nodding. He was looking at me with an expression that said that he wasn’t buying what I was selling.

The lights in the lobby dimmed and came back up.

#### Self-Regulation: Mean What You Say

Over the years, and centuries, the field of education has laboured to locate the most comprehensive curriculum (a list of what students should learn in order to achieve a certain aim) and effective pedagogy (the way in which teachers should deliver this curriculum in order to achieve a certain aim). The aims of education are often unspoken but considered obvious; to prepare the next generation of morally conscious, self-governing, productive, and democratic citizens.<sup>172</sup> In a thorough and wide-ranging way, the curriculum should outline what students ought to know, what competencies need to be developed, what core understandings must be fostered, and what skills have to be nurtured so that the aims of education can be realized. The techniques used to render a result supporting the aims of education are seemingly perpetually ‘progressing;’ pedagogy that reflects ‘best practice’ is thought to be continually evolving. What we propose to pass on (curriculum) to turn out ‘educated’ people should connect to what we believe *and* support our aims. Likewise, what we do (pedagogy) to communicate the curriculum should also sustain *and* bear a strong relationship or connection with our aims. Curriculum and pedagogy are not static; they change with a turn-over of government, or a new economic need, in relation to revised social attitudes and viewpoints, or with the results of new research, and under the influence of many of other factors.

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<sup>172</sup> As discussed earlier in this text, the current predominant expectation in Canadian education is culturally motivated by the goal of progressivism (Giroux, 2005; Harvey, 2015; Kohn, 2014; OME, 2015b). This means that most parents, teachers, and other stakeholders believe education ought to support values of democracy, which include moral consciousness, active citizenship, and an understanding of and ability to support personal and collective freedom and equality (Boyd, 2010; Harvey, 2015; Leafgren, 2009; Purpel, 1999).

If one could encapsulate in a single sentence the newest trend in practice to enter the mainstream Canadian classroom, one that is meant to support progressivist aims of education, it would read: people learn best in an environment that limits stress *and* with skills and strategies that help them adjust to situations and manage the stresses that they are under. A growing number of Faculties of Education<sup>173</sup> across North America are instructing teachers-to-be in mindfulness,<sup>174</sup> Social Emotional Learning,<sup>175</sup> and “growth mindsets,”<sup>176</sup> which are all related to stress and possible tactics to work through it, but *Self-Regulation* [SR] also has a prominent role and is inclusive when it comes to the above. Many parents of school-aged

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<sup>173</sup> The University of British Columbia’s Faculty of Education website features a page entitled “Self-Regulation in Schools” and shares that “[o]ur research focuses on motivation and self-regulation in schools. We are interested in how students’ and teachers’ motivation and self-regulation can be supported, as well as how teachers can develop effective teaching strategies to promote academically effective, and socially and emotionally supportive approaches for learning among their students” (UBC, 2019). Beyond teacher education at the pre-service and Masters level, the Ministry of Education & Training in British Columbia features a webcast (1 hour, 41 minutes in length, with 44 slides) of Dr. Stuart Shanker and Jane Bertrand entitled “Self-regulation...What is it and why is it important for learning” (2013).

<sup>174</sup> According to the MindUp Curriculum (Hawn Foundation, 2011), a popular curriculum that teachers or schools can purchase for teaching “Brain-Focused Strategies for Learning—and Living” (front cover), ‘mindfulness’ is a “state of being in touch with and aware of the present moment in a nonjudgmental way” (p.159). In a course at the University of Victoria, which is part of the program requirements for a Bachelor of Education, teacher candidates are taught the role of mindfulness in their own practices as well as the impact on their students (Abra et al., 2017). The course, *Transformative Inquiry*, is being used as a model in other Faculties of Education in Canada (Abra et al., 2017).

<sup>175</sup> Social-Emotional Learning [SEL] refers to “the process of acquiring and effectively applying the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to recognize and manage emotions; developing caring and concern for others; making responsible decisions; establishing positive relationships; and handling challenging situations capably” (Zins & Elias, 2006, p.1). Classroom management texts, such as Charney’s (2002) *Teaching Children to Care: Classroom Management for Ethical and Academic Growth, K-8*, Bear’s (2010) *School Discipline and Self-Discipline: A Practical Guide to Promoting Prosocial Student Behaviour*, and Jones & Jones’ (2007) *Comprehensive Classroom Management: Creating Communities of Support and Solving Problems*, all promote the use of SEL. Provincial education curriculum also calls for teaching SEL; British Columbia’s *Core Competencies* call for students to learn social and emotional intelligence (BCC, 2018). The province of Alberta’s curriculum calls for SEL to help students “develop social-emotional skills that are essential” for, among other things, “working with others” and “achieving goals” (Government of Alberta, 2019).

<sup>176</sup> A ‘growth mindset’ is a concept developed by Carol Dweck (2006) that gained popularity over the last ten years and has entered the popular lexicon (Kohn, 2014). Dweck defines a growth mindset as one in which “people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment” (2017, p.1).

children have heard the term, and various popular child-rearing websites provide information on how this modern innovation can be administered at home (see Pooley, 2016). Over the last few years, the mass media have regularly published articles filled with accolades for SR—“It’s been described as a watershed moment in B.C. education” (Steffenhagen, 2012)—complete with pictures of young children sitting on their ‘wobble chairs’<sup>177</sup> diligently filling in worksheets (Light, 2016) and accompanied by details of how SR is more than “trendy edubabble” (Soupcoff, 2012). The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation produced an article in 2013 that describes the Surrey, British Columbia, school district as taking on SR “almost out of self-defence” (Wells, 2013). The article also points out that the idea of SR isn’t new, but “[w]hat is new is the neuroscience supporting it” (Wells, 2013). Magazines and journals for teachers also share in the call for SR in the classroom. In the journal *Young Children*, the authors state that Ontario kindergarten programs have made a “concerted effort to focus on self-regulation” (Becker and Mastrangelo, 2017, p.20). The article quotes Canada’s leading voice on SR and claims that “[m]any educators use Stuart Shanker’s text *Calm, Alert, and Learning: Classroom Strategies for Self-Regulation* (2012)<sup>178</sup> as a process to help children articulate their emotions and help them develop both calming and alerting strategies to use as needed” (Becker and Mastrangelo, 2017, p.20). The article also proposes that SR is particularly important in helping children “control their impulses” and “stop doing something that is unnecessary (even though they do not want to) and start doing something that is needed” (Becker and Mastrangelo, 2017, p.20). In 2012,

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<sup>177</sup> Wobble chairs are chairs with no back and a rounded bottom so that they can wobble and a soft top so that they are comfortable for those people who need to wiggle.

<sup>178</sup> Although I am working with a 2013 printing, Shanker’s *Calm, Alert, and Learning: Classroom Strategies for Self-Regulation*, is a text that is commonly used in teacher education and professional development and is, according to self-reg.ca, one of the top-selling educational publications in Canada. I will be referring to this text often during this chapter.

the Ministry of Education invited Shanker to do a workshop with superintendents from British Columbia school districts on the science and successes of SR. There is evidence<sup>179</sup> that SR is being used in schools across that province; principals have been impressed by the “outbreak of self-discipline” and one teacher commented that those involved are “looking at children differently” (Wells, 2013). It is not surprising that SR<sup>180</sup> has been so warmly and uncritically

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<sup>179</sup> The Vernon School District (22) in British Columbia promotes SR on their website, advocating for Shanker’s (2013b) *Calm, Alert, and Learning* as well as the Hawn Foundation’s *MindUp Curriculum* (2015). In language that appears to be pulled from the MindUp website, the school district notes that “This research-based curriculum features 15 lessons that use the latest information about the brain to dramatically improve behavior and learning for all students. Each lesson offers easy strategies for helping students focus their attention, improve their self-regulation skills, build resilience to stress, and develop a positive mind-set in both school and life” (SD22, 2019).

<sup>180</sup> The terms ‘Self-Regulation’ and ‘Self-Regulated Learning’ are distinct and yet are occasionally conflated or confused for one another. This is understandable as they have overlapping elements and are drawn from a long history of theoretical and philosophical discussions surrounding learning and teaching. Formal research on self-regulation in relation to learning became more common and focused in the 1970s but did not lead to the outcome of contemporary pedagogical applications until the end of the 1990s (Zimmerman, 2014). The term ‘self-regulation’ was only introduced to PsycINFO, an online database produced by the American Psychological Association, in 2003, and is defined as the “[p]rocess of adjusting one’s behaviour to achieve or avoid a particular outcome” (2016a). ‘Self-Regulated Learning’ [SRL] was also added in 2003 and is distinguished as an “[a]pproach to learning that involves self adjustment, self monitoring, strategy use, and goal setting” (2016b). Although both SR and SRL are understood to be individually managed methods or strategies that relate to behaviour, the former is centred on the regulation of how one responds to stress (environmental, situational, emotional, social, or cognitive) and the ways in which one modifies their own behaviour with certain results in mind (Shanker, 2013b). The latter theory emphasizes a focus on learning; Barry Zimmerman, a prominent researcher on SRL, explains that it is not “a mental ability or an academic performance skill; rather it is the self-directive process by which learners transform their mental abilities into academic skills” (2002, p.65). It appears that what differentiates the two approaches is the orientation to academic achievement, with the ‘outcome’ of SR being somewhat ambiguous while the results of SRL being academic improvement. Yet, Martha B. Bronson (2000), developmental and educational psychologist and author of *Self-Regulation in Early Childhood*, argues that proponents of SR are often focused “more on the control of cognitive systems, such as the ability to control attention to direct and monitor thinking and problem solving, and to engage in independent learning activities” (Bronson, 2000, p.3). In fact, one of the main SR texts from which the ‘informed position’ of this paper is drawn, Shanker’s *Calm, Alert, and Learning: Classroom Strategies for Self-Regulation*, states that the “primary goal is to help students to achieve *optimal self-regulation*, a state of calm focus and alertness appropriate for learning in a classroom” (Shanker, 2013b, p.xiii, *emphasis original*). In another text of Shanker’s, *Self-Reg: How to help your child (and you) break the stress cycle and successfully engage in life* (2017), which is directed more to parents than to teachers, he states that the main purpose of SR is “is about making a dramatic difference in mood, concentration, and the ability to make friends, feel empathy, and develop the higher values and virtues that are vital to your child’s long-term well-being” (p.5). In the case of Shanker’s work, the ‘particular outcome’ in the first definition of SR noted above can be delineated to mean academic achievement, but this is not to say that this is the *only* outcome, and the outcome can be set apart from the goal. The main thrust behind the psychology and the science and research of the Self-Regulation Institute [SRI], a sister organization of The Milton & Ethel Harris Research Initiative Treatment [MEHRIT] Centre, is to “[e]nhance the health and wellbeing of children, youth, adults, and communities through integrative research steered by the innovative Self-Reg model” (SRI, 2019). In this project, I am focusing on SR and not SRL. It is possible

embraced by so many. It would be difficult to pinpoint a time when people were *not* considered in need of priming when it comes to learning to have self-control and regulating their behavior. Since Socrates, and perhaps even before him, there have been a steady stream of similar comments made on the problem of ‘kids these days’ and their poor behavior, which enjoins the call for an education that encourages the development of ‘well-regulated’ individuals (Harvey, 2015).

The thing is, that is *not* what SR is about. The Story goes that we need children to learn to ‘self-regulate’ so that they can fulfil the aims of education; but here, ‘self-regulate’ means to have self-control<sup>181</sup> and the ‘aims of education’ means compliance. The Story also promotes the belief that children will learn to have self-control first by *being controlled*.<sup>182</sup> This is evidenced

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that SRL may arise from the subjects in my data collection and this will be addressed before observations in the survey and the pre-observations interview when the subject is asked about their understanding of SR. My reasons for focusing on SR, and for not including SRL, are (1) they are not the same thing and to look at both would broaden the scope of this project to a needless and even confusing degree, and (2) the roles of philosophy and praxis in SR is what I am interested in and from where I detect the potential for problems.

<sup>181</sup> In a study on the meaning and conceptual clarity of SR, researchers found that the “ambiguity [of the term SR] is also a major hurdle for school teachers, especially those who want to apply ideas about self-regulation to improve their students’ classroom experience, learning outcomes, and general well-being” (Burman et al., 2015, p.1508). The study found 447 terms associated with SR, 88 closely related concepts, and 6 broad conceptual clusters (Burman et al., 2015). Using technology and algorithms, and scanning databases such as PsycInfo, they found that “the primary meaning of self-regulation is therefore that of self-control: if this were a Google search, then Self Control is the node in this network that would receive the most referred traffic (i.e., nearly double that of the next most relevant node)” (Burman et al., 2015, p.1512). The researchers believe that this misunderstanding of the meaning of SR is a problem that undermines its purpose and practice; they note that “the public understanding of self-regulation does indeed seem to be that of willpower (Baumeister & Tierney, 2012; McGonigal, 2012), focus (Goleman, 2013), and grit (Duckworth, in press; Tough, 2012). These are all stories of self-control (see also Mischel, 2014). Yet this does not seem to us to be as useful—to teachers—as some of the alternative meanings that are obscured by the influence of the self-control narrative, such as Self Monitoring, Self Management, and Emotional Regulation. (Briefly: If it is possible for a child to achieve the goal of greater self-control by learning and practicing skills related to self-observation and self-management, then this suggests a different approach to controlling disruptive classroom behavior than that typically taken today.)” (Burman et al., 2015, p.1513). It is arguable that ‘self-control,’ in the CMN, translates to being docile, obedient, and subservient. The conflation of these terms, and the narrative that undermines the goals and practice of SR, will be discussed deeply later in this chapter.

<sup>182</sup> Later in this chapter, in a discussion on SR and ‘external regulation,’ the difference between external control in terms of misbehaviour and external regulation/co-regulation through the lens of SR is discussed.

by the articles noted above and in texts on classroom management, but this narrative is also prevalent in everyday conversations with teachers,<sup>183</sup> parents, and other caregivers, and in their observed interactions with their students and children. In one of his books on SR, entitled *Self-Reg: How to Help Your Child (And You) Break the Stress Cycle and Successfully Engage With Life*, Shanker (2017b) states that “[t]he term ‘self-regulation’ is used in so many different ways—hundreds, in fact—but the original psycho-physiological sense refers to how we manage the stresses that we are under” (2017b, p.5). He continues to point out that ‘stress,’ “in its original sense, refers to all those stimuli that require us to expend energy to maintain some sort of balance” (Shanker, 2017b, p.5). Shanker argues that one can only have self-control if one is able to regulate their stress; “Self-Regulation makes self-control possible, not the other way around” (MEHRIT, 2016a). He also remarks that our mainstream narrative has us focused on self-control, meaning a concentration on controlling or containing our impulses, and this is based on “surface behaviours” (2017a). This feeds into The Story that self-control is indicative of one’s character and the narrative that children are naturally chaotic and necessitate external control in order to be ‘good;’ a child who displays inappropriate behaviour, who makes the grown-ups uneasy and has difficulty knowing “how far to go so the grown-up world can abide you” (Morrison & Morrison, 1999, p.10), does not have enough ‘willpower’ and cannot handle their freedom.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> In Chapters Five and Six, I will offer detailed examples of such conversations and this Story through my own experience and from the experiences of the teachers whom I interviewed and observed.

<sup>184</sup> This is in reference to the words of Morrison’s (1999) picture book, *The Big Box*, which was discussed at length in the Introductory chapter.

The narratives outlined above, and other stories-that-we-all-know, interfere with as well as undermine the aims of SR. The CMN, and The Stories that maintain it, need to be addressed within the context of SR or there is a risk of being distracted by The Question,<sup>185</sup> a focus on behaviour, a preoccupation with compliance, and a counter-productive aim of producing docile, unquestioning, and subservient people. In Claudia Ruitenberg’s article, “Plays Well with Others’: The engagement of philosophy of education with other educational research,” she addresses the common and rarely disputed separation of philosophy of education from other areas of research and disciplines in the field (2014). Although the author acknowledges that there are legitimate reasons for some philosophy of education to remain distinct from other research, and exclusively philosophical, she recommends that there also be intentional engagement with actual practices and policies, ideas being studied, and the reading of results (Ruitenberg, 2014). Ruitenberg remarks that “[i]t is not a given that philosophers of education should engage with other disciplines” (2014, p.89). Ruitenberg argues that philosophy of education has an impact on other educational research even without direct contact and she does not seek to make the case that “philosophers of education *should* engage with other forms of educational research but rather what such an engagement should look like” (2014, p.89). To further both philosophical and other educational research, I believe it is sometimes essential for the two to *see* each other. Philosophy of education needs to engage with the “everyday experience” in the field (Ruitenberg, 2014, p.89) and other educational research needs to be able to participate in reflection—praxis—and *see* The Stories made visible through

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<sup>185</sup> The Question is referred to in earlier chapters and is “How do I get them to do what I want them to do?” It is what undermines The Answer, which is in reference to what our goal as parents/teachers/society is for kids: the freedom to be fully human. These concepts are discussed in detail in the Introductory chapter.

philosophical engagement. Although this project cannot be an example of situated or embedded philosophy—as it is not written in collaboration with other educational researchers or psychologists—I aim to take Ruitenberg’s suggestions for how such engagement can work so that, as someone writing from a philosophical perspective, I do not stumble into the standard pitfalls of this interaction (2014). In an effort to make connections, and employ praxis within my own method, I will endeavor not to dismiss or sidestep empirical research or data but rather “respond to actual educational phenomena and trends” and make the effort to inform myself of “what other disciplines say on the subject, and show how philosophical perspectives can enrich and clarify the discussion” (Ruitenberg, 2014, p.90). This project is an effort to provide a ‘footnote’ to some of the research on SR as well as a philosophical or *praxis-based* discussion of data that I have collected from mainstream Canadian classrooms. My aim is *not* to avoid or separate my work from “the details of everyday reality that are the object of empirical research” but rather to try to remain in “the midst of education’s everydayness” while supplying an interruption that could perhaps unsettle those who are settling students into their disc cushions<sup>186</sup> with fidgets<sup>187</sup> in hand without reflection (Ruitenberg, 2014, p.90). I want to explore the potential of SR to support the aims of progressivist education *and* the possibility of its subversion. I want to demonstrate praxis in action and the uncertainty as well as empowerment and strength that can accompany engagements in *reflection* and the process of seeking connections or alerting to disconnections between our *thinking* and our *doing*.

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<sup>186</sup> ‘Disc cushions’ are soft round plastic cushions that can be placed on a hard chair for comfort and to allow movement.

<sup>187</sup> ‘Fidgets’ are a small item that can be manipulated with one’s hands so that one can fidget.

As I provide philosophical perspectives to the phenomena being discussed, I will describe some of the features of SR and demonstrate my efforts to become informed of what is traditionally the ‘main text’ and the standpoints and knowledge of educational research in this area. I will dig into this *actual trend* and what *other* educational research—as well as the broader discussions in education—are saying about SR. Of the many texts and articles on SR that I have encountered, most have been weighed down with psi-speak,<sup>188</sup> and are generally very focused on the science and empirical (here read: quantitative<sup>189</sup>) data supporting the claims and conclusions, theory and recommended practice. Within these articles, there are rarely any mention, let alone an in-depth discussion, of possible critiques of the values and/or assumptions within SR. Even the storytelling relies on science in a way that places primacy on certain types of evidence, on reason, in ways that distract from or discount the stories-that-we-all-know and the possibility of their influence. Although psychology and its terms are relevant and helpful in a discussion of what SR *is*, I have made the conscious decision to not solely rely on it and to include what might typically be footnoted—the links to our Stories, examples of practice, and storytelling—into the main text, while relegating some of the more technical stuff to the footnotes. While exploring SR and considering the impacts of other narratives, I will offer my primary questions surrounding this tool of progressivist education. The next chapters will

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<sup>188</sup> By ‘psi-speak,’ I mean a reliance on the language of what educational psychologist, Jack Martin (2004), calls the “‘psi’ discourses” (p.189). Martin critiques the psycho-educational approach that essentially diagnoses a problem, and then works to sell a solution through texts, manuals, and modules “targeted at the acquisition of specific individual skills and abilities” and that “all such selves can be purchased at fixed unit prices” (2004, p.202). The language used to sell these programs, or to argue that there is a problem that requires such a fix, is often laden down with technical and scientific words or wording that leaves those non-psychologists less able to follow or add to a conversation, making critique and critical engagement less possible or likely.

<sup>189</sup> It should be noted that not all empirical data are *quantitative*. There is an ongoing argument among researchers about the legitimacy of, or ability to defend, data that are non-quantitative.

outline my methodology in collecting my own ethnographic, qualitative data<sup>190</sup> in relation to these questions, as well as the analysis of this data and my conclusions.

The Question Shifts from ‘How?’ to ‘Why Now?’

When I talk about ‘self-regulation,’ I am referring to the term’s neurophysiological meaning; SR is about understanding the “brain-body responses to stress, including energy expenditure, recovery, and restoration” (MEHRIT, 2016b). A better appreciation for what stress does to us—physiologically, emotionally, cognitively, and socially—can give us a better awareness of when we are becoming overstressed, as well as how to break the stress cycle<sup>191</sup> and improve our self-regulation<sup>192</sup> (Shanker, 2016). Another leading voice in the field, clinical

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<sup>190</sup> In the following chapters, I will discuss the data I collected while immersed in mainstream public-school classrooms. I designed a study that included surveying, interviewing, and observing teachers who identified as ‘progressive’ and believed that they included SR in their classroom practice. I will discuss the design and approach to this study in the next chapter, and the resulting analysis and conclusions, as well as my thoughts on the data.

<sup>191</sup> Shanker (2017b) speaks of a ‘stress cycle,’ which is when our “internal alarm” is primed to go off because the stress has not been reduced (p.29). In other words, when our limbic system is triggered and our body reacts as though there is a threat to our lives (Shanker, 2017b). Shanker gives the example of waking up in the middle of the night feeling worried, our minds consumed with seemingly urgent issues, and we are unable to get back to sleep easily (2017b). He describes this as “a sign that your internal alarm” going off when you’re asleep, and that “you were likely in a high state of tension when you went to bed and stayed that way” (Shanker, 2017b, p.29). When our limbic system takes over, it is difficult to engage our pre-frontal cortex, our thinking brain, and talk ourselves down from solving the world’s problems from our beds at 2am. We begin a “looping stress response” and this creates more tension, using more energy, and priming us to continue to be in or near this state of “anxious rumination,” hence the term ‘cycle’ (Shanker, 2017b, p.29).

<sup>192</sup> In my research on SR, I encountered some conflicting definitions and focuses on SR. I have chosen to concentrate on Shanker’s and Siegal’s interpretations and approaches as theirs are what is currently referred to in the field (media, texts for parents/educators, workshops, professional development). However, I would like to note that there are various interpretations of what SR means and what the goal of it may be. The challenge among SR theorists is perspective; for example, do “emotions regulate behavior” or is behavior a symptom of dysregulation (Barrett et al., 2013, p.3)? In addition to Bronson (2000), there are three self-proclaimed SR ‘handbooks’ that I have used to inform myself: *Handbook of Self-Regulatory Processes in Development: New Directions and International Perspectives* (Barrett et al., 2013), *Handbook of Self-Regulation: Research, Theory, and Applications* (Baumeister & Vohs, 2011), and *Handbook of Self-Regulation* (Boekaerts et al., 2000). Bronson (2000) and Baumeister & Vohs (2011) are used by Shanker (2017). The texts mentioned so far in this paragraph are meant for an academic and research audience and are not accessible to the mainstream Canadian teacher in the same way as Shanker’s and Siegal’s work. Because I am interested in teacher practice, Shanker’s and Siegal’s resources are more pertinent. Shanker’s and Siegal’s books were also known—and subscribed to—by the participating teachers that I interviewed and observed.

professor of psychiatry at the University of California, Los Angeles School of Medicine, Daniel J. Siegel, says that “when you know about the parts of the brain, you can learn how to direct your attention in a way that can get certain areas to not only get activated but also to start to work together” (2017). Essentially, Siegel argues that one can change both the function and the structure of one’s brain by knowing in one’s mind<sup>193</sup> about how the brain works and what is happening in our brains when we are stressed (2017). One way of thinking about stress and the brain is what is called the ‘Hand Model of the Brain.’ Shanker uses this model in his work<sup>194</sup> but it was invented and popularized by Siegel in his series of books and speaking tours. At a MEHRIT workshop I attended in 2017, a facilitator named Susan Hopkins<sup>195</sup> also demonstrated how to use Siegel’s Hand Model of the Brain with young children and adults alike. It begins with a ‘triune’<sup>196</sup> representation of the brain, which looks at three distinct areas of the brain and their basic functions. Siegel demonstrates these three areas of the brain with his hand; he makes a fist with his thumb tucked under his folded fingers. If the model were orientated in our heads, the back of the hand would be at the back of the head with the wrist in line with the spine, and the front of the knuckles would be located behind one’s forehead (Siegel, 2017). Siegel

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<sup>193</sup> In an effort to add clarity to a neurophysiological understanding of the issue of SR, Bryson & Siegal (2018) articulate a distinction between the ‘mind’ and the ‘brain.’ The mind is the “self-regulation and organization of energy and information flow as well as our consciousness and the subjective feeling of being alive” (Bryson & Siegal, 2018, p.14). The brain is the “embodied mechanism of energy and information flow” (Bryson & Siegal, 2018, p.14). Another key definition here is ‘relationships,’ being the “sharing of energy and information,” which aligns well with my own definition of ‘connection’ (Bryson & Siegal, 2018, p.14). The mind and brain are differentiated parts that when, through a lens of interpersonal neurobiology, are “integrated” with our relationships produce well-being or a well-regulated person (Bryson & Siegal, 2018, p.14).

<sup>194</sup> Shanker discusses the Hand Model of the Brain in his 2016 book *Self-Reg* and in his presentation on Self-Reg (2017a).

<sup>195</sup> Susan Hopkins is the Executive Director of Stuart Shanker’s organization, as well as a former teacher and school administrator. She also authors many articles and papers on SR.

<sup>196</sup> The “Triune Model” of the brain was developed in the 1960s by neuroscientist Paul MacLean (Shanker, 2016). It is “now seen as an oversimplification” of the brain, but it remains very instructive and helpful in understanding the brain and stress (Shanker, 2016). One does not have to know and name all parts of the brain to learn about SR.

describes his fingers as a representation of the neocortex—the newest part of our brains evolutionarily speaking—which is the part of our brains responsible for higher-order functions such as thinking, creating, problem-solving, decision-making, language, and planning ahead<sup>197</sup> (Siegal, 2017). Basically, everything we are trying to do in school, from solving math problems or creative writing, to designing a science experiment to test our hypothesis, to working together as a team with our peers on a soccer team, to being a caring friend, all require the neocortex to be ‘online’ (Siegal, 2017). Playing, learning, socializing, engaging ethically (sharing, comforting someone), and many other daily elements of our lives as children, teachers, and parents involve the neocortex.

When one peels back the neocortex, what Shanker and Hopkins also dubbed the ‘blue brain,’ by lifting up the fingers of the Hand Model and revealing the thumb over the palm one can see the limbic region<sup>198</sup> (Shanker, 2017; Siegal, 2017). This part of the brain is evolutionarily much older than the neocortex (which is only about 100 million years old), and dates back to when we became mammals (about 200 million years ago), and acts like an early mammal, too (Siegal, 2017). The limbic region, or ‘red brain,’ has the job of staying alert to whether we are safe or under threat (Shanker, 2017a). It is also the home of our motivation and our “strong

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<sup>197</sup> The neocortex has other roles; Siegal describes it as “making maps” of the world around us by taking in what we see and hear. The neocortex takes in what we see through our occipital lobe at the back of the brain, while the temporal lobe perceives what we hear (Siegal, 2017). The parietal lobe, located above the temporal lobe and behind the frontal lobe, has a major role in sensory input but also in language processing (Siegal, 2017). The frontal lobe is our “association cortex” in that it is where we make associations in thought (Siegal, 2017). Tucked into the front of this area, as well as underneath, is the pre-frontal cortex [PFC], which is essential to our ability to self-regulate (Shanker, 2016). The Hand Model of the Brain does not go into detail on the parts of the brain, as its purpose is to be easily memorable and simple to associate to our experiences of stress and regulation.

<sup>198</sup> Siegal acknowledges that ideally there would be two thumbs, to demonstrate accurately the left and right parts of the brain (2017). Again, the Hand Model is meant to be a simple metaphor and not anatomically accurate.

emotional associations and urges”<sup>199</sup> (Shanker, 2017b, pp.14-15). The red brain never turns ‘off,’ but rather is a non-conscious system that is “constantly scanning the environment for safety or danger and sends messages to our ‘brown brain’” (Shanker, 2017a). The oldest part of our brain, called the brain stem and represented in the Hand Model as the palm and top of the wrist, the ‘brown brain’ does the work of keeping us alive (Shanker, 2017a). The brain stem receives information from the body and communicates back to regulate processes such as our heart rate and respiration but is also responsible for our states of arousal,<sup>200</sup> such as determining whether we are hungry or tired (Siegal, 2017). The blue brain, red brain, and brown brain also communicate about the conditions that call for swift action in response to a threat; the blue brain may evaluate a threat (although this is not always the case), the red brain sounds the alarm, and the brown brain mobilizes the distribution of energy (Siegal, 2017). When the limbic alarm goes off, it shuts down the blue brain and the functioning neocortex goes ‘offline’ (Shanker, 2017a). The power shifts to red brain processing and we are left with what the brown brain can do: survive with a reaction of fight, flight, freeze, or faint (Siegal,

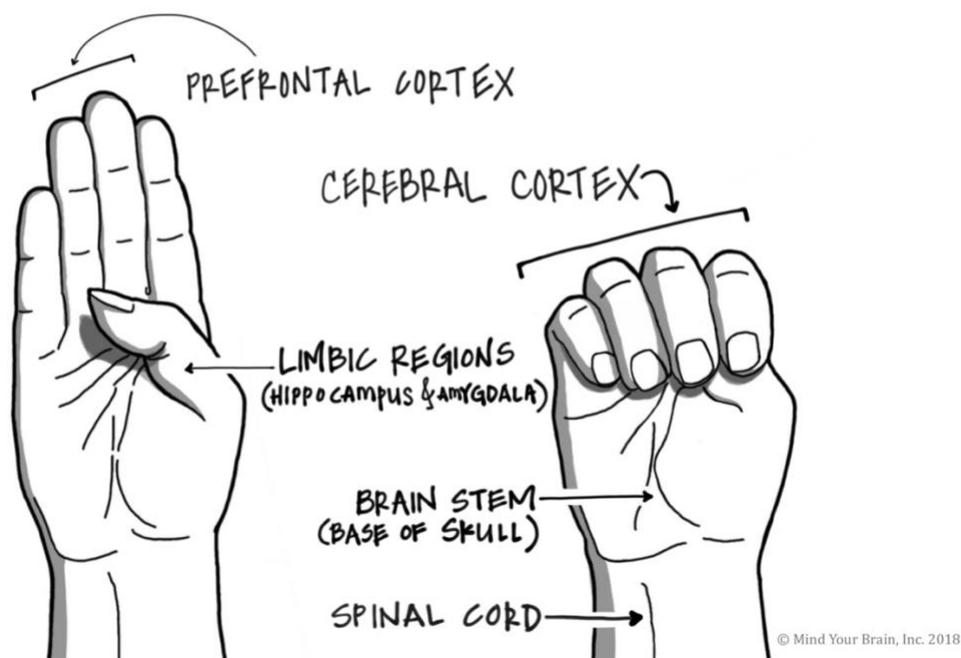
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<sup>199</sup> The limbic region of the brain sits just below the pre-frontal cortex and its “main structures are the amygdala, hippocampus, hypothalamus, and striatum” (Shanker, 2017b, p.13). Shanker notes that the amygdala is a stress and threat detector and is “automatically aroused by someone else’s anger or stressful behaviour” (Shanker, 2017b, p.197). The hippocampus is essential for integrating our memories and taking the “jumbled mess in our brains” and, like a “jigsaw puzzle,” organizes our reality, affecting how we see our world and ourselves (Bryson & Siegal, 2012). The hypothalamus is described as the “master control system” because of its role in the functioning of our immune systems, circadian rhythms, cellular repair, heart rate, respiration, hunger, thirst, and fatigue (Shanker, 2017b, p.14). It even has a role in important elements of communication, such as “‘mindreading’ other people’s social and emotional cues” (Shanker, 2017b, p.14). The striatum, also known as the basal ganglia, is involved in the generation of goal-directed voluntary movement and plays a part in detecting reward-systems and reacting to stimulus and response (APA, 2019).

<sup>200</sup> Arousal regulation is part of SR, and when one is dysregulated, or the more stress one is under, the harder it is to manage the transition between hypo- and hyper-arousal (Shanker, 2017a). Shanker notes that our autonomic nervous system [ANS] “regulates transitions between arousal states, from being sound asleep, our lowest state of arousal, to the highest, full-out flooded state, which you see in a child having a temper tantrum” (2017b, p.18). Our sympathetic nervous system [SNS] activates or makes us more aroused, like giving a car gas, while the complementary parasympathetic nervous system [PNS] puts on the brakes, and inhibits our arousal (Shanker, 2017a).

2017). Siegal describes the event of the non-conscious limbic region and brain stem taking over, and the conscious system of the neocortex taking a back seat, as 'flipping your lid' (2017). Using the Hand Model of the Brain, the gesture is simply lifting the fingers (neocortex) up to demonstrate the thumb's (limbic/red brain) dominance.

## Hand Model of the Brain



Hand Model of the Brain – Figure 5.0

Dr. Daniel J. Siegel's "Hand Model of the Brain," as first described in Siegel, D.J. (1999). *The developing mind: Toward a neurobiology of interpersonal experience* (1st ed.). New York, NY: Guilford Press. © 1999 Mind Your Brain, Inc., and later depicted by visual image in Siegel, D.J. (2010). *Mindsight: The new science of personal transformation*. New York, NY: Random House. © 2010 Mind Your Brain, Inc. and Siegel, D.J. (2018). *Aware: The science and practice of presence*. New York, NY: Random House. © 2019 Mind Your Brain, Inc. *Used with permission.*

When we are optimally self-regulated, our lid is down and our blue brain is working with the red and brown elements; we are able to maintain calm and focus, use empathy, and foster our connections with ourselves, others, the environment, and new or challenging ideas. The

blue brain is the source of our will power and effortful control; when we are well-regulated, we are capable of making difficult choices and staying the course, employing self-restraint and self-control (Shanker, 2017a). Being in a “neurological state that helps children (and adults) approach the world with openness, resilience, empathy, and authenticity” is being well-regulated (Bryson & Siegal, 2018, pp.6-7). In the past, it was common to approach thinking about the brain in a hierarchical way, with the ‘higher-order thinking’ of the PFC at the top and the reactivity of the limbic region and brain stem as base responses that demonstrate a lack of self-discipline or immaturity (Shanker 2017b). The Story that we are familiar with tells us that “when we give in to desires, it is because our PFC is too weak to inhibit the strong impulses emanating from the limbic system” (Shanker, 2017b, p.13). Shanker notes that this narrative tells us that it is through discipline and age that we learn “self-denial—resisting temptation and ‘base’ impulses—” but this Story isn’t reflected in the science and the evidence shows that stress depletes us and primes our limbic region for reaction no matter our age (Shanker, 2017b, p.13). Bryson & Siegal tell us that when a person is stressed, the balance required to keep all systems running—the blue, red, and brown brain are all essential and work together—is thrown off and we enter a reactive “No-Brain” state that is focused on survival, self-defence, and prone to fight, flight, freeze, or faint<sup>201</sup> (2018, p.4). If our limbic region determines that there is a threat, the “capacity of the prefrontal cortex to play a rational, inhibitory role—for example, by

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<sup>201</sup> I would like to note that there is a “different kind of brain hierarchy” when it comes to our responses to a threat (Shanker, 2017.p.20). Shanker notes that our first response is “social engagement,” but when this is not available (when the PFC goes ‘offline’) we revert to *fight* or *flight*, which is a sympathetic arousal response (2017, p.20). Next, if there is not enough energy for a sympathetic arousal we default to *freeze* (a parasympathetic arousal response) (Shanker, 2017b). Finally, there is *faint*, which could mean losing consciousness or “Dissociation (the ‘out-of-body’ state in which subjects report looking at what is happening to them as if it were happening to someone else)” (Shanker, 2017b, p.20).

weighing the value of an immediate reward against a long-term gain or cost—is significantly reduced” (Shanker, 2017b, p.14). The red brain can’t always tell the difference between a true threat and a simulation; like a car alarm being triggered from a vibration, the limbic region can be “hypersensitive” or simply exhausted enough that something non-threatening can set it off (Shanker, 2017b, p.14). Siegal suggests that knowing about a limbic response, even in the context of a simple Hand Model of the Brain, can help us to understand why we react the ways that we do, how it feels before and during such a response, and perhaps how to stave off ‘going limbic’ or ‘flipping our lids’ by building our resiliency and SR skills (2017; Bryson & Siegal, 2018).

Shanker also contends that a better understanding of what regulates/dysregulates us, as well as what increases or decreases our arousal (up- or downregulation), is helpful in developing SR in ourselves and supporting others with SR (2013b, 2017b). To assist with this concept he takes what may be our stressors, or what is taxing our red brain and priming it for reaction, and breaks them into five categories he calls the “Five-Domain Model of Self-Regulation” which he describes as the “linked” Biological, Emotional, Cognitive, Social, and Prosocial domains (2013b, p.xiii). While some people<sup>202</sup> struggle in particular domains, due to their disposition or temperament, physicality, prior experience, lack of resiliency skills, or present situation or environment, anyone could become *dysregulated* in all five domains (Shanker, 2013b). In the Biological domain, one may be hypersensitive to some forms of sensory input, such as loud noises or sitting on a hard chair for too long and demonstrate the impact on their nervous system by covering their ears or wiggling in their seat (Shanker, 2013b).

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<sup>202</sup> Much of Shanker and Siegal’s work discusses the SR of children, but the theory and practice also apply to adults, and may be different for people who are not neuro-typical.

A person experiencing dysregulation may withdraw from stimuli and appear unfocused, slow, or lethargic; this is when an activity or practice that increases their energy level (up-regulating<sup>203</sup> them) can improve their ability to learn (Shanker, 2013b). Other children may respond to sensory input by being overstimulated and need to downregulate to decrease their energy level (Shanker, 2013b). In the other four domains, becoming 'well-regulated' rather than dysregulated follows a similar design; in the Emotional domain one may feel emotions to an extreme, using up energy or making one overexcited, and certain techniques can return them to a state of calm (Shanker, 2013b). The Cognitive domain demands a student "efficiently sustain and switch attention, sequence [their] thoughts, keep several pieces of information in [their] mind at the same time, ignore distractions, and inhibit impulsive behaviour" (Shanker, 2013b, p.xvi). Shanker notes that in this domain students can become overwhelmed or under-stimulated, causing them to give up or daydream (respectively), and self-regulating can return them to focused learning (2013b). An optimally regulated child in the Social domain is one who "understands, assesses, and acts on particular social cues and in general behaves in a socially appropriate manner," while a dysregulated child may misinterpret cues and misunderstand social situations (Shanker, 2013b, pp.xvi-xvii). For example, a child who is dysregulated may misinterpret a friend who shares their excitement about achieving a new belt in Taekwondo as an effort to gain power in a relationship and return with put-downs or an exaggeration of their belt level in Karate. Finally, Shanker's last of the five domains, Prosocial, is deeply

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<sup>203</sup> Someone who appears withdrawn or low energy may be demonstrating an imbalance in their sympathetic/parasympathetic nervous systems and need to 'upregulate' or 'downregulate' (Shanker, 2013b). An example of upregulation would be doing jumping jacks to increase arousal; an example of downregulating would be taking deep belly breaths to decrease arousal (Shanker, 2013b & 2017b).

interconnected with all of the other domains (2013b). A child who is well-regulated will respond to others with positive social behaviours, demonstrating “acceptance, friendship and – very critically – empathy,” while a child who finds certain social interactions to be challenging may respond inappropriately, such as laughing at a hurt and crying friend (Shanker, 2013b, p.xvii).

Some of us may be prone to being stressed in one domain more than others, but all domains are “interlocked” so that stress in any one area can aggravate or intensify “stress-reactivity” in another (MEHRIT, 2016b). And, it should also be noted that “stressors have a *multiplying effect* on each other” and can lead to being caught in a stress-cycle; getting out can be a challenge (MEHRIT, 2016b). Often, when I talk with parents or teachers about ‘going limbic,’ or ‘flipping our lids,’ I give a personal example. I speak about how I am a sensitive person, but that it still helps me to do a survey of my domains. I demonstrate this by sharing what I notice in that moment in relation to each domain: I am aggravated by the buzz and harsh glare of the fluorescent lights and I suddenly feel the tag of my shirt against my neck; I recall the emotional interaction with my kids that morning; I struggle to recall the domains in the order I mentioned them; I wonder what the people in the room may be thinking about me; I try to push the day’s news out of my mind, and yet feel a sense of guilt for not facing the latest disaster or war. My physical body, daily experiences, what I am doing, my life connections in general, are all being stressed Biologically, Emotionally, Cognitively, Socially, and Prosocially. I am slowly being depleted and my ability to maintain the balance in my brain is becoming more and more of a challenge for my mind. I can notice this and do what I need to do to reduce the stress, restore my energy, and be resilient in my recovery. Or, I can do nothing, perhaps not even take an inventory of my stress load, and then stub my toe on the way out of this

presentation, tipping me over the edge and into a limbic response. Or, minutes after I get home after this workshop, my partner can say something that I misinterpret and I can feel my face flush, my heart rate increase, and my ability to voice my needs (or argue or think) becomes less reachable as I stutter or struggle to locate the words. After my lid has flipped, I may start to cry or shout or lash out (fight), or walk away and ask to be left alone (flight), or go silent and hear that voice that tells me its hopeless or nothing can be done (freeze or faint).<sup>204</sup> All of my domains were stressed to some degree and something seemingly inane set me off. This has happened to me and I will experience this again and it is not because I lack maturity and *won't* control myself (as The Story goes), but rather, according to the SR literature, there are times when my stress load becomes unmanageable and I am dysregulated and *can't* think clearly as my red brain has taken over.

Self-regulation skills are the ability to pay attention to the balance in our brains, minds, and bodies. It is the adeptness of noticing whether our lid is flipped or close to flipping, so that we can “control [our] emotions and bodies better, while also listening to inner promptings” with the aim of becoming or being more “fully” ourselves (Bryson & Siegal, 2018, p.6). We can learn new things, take healthy risks, make new friends and build social connections, problem-solve, and make difficult decisions when we are well-regulated. Our ‘regulation’ is primarily for our well-being and our well-being is based on our connections with self, others, the environment, and ideas. There is also the welcome side effect of being happy, more fun to be

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<sup>204</sup> These reactions, fight/flight/freeze/faint, often occur in this order (Bryson & Siegal, 2018). Our first response, before our limbic system takes over and our neo-cortex goes ‘offline,’ is a social reaction, which is usually dialogue, touch, or sighing/breathing deeply. When we can no longer think it through, we may fight first or simply jump to flight (Bryson & Siegal, 2018). ‘Freeze’ is reserved for when our limbic region does not have the energy for fight or flight. ‘Faint’ is a last resort for the red and brown brain that are focused on our survival (Bryson & Siegal, 2018).

around, and more open to connection with self, others, our environment, and new ideas (Bryson & Siegal, 2018). SR is something that we must do; we have to deal with stress and other obstacles so that we can meet our needs, the needs of others, and have success in fulfilling our goals. But there is also an innate motivation to do so, because humans feel a sense of intrinsic reward by experiencing competence and internal control, and “show spontaneous interest in controlling their own bodies, their actions in the environment, and their cognitive processing and problem solving” (Bronson, 2000, p.31). Feelings of self-determination and believing that our activities and goals are of our own volition is essential to intrinsic motivation and reward; research in SR shows that “we tend to lose interest in activities and goals that are externally imposed and require external rewards to motivate continued engagement” (Bronson, 2000, p.42). As Shanker notes, it feels good to be optimally self-regulated, so that is motivation in and of itself; yet, there are some people who don’t know what it feels like to be calm and well-regulated and need outside assistance before they can be motivated to self-regulate (2013b). Also, an understanding of what primes us for flipping our lids—what stresses us—so that we might be able to make adjustments and lower our stress empowers us to take care of our brains and minds and builds our resiliency in honing our approach to recovery. It also provides us with a better understanding of those around us and how our beliefs and actions, and even our feelings, may have an effect on others.

If SR theory and the research supporting it tells us that we *want* to be well-regulated, those who are behaving in a way that indicates stress behaviour will not be helped by the narrative that blames them for their inadequacies (‘control yourself’ or ‘calm down’) or confuses their stress behaviour with ‘misbehaviour’ (‘they won’t listen’ is misbehaviour, while

'they can't listen' is a reframing of the behaviour as an indication of stress). As teachers and parents, we may need to "**Reframe** the behaviour;" by seeing our behaviour or the behaviour of another person as a demonstration of stress, our response can be adjusted to reflect this interpretation and work to reduce stress or help the person to recover (Shanker, 2013b, 2016, 2017b). SR is just as much about perceiving our own stress levels, triggers, and modelling how we attend to our needs and recover from stress, as it is about being able to read the stress levels of the kids in our lives so that we can support them in regulating. The Shanker "Self-Reg" approach presents five steps to SR support that are non-linear and can be employed in any order (2016). In addition to "Reframe the behaviour," there are the steps of "Recognize the stressors," "Reduce the stress," "Reflect: Stress awareness," and "Respond: Restoration & resilience" (Shanker, 2013b, 2016, 2017b). By incorporating an understanding of our brains under stress, SR changes the way we see children and ourselves; it upsets the CMN and related narratives and, as Shanker makes clear, "[t]his sort of transformation [is] a case of...changing the whole teacher-student dynamic" (2017b, p.3). SR is about dealing with the ebbs and flows, the fluctuations and challenges in life, so that we can come to manage our own energy and stress, even as "[o]ur reactivity to stress is constantly changing, as indeed are the stresses themselves" (Shanker, 2016). If we can keep our heads, maintain our balance, manage our stress, we will be in a better place to self-govern, "connect openly with others," and "open ourselves to a sense of equanimity and harmony" (Bryson & Siegal, 2018, p.4).

Some people are more resilient than others, some are more sensitive to certain stresses than others. SR is as a practice, a mind-set, and an area that often needs support. Also, there are stories-that-we-all-know that interfere with SR. After determining that someone is

dysregulated, an *intervention* to assist them in self-regulating may be needed. Shanker explains that “[c]hildren acquire the ability to self-regulate by first becoming regulated” (2013b, p.9). For example, a parent may soothe a crying baby by holding them and swaying and the baby then “internalizes the regulation of these techniques, thereby developing their own capacity for self-regulation” (Shanker, 2013b, p.9). Without verbal communication, as a baby cannot yet speak in the same way as their parent, and without ‘reasoning,’ but rather through a “sort of Bluetooth or wireless connection, which tethers the caregiver’s brain to the baby’s brain” the parent and child share an “intuitive channel of communication” (Shanker, 2017b, p.58). Called the ‘interbrain,’ its development through relationships with caregivers is essential to laying the “deep neurological, psychological, and sensory circuitry for co-regulation”<sup>205</sup> that evolves as we grow (Shanker, 2017b, p.59). This connection of the interbrain can help us to work with our children and students, but it can also challenge our efforts to ‘lend our calm.’ Shanker speaks of the parent or caregiver as an “external braking system” for those who are still developing their abilities to self-regulate (Shanker, 2017b, p.82). When there is an increase in energy or tension, when we pick up on the dysregulation being experienced by another, it can be difficult for us to “stay calm and composed and perform [the] designated role of the regulating ‘brake’” (Shanker, 2017b, p.82). The Story can come into play when one considers the word ‘regulation’ and its common meaning of “a rule or principle governing behaviour or practice; *esp.* such a directive established and maintained by an authority” (OED, 2019). Although within SR this is not the way in which ‘regulation’ is being used—Shanker is not saying that in order to learn to self-

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<sup>205</sup> Co-regulation is when two individuals are in sync with each other, and through subtle communication (such as through the interbrain) allow for one another to up- or downregulate and share each other’s calm (Shanker, 2017a).

regulate one must be externally *controlled*—when unacknowledged, the CMN can work through us and translate the “designated role of the regulating ‘brake’” as an externally authoritative governance of (mis)behaviour rather than an external support system in feeling *calm* (reducing stress-behaviour) so that one may have control over their own behaviour (Shanker, 2017b, p.82).

Another complicating factor in interbrain communication and co-regulation is our common reflex toward talking and reasoning another out of dysregulation. The CMN influences us in this respect and “we tend to overestimate the power of words to soothe other people’s distress” (Hoffman, 2019). In providing a better understanding of the brain state, SR reminds us that a person in ‘red brain’ has difficulty reasoning and will likely misinterpret what we are saying because their ‘blue brain’—the place where reason and language happen—has gone ‘offline.’ The brain-to-brain (interbrain) communication, the physical cues such as our breathing and facial expressions, our tone, all can be misunderstood as a threat by someone whose limbic system has taken over (Hoffman, 2019). Because “[w]e are designed to draw energy from one another and restore energy through one another,” our efforts to be the external ‘brake’ for another can be impacted by our own stress (Shanker, 2017b, p.67). Shanker notes that sometimes, “what we say in situations like this may be at least partly about the need to relieve our own prosocial stress caused by the other person’s distress” (Hoffman, 2019). We may want them to feel better because how they feel, and their stress behaviour, is negatively affecting us; we feel vulnerable and uncomfortable and our own stress cycle and arousal state is responding. Our own response to stress, our need to ‘fix’ things for our child or student, our dependence on/habit of reasoning and verbal communication, are distractions related to The Stories: being

uncomfortable is bad, reason is maturity, emotion is a lack of control, we need to (or can) *talk* other people into feeling better, they need to ‘just calm down!’ And, we can add to that the framing of stress responses as ‘misbehaviour.’

SR calls us to regulate ourselves *and* be that external assistant; a teacher in the sense of being a guide who walks beside the student with the goal of supporting the development of SR, co-regulation, and an awareness of the interbrain. Proponents of SR recommend that we see ourselves as “stress detectives” and ask questions such as ‘Why?’ and ‘Why now?’ and that we model, support, and guide mindfulness and other strategies to help others to know what calm feels like and what they need in order to keep their neocortex ‘online.’ In an infographic available on the MEHRIT Centre’s website (2019), the SR approach is outlined in a way that demonstrates the CMN on one side and the ways in which SR blends mindset and practice on the other (Figure 5.1). The infographic, drawn by Kristin Wiens, quotes Shanker and Ross Greene<sup>206</sup> (respectively), and suggests that in order to “see a different child” we need to believe that “kids do well if they can” (Wiens, 2019). Within the CMN, the focus is on the child’s behaviour and the mindset of the adult is to judge the behaviour as misbehaviour and the child as possibly “willful” or “defiant” (Wiens, 2019). SR recommends that our focus shift to curiosity and asking questions about stress and how a child may lack the skills to regulate (Wiens, 2019). The infographic depicts the adult’s thoughts under a “Won’t” mentality (I argue this is the CMN) to centre around moral deficiencies such as laziness, attention seeking, or being impolite (Wiens, 2019). With a “Can’t Yet” mindset, an adult working through a SR lens may think about

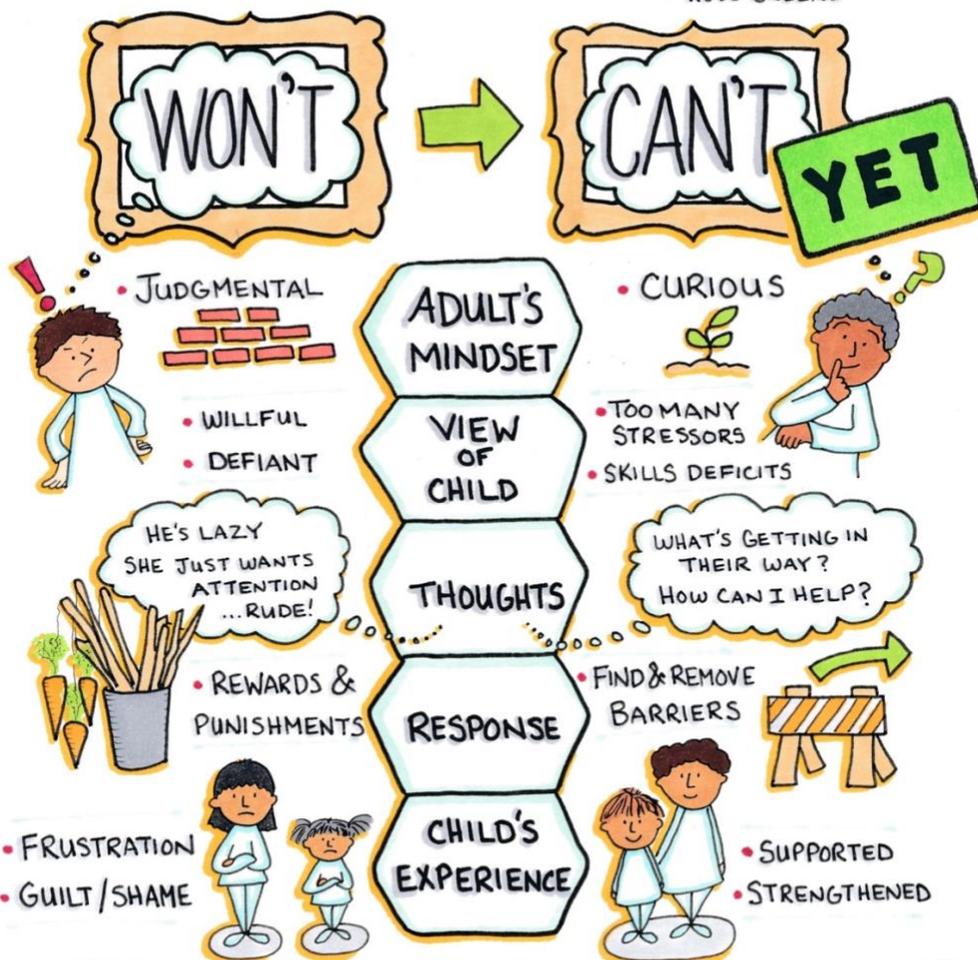
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<sup>206</sup> Greene is an American clinical child psychologist and author of *The Explosive Child* (2005), which has a chapter entitled “Kids do well if they can.”

what is inhibiting the child, or what stops them from doing ‘well,’ and asks, “How can I help?” (Wiens, 2019). The standard response to a child seen as misbehaving is often punishments and rewards, among other aspects of discipline, which will only exacerbate a person experiencing stress (Bryson & Siegal, 2018; Kohn, 2006; Leafgren, 2012; Shanker, 2017b). A SR approach reframes some behaviour as stress behaviour, which modifies the response: find out what is causing a person stress and reduce the stressors, locate the “unmet needs” and “meet them,” and teach the child the skills they appear to lack so that their resiliency and ability to recover from stress will increase (Wiens, 2019). The outcome is the sticking point. Regardless of whether a progressivist teacher finds themselves practicing typical classroom management *or* using SR, their goal is the same: the aim in progressivist education is to prepare self-governing individuals. As discussed in the previous chapters, the CMN or “Won’t” approach has the effect of “frustration” and/or “guilt/shame” for the child (Wiens, 2019) and, I would add, a learned helplessness and docility that is counterproductive within democracy. The practice undermines the goals of teaching and parenting outcomes. What beliefs or ‘thinking’ influence or motivate our ‘doing,’ and the effects of what one actually does, are disconnected. The “Can’t Yet” or SR lens is argued to have the alternative outcome of a supported and strengthened child/student (Wiens, 2019).

# REFRAME THE BEHAVIOUR

“KIDS DO WELL IF THEY CAN”  
~ROSS GREENE



“SEE A CHILD DIFFERENTLY, YOU SEE A DIFFERENT CHILD”  
~Dr. Stuart Shanker

When kids exhibit challenging behaviour we can be “STRESS DETECTIVES”...finding and removing barriers.

- FIND STRESSORS → REDUCE THEM
- FIND UNMET NEEDS → MEET THEM
- FIND SKILLS DEFICITS → TEACH THEM

@kwiens62

Reframe the Behaviour: Won't to Can't – Figure 5.1

From Kristin Wiens, 2017, Victoria, BC: North Star Paths. Copyright 2017 by Kristin Wiens.

Retrieved from <http://northstarpaths.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Can27t-vs-Won27t-graphic-march-2017.pdf>. Used with permission.

There is evidence that a SR approach reduces student stress and increases social and academic performance in schools (Bryson & Siegal, 2018; Shanker, 2013b & 2017b). There is also research—not that it isn't already quite apparent—that parents and teachers feel more connected to their children and students within a SR framework and by employing the recommended practices (Bryson & Siegal, 2018; Shanker, 2013b & 2017b). When our goal of supporting and strengthening a child is realized rather than subverted by our methods, our relationships also have value added. It is plausible that if stress is reduced, needs are met, and a person is developing the skills to reduce their own stress and meet their own needs (not to mention how to read and reduce the stress of others and understand and support the needs of others), they are in a better position to be a self-governing person with the 'freedom to be fully human' that aligns with a progressivist education. This outcome of a more democratic *polis* through SR has not been formally tested, but it aligns with the proponents' goals<sup>207</sup> and seems possible with reflection and action (praxis). The gap in the research with which I am most concerned surrounds the ways in which mainstream Canadian teachers understand and integrate SR into their classroom practices. Do they overcome the CMN and implement SR in a way that aligns or connects with the goals and aims of progressivist education? Is SR employed as a tool of progressivist education without consideration for the CMN and therefore

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<sup>207</sup> On the first page of Bryson & Siegal's (2018) book, *The Yes Brain Child*, they discuss what I refer to as 'The Answer.' They are asked "What characteristics are most important to focus on to help them [children] live happy, meaningful lives?" (Bryson & Siegal, 2018, p.ix, *emphasis original*). 'The Answer' boils down to helping kids to have "Balance," "Resilience," "Insight," and "Empathy" so that they can support their own freedoms and the freedoms of others (Bryson & Siegal, 2018, p.ix-x). Children with SR skills have a more developed "social engagement system" which helps them to "connect openly with others" and allows them to "work from a clear internal compass that directs their decisions as well as the way they treat others" (Bryson & Siegal, 2018, p.5-6). Shanker is passionate about dispelling the myth that there are 'bad kids' and reframing our thinking so that we can see children and ourselves in ways that support us on healthy academic and life trajectories (2013b; 2017a; 2017b).

undermined or impacted by a Progressivist Paradox? In either case, what role might praxis play in an approach to teaching that includes SR? Of course, there may be other possibilities and outcomes for teachers who include SR in their classroom practice; I am interested in a better understanding of how SR is being used by classroom teachers and whether or not it supports or undermines progressivist efforts to encourage students in their learning of self-governance and democratic participation.

### ~~Classroom Management~~ Self-Regulation: A 'Mindset Shift'

My early encounters with classroom teaching of SR started off with some confusion. I thought that what my son had experienced in his 'self-regulation classroom'<sup>208</sup> was nothing 'new' or isolated, but rather reflected the standard CM approach. My son wasn't learning what it felt like to be calm, to read the needs of his body or the presence of his big emotions, but rather he was demonstrating a beginner's understanding of the Good Behaviour Game.<sup>209</sup> He knew what he was 'supposed to do' in order to reflect what the teacher wanted him to do; 'regulation' was not translating to finding his calm but rather being able to assess what behaviour was appropriate according to the external authority. I picked up Stuart Shanker's (2013b) *Calm, Alert, and Learning: Classroom Strategies for Self-Regulation* because it was a text that my students (pre-service teachers at the University of Victoria) had been assigned in a separate course than the ones I teach. Later, I learned that it is frequently cited as essential

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<sup>208</sup> This is in reference to a story I told in the Introductory chapter.

<sup>209</sup> This is a real 'game' and CM tool (Parsonson, 2012). In an article entitled "Evidence-based Classroom Behaviour Management Strategies," the game is described: "The game involves establishing a small number of explicit rules which set out broad positive behaviour expectations (e.g. respect others, solve problems responsibly, manage yourself) and define these in terms of the daily settings and routines of the classroom" (Parsonson, 2012, p.19). The students are then monitored and awarded or deducted points based on compliance, leading to a reward or prize (Parsonson, 2012).

reading for pre-service and experienced teachers alike. When I began reading Shanker’s book, I was already feeling unsure about the whole thing and suspected that SR was just another CM tool that aimed to control children.

Certainly, the overall message of the book is that a person must be ‘regulated’ to be calm, alert, and learning; but my mindset was misinterpreting this term. There were moments in the text that appeared to be offering something different than your standard compliance-based approach to CM. There were certain aspects of the CMN that were missing in the text, such as treating children as though they are *naturally* self-centred and incapable of self-governance—people who require control or else there will be chaos—and instead there was the implication that for the most part children do not *choose* to be ‘poorly behaved.’ I found that in this book Shanker (2013b) regularly tells stories about typical CM approaches, and teachers who carry classic CMN beliefs, and then modify their practices once they can *see* the stress and the need for SR. SR is presented as a reframing of the teacher/parent way of *seeing* students/children—and consequently “seeing a different child”—and recognizing that many of the practices teachers (and parents) often employ only add to or aggravate stress (Shanker, 2019a). But, at the same time the purpose of SR, which Shanker presents as helping “students to achieve *optimal self-regulation*, a state of calm focus and alertness appropriate for learning in the classroom,” wasn’t clearly differentiated from the aims of the CMN (2013b, p.xiii, *emphasis original*). Is the point of SR to offer teachers another approach that will aid them in their efforts to get students to do what they want them to do?

Shanker mentions in his introduction to this very introductory book on SR for classroom teachers that “Self-regulation is increasingly being seen as essential for enabling children to

respond efficiently and effectively to the everyday challenges they face in and out of school.

The better we understand self-regulation, the better we can implement educational strategies that enhance students' capacity to learn and develop the skills necessary to deal with life's challenges" (2013b, p.xii). The book focuses on common classroom scenarios that are often interpreted as 'challenging,' 'disruptive,' or 'inappropriate' behaviour. For example, the case of a grade one teacher called 'Doris' who finds that "half of her class is composed of children who cannot sit still or respond to their name, much less listen to a story" (Shanker, 2013b, p.11).

There is the story of 'Kyle' who encounters what he calls the "emotional illiteracy" of his grade six students, leading to "outbursts or stubbornness" and behaviour that was "undisciplined" (Shaker, 2013b, p.43). A veteran teacher, Sherry, speaks to the growing intensity of "attention challenges, some more severe than others, but all at a level that impacted their learning and participation in class" (Shanker, 2013b, p.56). Some of Sherry's students could not engage in play, withdrawing after a short time or shying away from getting involved, and there was also the issue of students requiring her "constant presence" in order to follow even the simplest instructions (Shanker, 2013b, p.57). There is the story of the "boy with the sideways cap," a child who also is characterized as wearing "baggy pants" and displaying behaviour that was "increasingly problematic;" he slouches and appears to lack the "light of learning that you would hope to see at this age" (Shanker, 2013b, p.65 & 66). This child, who is "restless and needed to constantly move about and feel things," also struggles with learning the alphabet, following a story, and generally staying on task (Shanker, 2013b, p.66). Another teacher in the text grapples with a class of grade 4s who display "a fair amount of bullying behaviour among them" in a school that was committed to a "zero-tolerance policy" when dealing with

“misbehaviour” (Shanker, 2013b, p.102 & 103). This list of examples provided in Shanker’s text exhibit the ways in which his approach to talking about SR involves the “everydayness” of schooling and mainstream classroom teaching (Ruitenberg, 2014, p.90). These are issues that are recognizable to teachers. The solutions that Shanker offers diverge significantly from the common approaches that many well-meaning professionals dedicated to progressivist goals were in the midst of implementing. Shanker’s critique of the CMN is subtle, barely audible, but he is asking teachers to let go of our dependence on “long-standing views about regulating children ‘from the outside,’” such as through a fear of reprisal or coercion, bribery or praise (Shanker, 2013b, p.29).

‘Doris’ was guided to assess the impact of her classroom environment on the students’ abilities to focus (Shanker, 2013b). Much like the saying ‘a cluttered desk is a cluttered mind,’ Doris noted that her busy and brightly colour-filled classroom, with shiny posters covering the walls, overflowing bookshelves and bins of materials, the overhead lighting, and the sounds of chairs scrapping the floors made for a stimulus overload (Shanker, 2013b). She then took steps toward a SR-inspired classroom makeover, reducing the clutter and colour, increasing natural light, and dulling the sound (Shanker, 2013b). Shanker notes that after this first step toward addressing her concerns through SR, “Doris remarked that *she* felt calmer when she walked into the room” (2013b, p.12, *emphasis original*). Kyle approached his grade six students, many of whom became “frightened, anxious, or angry at the slightest provocation,” with an integration of focused learning on emotional regulation alongside regular curriculum content (Shanker, 2013b, p.33). Shanker argues that the research shows that “constantly helping students to develop emotion-regulating skills should be a core element in our teaching mindset and toolkit”

(2013b, p.33). In an effort to help her students become more independent, Sherry became attentive to her student's sensory processing and motor abilities and modified expectations of her students while planning activities to support their growth in these areas (Shanker, 2013b). It turned out that the "boy with the sideways cap," who was "subdued" and "unresponsive" with traditional approaches to his behaviour, learned alternative ways to self-regulate; no longer treated like a problem, with the adults expecting "to be disappointed in him," he was supported with compassion and dialogue, increasing his confidence and connection, changing his whole demeanor and increasing his resiliency to stress (Shanker, 2013b, p.66 & 67). All of the examples were not quick fixes, focused on the moment or the need for compliance, but rather on the long-term resiliency of the students with the teacher expectation that a SR approach would include ongoing reflection, reworking, and re-educating.

Shanker's SR solutions are counter-intuitive because the CMN is the dominant narrative. About half-way through *Calm, Alert, and Learning*, Shanker (2013b) makes clear what he sees as a major hurdle to climbing on board with SR. In an example of a school that is struggling with bullying and striving for more community involvement and a sense of belonging, Shanker writes,

The major concerns of the teachers at the local elementary school came as no surprise: a lack of student engagement and a general lack of 'connectedness' between the community and the school. The teachers themselves appeared to be very dedicated, but they were feeling burned out. As in many districts, every two or three years they had been required to implement a new educational initiative to manage the students' behaviour.<sup>210</sup> In fact, the

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<sup>210</sup> Kohn speaks to the high turnover of discipline programs and argues that some newer programs that are more popular have language that is "lovelier and their techniques are trendier, but ultimately their systems are woven from the same cloth... [I]t makes little difference whether one resorts to nods and smiles rather than scowls and shouts, whether one prefers class meetings, positive reinforcement, or old-fashioned punishment. What counts is

teachers had just spent the past year training on the latest offering, which had only partly addressed issues related to social self- and co-regulation. Understandably, then, they were concerned that I might be there to impose yet another pre-packaged program on them, one not customized to deal with their specific needs. Furthermore, it became clear that, as with so many such programs, the latest one that the teachers had tried emphasized children being regulated rather than self- and co-regulating. Essentially, this most recent program promoted the use of 'command-and-control' behaviour management techniques to induce compliance (giving rewards for good behaviour and taking away rewards for 'bad' behaviour). (Shanker, 2013b, p.82)

He continues by offering examples of common behaviour management techniques he sees in schools. Reward games for table or desk groupings (such as The Good Behaviour Game), the use of a "management book" that tallies each student's "good" and "bad" behaviour (scores can be used for rewards), a "'discipline mat' or time-out area" for those students exhibiting 'misbehaviour,' and sending notes home to parents that detail a child's 'misbehaviour' that the parents must sign and return are what Shanker points to as methods that do "little to enhance the children's social intelligence because there was little if any recognition of the crucial importance of self- and co-regulation" (2013b, p.82). When "dedicated teachers" are feeling "burned out," they are no doubt looking for 'new' or 'innovative' tools that will help to make classroom life a little easier (Shanker, 2013b, p.82). Both Shanker and Kohn are hesitant to blame a single program for what is problematic about CM approaches, and they both acknowledge that there is "nothing new" in these so-called "new educational initiatives" because they are still designed with The Question in mind (Kohn, 2006, p.58; Shanker, 2013b, p.82). Because tactics that are in service to The Question of 'how do I get them to do what I

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that the teacher has never given up any real control. What matters is that the goal is not learning: it is obedience" (2006, p.60).

want them to do?’ are designed for temporary compliance, they not only wane in effectiveness (counting down from three to *garner obedience* only works so long) but they also fail to improve the connectedness, or general community engagement within the classroom or school, because the point of the tactic is compliance (Kohn, 2006). Teachers are left still searching for the next metamorphosis in CM tools—the perfected pedagogy—that is backed by ‘science’ and will solve *the problem of misbehaviour*. Character building and values-based programs, as well as non-curricular efforts to instill moral thinking and action, are an example of the “new discipline” approaches that are regularly introduced and sold to schools in Canada (Boyd, 2010; Harvey, 2015; Kohn, 2006, p.59). Seemingly aimed to teach the young to be respectful, responsible, caring, honest, etc. (this laundry list varies in terms and priorities), they undermine their own efforts by employing practices that focus on adult’s control of children and resulting compliance (Boyd, 2010; Harvey, 2015; Kohn, 2006). The behavior of children and students is being managed by teachers and other caretakers and the underlying lesson turns out to be that being good equals being compliant (Harvey, 2015; Kohn, 2006; Leafgren, 2009). Teachers are facing burn-out for a myriad of reasons, but the focus on external control and The Story that tells us that the role of the teacher is to ‘manage’ the classroom is not helping. Control begets the need for more control and does not teach ‘self-control.’ Classroom management techniques, such as fear of punishment, does “little to cultivate” the skills of SR “and may in some cases have actually impeded their development” (Shanker, 2013b, p.83). Shanker argues that, although there are issues of misbehaviour in schools, the more common problems are stress related and require a response to “underlying factors” (2013b, p.83).

In a one-day conference held by the MEHRIT Centre, Shanker acknowledged that some confusion may emerge on this front. I was confused. Even after reading and re-reading *Calm, Alert, and Learning*, I wasn't sure whether or not I was holding onto a text promoting just another classroom management program. In my assessment, the text offered no argument that SR was an alternative to CM. The large quotation provided just a moment ago critiqued some of the tactics used in CM, but there was no critique of the CMN that motivates and legitimizes them. It was as though the two approaches were supposed to cohabitate—Shanker writes that CM tactics such as punishment/fear of reprisal “were useful for some of the students in some situations”—despite being focused on different goals (Shanker, 2013b, p.82). One could use SR tools to get compliance, but wouldn't this undermine the SR goal of raising children who feel a sense of well-being and autonomy? When I attended the aforementioned conference in November of 2017, called “Reframing Schools as Self-Reg Havens,” I arrived with my notebook and pen expecting to hear the CM essentials laid out with just a touch more about ambiance and a rephrasing of typical teacher-to-student requests. I was ready to write about the superficial transformation of classrooms from desks and chairs, and harsh overhead lighting, to a variety of seating and softer colours and a more comforting lustre. I thought it was superficial if the point was to prepare an environment so that “nothing shall strike his [sic] eye but what is fit for his sight” (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.59), but at that point I had also never been in a classroom that challenged typical décor and offered lower stimulus. I was expecting to hear about ‘new’ tactics to garner obedience in ways that made normalization, discipline, and surveillance less obvious and yet still invited the ‘good’ student to move “further into the light” (Ford, 2003, p.10). Without addressing the CMN, the ‘regulation’ in SR sounded like a palatable

revision on external control; ‘calm’ and ‘focused’ seemed to be synonyms for docile and obedient. Could a transformation or ‘progress’ occur if a critical reflection on The Stories that told us our roles were to be ‘natural’ and ‘effective’ teachers who ‘manage’ the students who “can’t handle their freedom” were not part of this ‘new neuroscience’ (Morrison & Morrison, 1999, p.12)? Wouldn’t we just stick to The Question of how to get kids to do what one wanted them to do *and* offer strategies to deal with the stress that may be stopping them from being calm and focused as they did it? Could we have our still and quiet, compliant students *and* promote and support their growing autonomy and self-governance, too?

I was startled when the opening speaker told us that we weren’t going to like what we were about to hear and to get ready for a “mindset shift” (Hopkins, 2017). She then stated that “if we were to remove ‘behaviourism,’<sup>211</sup> we would need to replace it with Self-Reg” (Hopkins, 2017). By ‘behaviourism,’ she explained, she was referring to our focus on misbehaviour, surface behaviours, and a narrative of self-control<sup>212</sup> (Hopkins, 2017). She said that the point of

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<sup>211</sup> As discussed in footnote 147, ‘behaviourism,’ broadly applied, is an approach to learning founded on the principle that behaviour is a function of its consequences. The work of B.F. Skinner, who is known for his studies on ‘behaviourism,’ was influenced by Thorndike’s work and the Law of Effect (Lagemann, 2000). In a paper on the philosophical orientations of pre-service teachers, Thomas G. Ryan defines behaviourism as an approach that focuses on “core reflexive responses to stimuli and the positive classroom environment” being “emphasized to produce desired behavior in a classroom” (Ryan, 2008, p.251). Behaviourism *is* about stimulus and response, but I argue that what Hopkins (and later Shanker) as well as Ryan add into the concept is The Story (the CMN) that its goal is to produce desired behaviour. I will make this distinction again, shortly.

<sup>212</sup> The way in which Hopkins, Shanker, and progressivist educators in general define or employ ‘behaviourism’ veers from its original meaning of learning through stimulus and response, and takes a critical stance of viewing behaviourism *as its perceived misuses*. When external control of student behaviour is being discussed as problematic, it is sometimes mislabeled as ‘behaviourism’ (or, as discussed in Chapter One, ‘traditionalism’) and contrasted to progressivist approaches with the latter presented as more enlightened. Behaviourism itself is not focused on *misbehaviour*, but within the CMN, it is used (through practices such as punishment and reward) to control behaviour for compliance to adult expectations. For example, the stimulus is the prospect of a sticker prize to the student who is a ‘good listener’ during an assembly. The response is the attentive and acceptable behaviour of the students vying for the reward. Behaviour is then the product of its consequences. Behaviourism does not have a “narrative of self-control” (Hopkins, 2017), but the CMN’s focus on behaviour, and misbehaviour in particular, and the narrative that behaviour is a *choice* and choices must be externally motivated or misbehaviour will run rampant in our schools and homes, is a narrative of self-control. Hopkins (2017), and later Shanker

the day's presentations was to change our mindsets so that we would come to understand "the difference between misbehaviour and stress behaviour"<sup>213</sup> (Hopkins, 2017). She drew our attention to the quotation being projected onto a large screen hanging over centre stage: "When we treat stress-behaviour as if it were misbehaviour we can make things worse, by increasing the child's stress load, rather than figuring out what the stresses are and how to reduce them" (Shanker via Hopkins, 2017). She clarified that what we were going to hear would not be new or better ways to get kids to behave, or how to manage their behavior, but rather that we would be learning about "a process for understanding stress and managing tension and energy" (Hopkins, 2017). I wrote down in my notebook, "I wonder if we will have the chance to reflect on our own relationship with the concept of 'behaviourism'?" and "What about The Story that it is my role to control the students/kids?" I was curious if reflections, like these or others, would be a part of this proposed "mindset shift" (Hopkins, 2017).

When Shanker took the stage, seated in a large armchair, he initially announced that there was a "resurgence of Victorian era thought surrounding the rights of the child" (Shanker, 2017a). His tone seemed to be one of annoyance as he described what he saw as a revival of the narrative that there are 'bad children' who, because of their poor character, deserve

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(2017a), use behaviourism in juxtaposition to SR; they say that behaviourism treats students as though they *choose* acceptable or unacceptable behaviour, while SR sees behaviour as communication and an indication of stress and regulation/dysregulation. When one is well-regulated, one can use their will or self-control to choose appropriate or acceptable actions (Shanker, 2017a). Behaviourism is used in a CMN to gain compliance—it is a *tool* of the CMN—but it is arguably *not* the narrative that promotes external control, a lack of agency, or a misunderstanding of stress. We can understand SR and stress behaviour through behaviourism; for example, Regan has anxiety and when the bell rings they become more agitated. The stimulus is anxiety *and* the bell (that doesn't typically bother Regan), which combined is setting off their amygdala and stress behaviour (agitation). Their agitation is a product of their anxiety.

<sup>213</sup> The way in which 'behaviourism' is contrasted with SR reminds me of the way in which traditionalism is often distinguished from progressivism. There is a lack of reflection on from where and how The Stories are told and who benefits from their telling. Also, what kind of hold do The Stories have on us and how might this effect our praxis?

whatever happens to them. He argued that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the great thinkers in education “overturned” the belief that children were without rights or an ability to self-govern and critiqued the idea that the next generation necessitated an education in self-control for the purpose of honing ‘good’ character so that they may be tolerable adults (Shanker, 2017a). Shanker announced that we had entered a new age of understanding surrounding the science of behavior. “But,” he sighed, “for all of this knowledge, we are going in the opposite direction”<sup>214</sup> (Shanker, 2017a). He told us that the call for both zero-tolerance and character education programs are ineffective because, although they seem like very different approaches, they are both “encountering the same problem; they are rooted in self-control and a narrative of behaviourism” (Shanker, 2017a). At this point, ‘behaviourism’ had been mentioned a few times, and it was clear that this was attached to some sort of narrative surrounding the individual’s ability to self-control, to choose to display qualities of ‘good’ character even when one didn’t want to do so, and that this should be taught using “consequences” (Shanker, 2017a). Shanker also remarked that behaviourism’s aim aligned with the general aim of creating a safe and calm environment for learning, but that it leaves some kids behind and then blames them for their folly.<sup>215</sup> He was passionate about the next point, and he did not attempt to stifle his frustration with how often it was misunderstood. He said that democratic education

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<sup>214</sup> It is interesting to me that Shanker appears to be speaking the progressivist Story; the one that tells us that we are always moving toward the progressivist aim, in the direction of freedom. This dismisses the past and still relies on dichotomous thinking.

<sup>215</sup> This indicates to me that there is a lack of critical reflection surrounding ‘behaviourism’ or the CMN. The problem, as Shanker presents it, is that ‘it leaves some kids behind’ and not that it is counterproductive because it undermines the aims of progressivist education. Also, once again, ‘science’ is being presented as the answer and the invitation to praxis is subtle, spoken as a ‘reframing’ of our thinking, and other than being told that ‘behaviourism’ doesn’t work, we do not explore the why or what, just the how. The ‘how’ of what we are *doing* is discussed, but The Stories that support the why and what in our theory or beliefs are glossed over so that the paradox remains and maintains us in a state of ‘certainty.’

is the goal but that “we are still operating as though we accept this Dickens-era, *Hard Times*,<sup>216</sup> belief that if a kid doesn’t keep up, he [sic] has no one to blame but himself” (Shanker, 2017a). The narrative is that the problem is *the kid* and it is the adult’s role to correct the problem.<sup>217</sup> Shanker was dismayed but articulated that there is an alternative “grounded in science” (Shanker, 2017a). He softened a little and smiled, indicating that the audience could relax, and continued by saying that scientific discovery shows us that “inclusion is part of the human dynamic;” he explain that, in other words, it is our collective ‘nature’ to *connect* more than it is to *control* (Shanker, 2017a). He contended that the standard teacher-student or parent-child relationship—the way in which we *see* the child—has to change and that the “reason this [alternative of SR] isn’t working is because we haven’t reframed our thinking” (Shanker, 2017a). What I was hearing was frustration with a Progressivist Paradox. It was the language that was different; he says ‘behaviourism,’ while I say ‘classroom management narrative.’ I was no longer confused about SR; it is a progressivist tool that unsettles typical CM tactics. SR is a departure from the CMN’s playbook. Shanker’s notable frustration became suddenly understandable; I had encountered plenty of evidence that the mindset shift or reframing required for SR was hard to come by. When I thought about this gap, it seemed as though praxis was usually also missing.

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<sup>216</sup> I believe that this is in reference to the Charles Dickens 1854 novel entitled *Hard Times*. Shanker (2017a) calls ‘behaviourism’ a “Dickens era” practice when it emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The CMN, which aligns more closely with Shanker’s critique, has been a part of child rearing and teaching since the Enlightenment era (in the Western worldview) and probably long before. In progressivist writing, there appears to be the trend of referring to ‘behaviourism’ as a problematic science and avoid discussing the narrative of control that is baked-into the Western image of the adult/child, teacher/student relationships. It sounds as though Shanker is concerned with taking up the problematic image of the child, but behaviourism is not the culprit.

<sup>217</sup> This is an essential element to the CMN.

## Self-Regulation Sans Praxis

How could one begin to play a new game, with a different goal and separate rules, while everyone else is still playing the old one? In an article in the *Vancouver Sun*, entitled “B.C. schools to promote student self-discipline,” the author writes that SR is understood as “key to addressing the mental, physical and psychological diversity in classrooms that sometimes disrupts learning and creates a stressful environment for teachers” (Steffenhagen, 2012). SR is being presented as an innovation in getting better behaviour out of students, teaching them to “remain calm, focused and alert” (Steffenhagen, 2012), so that the stress that *teachers* experience in classrooms while “managing tension and energy” (Hopkins, 2017) is reduced. The title of this article connects SR to self-discipline, but the author also briefly remarks that SR “is not just another educational fad” and should not be “confused with self-control” but offers little to clarify this distinction or how the practice of SR differentiates itself (Steffenhagen, 2012). In response to the *Vancouver Sun* article, Marni Soupcoff of the *National Post* remarks that SR “might sound like a fancy way of saying, ‘making sure kids can sit in their seats and be quiet.’ But it’s not. At least, not exactly” (2012). These mainstream mentions of SR don’t offer much to upset the CMN. Continually tied to behaviour, or how one ‘acts,’ rather than the stress one is experiencing, resources for teachers follow the same line of thinking. When searching “teaching self-regulation in the classroom” using the Google search engine (search conducted April 21, 2019), the website called “Proud to be Primary” (a Canadian resource) is the first result (Rycroft, 2019). This site suggests that self-regulating is the controlling of one’s emotions/emotional expressions and that some children “haven’t been taught how to self-regulate or manage their emotions and behaviors” (Rycroft, 2019). A website called “The Highly

Effective Teacher” is the fourth result and explains that some students “lack the self-regulation skills to always act appropriately” (Amaro, 2019). Both websites recommend using typical CM tactics such as “positive time out” (Rycroft, 2019) and “positive reinforcement and praise to encourage the character traits you wish to build” (Amaro, 2019).

Classroom management texts sometimes criticize a student’s ‘poor’ SR as a reason for disruptive behaviour; a child may behave poorly because they are trying to get “attention,” “the behavior serves the need to control events,” or in an effort to self-regulate or “to regulate feelings...or energy levels” (Jones & Jones, 2007, p.44). SR is also commonly equated with self-discipline in CM resources for teachers; Bear refers to it as “students regulating their own behaviour with minimal adult monitoring and use of external rewards and punishment...used interchangeably with the terms *responsibility...self-control, and autonomy*” (2010, p.37, *emphasis original*). SR is said to entail “knowing what’s right, desiring to do what is right, and then *doing* what is right. It reflects *intrinsic* rather than extrinsic motivation”<sup>218</sup> (Bear, 2010, p.27). Another text criticizes “obedience-oriented approaches” because “they do not foster the self-regulation we ultimately want from responsible students” (Ponte et al., 2009, p.52). They continue that they favour positive reinforcement and intrinsic motivation, as well as “positive teacher-student relationships,” to encourage self-control and appropriate behaviour (Ponte et al., 2009, p.55). Self-control is either conflated with SR or has primacy, demonstrating a lack of the SR lens which understands SR as what “makes self-control possible, not the other way

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<sup>218</sup> It is interesting to note that Bear’s definition of self-regulation echoes Aristotle’s “decisive rejection” of Plato’s argument that virtue is knowledge of what is right, while vice is a lack of that knowledge (Kraut, 2018, 5.1 para 1). For Aristotle, ethical virtue is a “state” or “disposition” called *hexis* in which one knows what is right and wants to do what is right, and because one has developed habits one is induced to do what is right without external direction (Kraut, 2018). This is discussed in the *Nicomachean Ethics* in a section on what Aristotle calls “The Doctrine of the Mean” (EN 1105b25-26).

around” (MEHRIT, 2016). One CM text that I purchased at the University of Victoria bookstore, an assigned text in its Faculty of Education, says nothing of SR but explains that “[w]e need to strive for the creation of self-control in children. It is the first purpose of classroom management” (Charney, 2002, p.19). The author then cites John Dewey’s mention of self-control in *Experience and Education*, “The ideal aim of education is creation of power of self-control” (Dewey, 1938/1997, p.64 as cited by Charney, 2002, p.19). As discussed in the previous chapter, Dewey is not speaking of self-control in the same way as the CMN—as the ability to stave off certain impulses or do something one does not desire for the purpose of normalized behaviour—but rather as self-governance.<sup>219</sup> Without critical reflection, the dominant narrative of self-control, the CMN, blurs our progressivist goals and subverts a SR mindset.

But the problematic ‘Dickens-era’ narrative and the shaky science of ‘behaviourism’ (as Shanker termed it in his presentation) were not critically discussed in *Calm, Alert, and Learning* as disruptive to—or distracting from—SR (2013b). The idea that, as Shanker put it moments into his talk, “Self-Regulation is a way of thinking” that disrupts and subverts the narrative of external control was not an essential message in his text designed for classroom teachers (2017b). What the text *does* do is use the science of SR to reframe some common student/child behaviours and walks the teacher through how to assess for stress and use techniques for helping students to up- or downregulate so that they can participate in the classroom and their own learning experiences. Being presented as a progressivist tool, one that supports progressivist educational aims but without reflection on the dominant narratives that are sewn into the fabric of mainstream classroom practice, means that transformation, let alone the

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<sup>219</sup> See page 182 from Chapter Three.

letting go and leaning into the vulnerability that come with questioning the stories-that-we-all-know, are left to occur independently.<sup>220</sup> If SR is not only a ‘new’ tool, but a critique of the CMN *and* also a replacement for the methods that exist within the CMN, it requires praxis. Without it, the viability of this alternative is potentially undermined by a Progressivist Paradox.<sup>221</sup> Burdened down with dichotomous thinking and an insistence on certainty, SR risks being employed in a way that exhibits a disconnection between thinking and doing. A classroom teacher or parent might encounter the idea of providing a space for children who need a break from the noise, harsh lighting, social demands, and cognitively-draining activities and create a cozy-corner. Yet, when a student is displaying ‘inappropriate behaviour,’ behaviour that indicates stress and the need to lower sensory input, they may still be sent to the desk in the hallway as punishment.<sup>222</sup>

Examining the use of a specific SR tool, the Alert Program® Engine Chart (Williams & Shellenberger, 1996) in a classroom could demonstrate the ways in which the CMN can undermine SR as a progressivist tool (Shanker, 2013b, p.17). Shanker (2013b) references the use of this program in *Calm, Alert, and Learning*. Essentially, the students are provided with a chart that is a half-circle divided into thirds, with a picture of one car in each third. The first car,

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<sup>220</sup> This is not to say that I believe that teachers or parents *won't* reflect or engage in praxis without being primed in a text or guided by a mentor. I am a living example of someone who has found praxis and I believe that most people engage in it in their daily lives. But there is evidence that the stories-that-we-all-know or the dominant narratives, including the CMN but also other oppressive forces such as white supremacy, the gender binary, and heteronormativity, are sometimes so strong that we *can't* (yet) easily see or hear them. Speaking about or drawing attention to the “single story” and the ways in which it props up one’s worldview and keeps us comfortable in our certainty can help us to see the other possibilities (TED, 2009). Dominant narratives are difficult to detect and without the connection between our Stories and our theory/practice being made, we are left with a single story being told for us while being recounted through us.

<sup>221</sup> Refer back to Progressivist Paradox, in Chapter Two, pages 145-148.

<sup>222</sup> In Maureen Ford’s (2003) article, “Unveiling Technologies of Power in Classroom Organization Practice,” she comes to a similar conclusion; when progressivist practice ‘fails’ to achieve student compliance (or appropriate behaviour), the traditionalist sovereignty is there to fall back on and is taken up (again).

on the far left, is running 'too slow' and has a turtle with glasses hunched over in the driver's seat. The second/middle car is running 'just right' and depicts a happy dog with its head hanging out a car window. The third car, on the far right, is running 'too fast,' and is surrounded in smoke and riding with the two left wheels off the ground, making it look out of control. In Shanker's (2013b) story about the teacher named 'Doris,' she uses the tool to help her students assess whether they are feeling sluggish, optimally regulated, or overstimulated by asking them how their motor is running. She then problem-solves with those who are not optimally regulated on how to get there, such as by doing jumping jacks to upregulate or taking some deep breaths to downregulate (Shanker, 2013b). She "also makes comments in a neutral tone of voice when she sees the child's engine is running high, low, or just right: 'Looks like your engine is running in low, right now, while you are trying to read your book. Let's do a few star jumps, so your engine will be running just right for reading and concentration'"<sup>223</sup> (Shanker, 2013b, p.18). This example in Shanker's book demonstrates the effort to remove judgemental language, and therefore the discernment that comes with reward or punishment, so that a child's behaviour isn't being addressed as a character flaw but rather as an indication of stress.

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<sup>223</sup> This example of a child needing to upregulate demonstrates that SR is *not only* about trying to maintain or achieve calm, but also focus. In the CMN, the effort is more often than not to attain quiet, stillness, *and* attentiveness, which can resemble calm and focus. A child who is hunched over their book with a glazed look on their face, or daydreaming, isn't being *disruptive* within a classroom that is fixated on a typical narrative of management. In SR, a lack of focus is an indication of stress; perhaps one's Biological domain requires attention. Water, a snack, or a walk can wake someone up enough that they can regain their concentration and be better equipped for learning. Within a CMN, the problem of hyperactivity, noise, or the wiggles, is often assessed as problematic because this sort of behaviour does not, according to The Story, a calm and 'effective' classroom make, and downregulation may garner more attention. Earlier in this chapter, an article by Marni Soupcoff (2012) was mentioned and in it SR was presented as more than a way to make sure "kids can sit in their seats and be quiet," but this comment also indicates that the focus on stillness and silence is not really up for debate. This is a misunderstanding of SR and a demonstration of how SR practice is seen through a CMN lens. It is difficult to see stress behaviour when we confuse it for misbehaviour. In SR, stress behaviour can be disruptive to self and others, but it can also be easy to overlook. Whether a person is in need of up- or downregulation, in SR the belief is that it is not a moral deficiency and that assistance is offered to better the recipient for self-governance.

Also, the 'engine chart' is a visual for children who are learning to scan their bodies and minds for stress and make their own diagnosis about their stress state followed by choosing what activities may work best for their self-regulation. This is a departure from the CMN, but it is subtle, and I am concerned that it may be imperceptible without a critical reflection on the narrative it is attempting to move beyond.

During a student-led conference<sup>224</sup> in my child's 'Self-Regulation Classroom,' I asked my son, then in grade one, about the chart that was taped to the side of each desk. It was the Alert Program® Engine Chart, complete with a moveable arrow to indicate one's state of regulation. He explained that the *teacher moved the arrow* to show the children whether or not they were being 'good.' The child wasn't to move the arrow. Presumably, 'good' was in the middle, with an engine running 'just right.' Regardless of how the teacher may have actually used the Alert Program® Engine Chart, the take-home message was clearly not reflecting SR. On another day, in which I was volunteering in the classroom, I witnessed the teacher point to the Alert Program® Engine Chart on their desk and warn a child in a stern and clear manner that their engine was running too fast. There was no follow-up guidance on how to regulate, no problem-solving on how to manage stress, but rather the message was that *behaviour* had been noted, an unacceptable behaviour, and that there was an expectation it be promptly corrected.

In the above example, the focus is on student behaviour and control of that behaviour; the practice is rooted in a CMN (discipline, normalization, and surveillance). The Alert

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<sup>224</sup> An alternative to the traditional teacher-parent meetings, the student-led conference will look different from school to school. Generally, they involve the parents/guardians and the students, and the process actively engages students. The students are usually responsible for guiding the parents/guardians on a tour of their learning and parents/guardians are encouraged to ask the student questions. Work samples and/or activities are stationed around the classroom (or school) to showcase student progress.

Program® Engine Chart is supposed to be a helpful tool in teaching stress awareness; when we are able to detect our stress, we are more likely to be able to take steps to reduce it (Shanker, 2017a). In SR literature, it is sometimes up to the teacher’s assessment, or “correctly interpreting a child’s behaviour,” to determine in what domain(s) the student may need to “up-regulate” or “down-regulate” and respond accordingly with tools or approaches to assist the student (Shanker, 2013b, p.9 & xv). When children are struggling to up- or downregulate or have not (yet) managed to internalize the methods needed to do so, they may require more “external regulation” from the optimally regulated adult or even peers who act as co-regulators (Shanker, 2013b, p.9). It is important to note that The Story, the CMN, tells us that external control is required to achieve appropriate behaviour. *External regulation* is not about getting other people to do what we want them to do, but rather it is has the aim of supporting a person in regulating their stress and stress reaction. SR is not about putting off a craving, and it doesn’t mean that arousal is “the enemy,” and “the point of Self-Reg isn’t to label a response or a behaviour as something you must resist or control” (Shanker, 2017b, p.22). SR is about asking ‘Why am I feeling this way?’ ‘Why am I having this urge, now?’ ‘Why *can’t* they sit still?’ ‘Why are they so lethargic?’ And, rather than being distracted by The Story that tells us we need to control our feelings (read: don’t feel them, set them aside and focus), or that if we had more self-control we wouldn’t crave that donut (read: our resolve is weak), or that they *won’t* sit still (read: because they aren’t being ‘good’), we must be able to *see* The Story, *reflect* on its connections and disconnections between theory and practice, and *let go* of what disconnects us and doesn’t serve us. The Question of ‘how do I get them to do what I want them to do?’ — which focuses on external behaviour and leads us to practice in ways that undermine our

goals—with SR becomes a question of what is going on internally and why now? We see the brain and we work with the mind. The theory is to support freedom and equality (I believe that one is capable of self-governance and that with self-regulation, one can support their own freedom and the freedom of others) *and* the practice is to support freedom and equality (my actions consider how to support self-governance by considering the barriers and skill-deficits in self-regulation and reacting so that one can support their own freedom and the freedom of others). And when vulnerability comes up, and The Story sneaks in to distract us, hopefully a commitment to praxis will help us to see where disconnections lie and the *who, what, and how* of reconnection.

#### Mind the Gap

While popular media, Ministry of Education websites and curriculum documents, school boards, parent groups, and teachers themselves all call for SR to be a part of mainstream Canadian education, school communities, and classroom practice, there is a gap in the research. So far, I have relied on anecdotal examples of SR in classroom practice and, although true to my memory, I acknowledge that my memory is like anyone's and can be faulty. Also, I am influenced by my personal investment in these stories as they involve my own children. When I started this project, I wanted to know how SR was being used in schools. I wanted to know whether or not it was a progressivist tool. The potential for SR to be an alternative to CM tactics is there; but so is the capacity for progress to be thwarted by dominant narratives that undermine progressivist aims. In searching for research on the ways in which SR has been implemented in mainstream Canadian classrooms, and whether or not it has been put into practice in a way that supports progressivist aims and the objectives of SR, I have come up

empty-handed. In my search, using the University of Victoria’s online Summon database (January 14, 2019), within the disciplines of ‘education’ and ‘psychology,’ with the search terms “self-regulation AND classroom teaching AND mindfulness”<sup>225</sup> and limited within the last five years, I encountered 110 results. I found that the results yielded studies that could be sorted into two general categories: studies that show the effects of SR on children and studies that show the effects of SR on teachers. There were studies that provide evidence that self-regulation skills, such as mindfulness and yoga, have a positive effect on academic performance, classroom behaviour (students showed improvements in “paying attention, self-control, participation in activities, and caring/respect for others”), and emotional state (Black & Fernando, 2014, p.1242).<sup>226</sup> Other studies provided evidence that self-regulation tools, such as mindfulness and yoga, have a positive effect on teacher well-being, stress levels, and behaviour (significant improvements in “positive affect, classroom management, distress tolerance”) (Harris et al., 2016, p.143).<sup>227</sup> One study noted that teachers who used mindfulness-based interventions demonstrated “more adaptive strategies for coping with job stress, and a tendency to evaluate challenging students in a more positive affective light;” this result could support my questions, but without philosophical engagement with the teacher the result falls short (Taylor et al., 2016, p.115).

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<sup>225</sup> I used the search terms “self-regulation AND classroom teaching AND mindfulness” because I am interested in self-regulation and not SRL and I have found that when mindfulness is mentioned the search results come back with less SRL and more SR. Also, I am interested in the classroom teaching or facilitation of SR. I allowed results from the last five year to make the draw more manageable.

<sup>226</sup> There were many studies in this category, but I would like to draw the reader’s attention to Black & Fernando, 2014 and Felver et al., 2016.

<sup>227</sup> There were many studies in this category, but I would like to draw the reader’s attention to Harris et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2016; Kyte, 2016.

Using EBSCO*host* or 'ERIC'<sup>228</sup> (January 14, 2019), search terms “self-regulation AND classroom practice AND teacher beliefs AND classroom management,” accepting results from 2010 to 2019, there were only two results. One measures student motivation in relation to SLR, which is not within the scope of this project. The other result struck my interest: it is entitled “Teachers don’t always do what they think they should: A preliminary Validation of the Early Childhood Educators’ knowledge of Self-Regulation Skills Questionnaire” (Willis et al., 2014). The study states that “the extent to which teachers understand the concept of self-regulation, how it is exhibited in their classroom, and how best to implement practices that enhances its development, remains unexamined” (Willis et al., 2014, p.169). But, upon a deeper reading, it became clear that SR was being described as self-control, especially in terms of controlling one’s own behaviour rather than “relying on external sources” and that a successfully self-regulating child will “internalize adult rules, and take them as their own” (Willis et al., 2014, p.169). SR, within this study, had little to do with stress or connection, and instead discussed “inner-discipline” and “self-direction” (Willis et al., 2014, p.170).

Entering the same search terms I had used in EBSCO*host* or 'ERIC' into Summon (January 15, 2019) resulted in more than 1000 results and all of the abstracts in the first 100 that referred to 'self-regulation' discussed it as SRL or 'self-control'<sup>229</sup> or were focused on the

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<sup>228</sup> While the 'Summon' search engine is used by libraries around the world and provides credible results, ranked by relevance, from a library's online and print catalogues, EBSCO*host* or 'ERIC' is “an intuitive online research platform used by thousands of institutions and millions of users worldwide” that is beyond the figurative library walls (EBSCO Industries, 2019). These two search engines, although overlapping in some respects, turn up lists of resources that are unique from one another.

<sup>229</sup> For example, the second result was about motivation and SRL and CM practices (Velayutham & Aldridge, 2013) and the 14<sup>th</sup> result surrounded teacher beliefs and classroom practice to support SRL (Bol & Spruce, 2015).

influences of social and/or emotional awareness on student learning outcomes<sup>230</sup> and teacher efficacy (but what is considered ‘effective teaching’ or ‘positive behavioural change’ and why?). There were also some results that surrounded constructivism and teacher beliefs and practices,<sup>231</sup> but these papers were not directly discussing SR. There was an article that discussed the relationship between teacher beliefs and teacher practice and CM practices, but SR was only mentioned within the implications of the study (Berger et al., 2018). In it, they acknowledge that “the analysis of the relationship between teachers’ beliefs and classroom management practices has been neglected” (Berger et al., 2018, p.2). The majority of teachers participating in the study aligned with constructivist and progressivist beliefs about teaching and learning. The research also found a strong correlation between teachers whose beliefs were constructivist and centred on intrinsic motivation and supporting student autonomy, while those teachers who carried more traditional beliefs were interested in “direct transmission” teaching, extrinsic motivation, and saw a “strong correlation between chaos and control” (Berger et al., 2018, p.8). But teacher beliefs in constructivism “did not impact practices;” the data showed that teachers with more experience were more likely to employ a constructivist approach (Berger et al., 2018, p.1). The authors argue that the implications of this study are of concern because CM styles affect student learning, engagement, and autonomy, but also “classroom management is likely to affect self-regulation” (Berger et al., 2018, p.9).

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<sup>230</sup> For example, the third result was how students being made more aware of their emotions can promote positive behavioural change and teacher efficacy (Arguedas et al., 2016). The 15<sup>th</sup> result centred around teacher-student relationships and teaching aspects of SR to improve academic disparity in students from low-income families and ethnic minorities (Chen et al., 2010). The 33<sup>rd</sup> result is a quantitative study that examines how teachers feel when their students lack engagement or discipline in class (Hagenauer et al., 2015).

<sup>231</sup> For example, result 34 discussed the relationship between teacher beliefs about constructivism and its influence on their practice (Boz et al., 2010).

Veteran teachers have experienced more reflection and transformation over their careers, and the study concludes that “the issue would not be to persuade teachers of the value of the constructivist approach, but to foster the developmental move from one stage to another in the process of becoming a teacher” (Berger et al., 2018, p.9).

When a teacher has taken on what they believe to be a practice reflecting SR, or when they see their classroom as a ‘Self-regulation classroom,’ what reflections have they made along the way? For those teachers who understand the meaning of SR and thoughtfully attempt to integrate the recommended practices, I wonder what, if any, barriers they encountered on their journey? Or, perhaps there wasn’t a journey at all? But, if we are all raised and living within the dominant narrative of the CMN, a SR teacher must have had to overcome it. What is their story? In the next two chapters, I will explore these questions while observing classrooms and interviewing two teachers on their beliefs and practices surrounding SR.

## Chapter Five—A Path of Least Resistance

### The Unexpected Turns in a Path with ‘Heart’

The school was quiet. It was so early in the morning that I had to wait outside for an arriving teacher to let me into the building. Her keys jingled and I offered to hold her coffee cup as she located the one that would open the door. She smiled and asked warmly, “Whose room are you in today?” She was not one of the teachers I was working with, but the team of staff in this suburban public elementary school were so welcoming and often voiced their ongoing interest in and genuine support for my research. I returned that I was finished with the observations and was now onto final interviews. She held the door and wished me luck and we parted ways. I walked down the empty hallway and let myself into the grade one classroom. I left the lights off, as the teacher often does; it was a bright morning and the soft light that came from the large window facing the school yard was enough. I unpacked my notebook at the ‘rainbow table’—a curved half-circle—which was wedged between a small rug encircled by a white sheer curtain and a wooden ‘kitchen’ play-space. The chair I pulled out for myself seemed to float across the floor as it rode on felt ends. I sat down and looked around at what had, over the last five classroom visits and a previous interview, become familiar. The gentle earth tones on the bulletin boards, the inviting carpet space partially enclosed by a bookshelf, the lack of clutter, the small pots of flowers on each of four little round tables where the students sometimes sat made me smile. I took a deep breath and let it out slowly. The room seemed to invite me to do so.

I felt calm as I waited for the teacher to arrive. It had been a hectic five weeks; I had been bouncing between my job as a practicum supervisor, observing and supporting student teachers in various schools around the district, while also collecting data in two classrooms for my research study in the forms of surveys, interviews, and observations.<sup>232</sup> Earlier in the year, my efforts to recruit teachers to participate in the study had been a struggle. The initial four schools that I had approached yielded not a single teacher who was willing to participate *and* identified as one who practiced self-regulation [SR] in classroom teaching. I had to return to the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Board and request to expand my net, adding more schools to my approved list. This pushed my expected timeframe back, landing my research data collection period smack dab in the middle of a practicum<sup>233</sup> period that I had already committed to working. The three additional schools yielded a little more interest, possibly due to a small change in the parameters, such as a reduction in observation time and paperwork, as well as my reframing of a 'self-regulation teacher' as being "anywhere on your

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<sup>232</sup> There will be some details on these methods later in this chapter, but they will mostly be relegated to the footnotes while the narrative elements will be in the main text. As discussed in the Introductory chapter, and within footnote 15, I am interested in shifting from a traditional focus on an analytical discussion of the data, which relies on a "language of reason" (Rancière, 1991, p.84), to a relationship with the interlocuter that is founded on equality. The main text is a narrative relaying my experience within the schools as well as my own reflections on praxis; I ruminate and raise questions surrounding the connections and disconnections between theory and practice, and the possibilities outside of the dominant narrative for *action* and transformation. The footnotes, or sub-text, remain important, but they are *not* intended to be a reasoning for the reader. The footnotes are interruptions that invite the reader to engage with *my* learning. I see the interlocuter as *capable* and my hope is that the stories I have told up until this point will resonate with others who have experienced a *culture* immersed in the CMN. Storytelling is a language of equality, and the meaning I hope to convey may be found rather than given (Archibald, 2008). Depending on the journey of the reader, the footnotes may be superfluous.

<sup>233</sup> Practicum is field experience for folks who are working toward their Bachelor of Education degree and becoming teachers. The period is often from 3 to 12 weeks, depending on their stage and program. They observe a mentor teacher, plan lessons and units, take on teaching responsibilities including the execution of lessons, assessment, and other daily expectations of teachers. When I work as a practicum supervisor, I observe these students teaching lessons and meet with them and their mentors to discuss their progress and make recommendations for reflection and growth. I also support them and advocate for them when necessary. Out of respect for their privacy, I will not discuss any details that pertain to those students or their performance in their practicum classrooms.

self-regulation journey.” But the reason that I attribute for the eventual success in tracking down the teachers I was seeking was the luck I had in selecting this particular school.

It was late Winter when I received approval from the principal to come into the library during a staff meeting to pitch the project to the teachers. She was surprisingly encouraging to me. Other principals seemed reluctant to let me in, often warning me that the well was dry. One principal laughed after I delivered my spiel that was meant to convince him to support my project. He *was* supportive. But his guffaw was clarified when he said, “Lyndze, you know this school. We are pretty dysregulated. I doubt there are any teachers here who are using self-reg.” He was right, I was aware that the school was unlikely to have teachers who demonstrated SR, at least not rightly so-called. Part of my inquiry had been to argue that I was on a fool’s errand; I had put myself on a quest to locate data that would support my ongoing informal experience of witnessing the common misinterpretation of SR as self-control and the use of typical classroom management tactics to elicit ‘good’ behaviour instead of SR being used to support stress behaviour. I *didn’t* expect to locate teachers who were actually practicing SR as Stuart Shanker<sup>234</sup> intended. I anticipated that the participants would be teachers who *believed* in SR and *thought* of themselves as employing SR, but in *practice* demonstrated standard CM *tactics*. The apprehension of potential participants hardly surprised me, nor did their reasons for not joining me in the project; if anything, the scarcity of teachers practicing SR substantiated my claim, as did the narratives they provided as justification. I was either given a direct indication that the teacher did not use SR or I was told that they used SR, but that their students “weren’t

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<sup>234</sup> Stuart Shanker is the Canadian SR expert whose work has been discussed deeply throughout this text. Chapter Four has an in-depth discussion of SR as ‘intended’ in theory and practice, which relies on Shanker’s texts and other sources.

ready” to be observed, or that they “only use it [SR] when the kids are good, and right now everything is chaos,” or that they were “big believers in SR, but *my* class just can’t handle it.” The potential of being observed *doing* SR while one’s class was ‘out of control’ is not appealing when the CMN tells us that *effective* teachers have a *well-managed* classroom; progressivist methods are all well and good until read as disorder, and then something more firm (traditionalist) is required (Ford, 2003). The message from teachers who declined to participate was representative of the multi-dimensional narrative I had so often encountered; SR was a difficult-to-master almost ‘magical’ fix for behaviour challenges and therefore a SR class should be the picture of calm and focus; SR is an *additional* tool that can be employed to control behaviour (a classroom management strategy) in fits and starts, that it can be pointed to occasionally, but that nothing else about a classroom teaching approach need change; and finally, The Story that SR is classroom management ‘lite’ and therefore couldn’t possibly work in a classroom make-up that was heavy on certain energies or challenges, or low on certain resources, because those kids need to be contained and SR is too lenient for avoiding chaos and, after all, “those kids can’t handle their freedom”<sup>235</sup> (Morrison & Morrison, 1999, p.6).

So, when the principal at Pathway\* Elementary School welcomed me in, saying that her school was well suited to such a project, I got curious. In the library, I was greeted by a cheerful teacher who, having heard why I was there, informed me that I had “hit the jackpot” because her school was in the midst of a “self-regulation staff inquiry project.” With her words, my

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<sup>235</sup> This quotation is from Morrison & Morrison’s (1999) picture book *The Big Box*. Recall the summary of the book [pages 51-52] and the reference to the CMN that children necessitate control and that, despite our progressivist goal of teaching self-governance (freedom), the paradox is that our practices indicate that we don’t trust that children can handle said freedom.

\* Names of schools, teachers, and students have been changed to maintain privacy and anonymity. The \* indicated pseudonyms throughout.

stomach leapt while at the same time my chest felt heavy. My face was suddenly a little warm. I was somewhere between excited and horrified. I could feel a lite tug in both directions. This was a crossroad; what I had just heard was unexpected and my emotional reaction was confusing. I really needed to pay attention. Up until this moment, I thought I knew what was at the other end of this path I was following. I sincerely believed that if I were to find a teacher participant, as well-meaning and dedicated as they might be, they would exemplify my hunch that SR was being used in ways that were at least partially obscured by a preoccupation with compliance derived from the classroom management narrative [CMN]. Her words came to me like an answer to this problem; what if we looked at SR through inquiry?<sup>236</sup> After all, wasn't this more or less what I had been arguing? Praxis is about curiosity, taking the time to reflect and notice, asking questions (often difficult ones that make us feel vulnerable and uncertain), letting go and letting in, and eventual transformation. I was suddenly overcome by the prospect of a group of educators taking on SR with the inquiry process in mind. But I was also concerned that this would cause me to veer from my current plan and the trajectory that I had felt was inevitable. When I feel uncertain, vulnerable, or torn (as though there are only two options and that *I have to choose*), I know that this is an opportunity for transformation. At least that is

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<sup>236</sup> According to the British Columbia Ministry of Education "Glossary of Curriculum Terms," 'Inquiry' is a mindset one uses to "build their own knowledge and understanding through an active, open-minded exploration of a meaningful question, problem, or issue" (BCME, 2019). The staff inquiry project, to my knowledge, was an effort to explore SR theory and strategies as a group of professionals. To look at SR through a lens of inquiry is to "not follow a set process or program" with an expected answer or certainty in a specific end to be reached, but rather to explore possibilities surrounding questions relating to a problem (in this case SR) and "provide justification for their thinking, changing the discussion from 'right or wrong' to 'more or less justified'" (BCME, 2019). To me, this sounds a lot like praxis; to "ask questions, conduct research, and produce some type of product to demonstrate their understanding (the product does not have to mark an end point and can be the starting point for further inquiry)" and to "actively engage in building knowledge and deeper understanding of key concepts" while also exploring "challenging questions, problems, or issues that can be approached and answered in many different ways" echoes reflection and an assessment of a question of connection between thinking and doing, as well as action toward reconciling disconnection (BCME, 2019).

what I earnestly advocate in the classrooms and workshops I lead, and in my writing. I wondered in that moment if I could walk my talk. And then I recalled a quotation that education researcher Cynthia Chambers (2004) uses in her article entitled “Research That Matters: Finding A Path with Heart.” She calls on the words of author and anthropologist Carlos Castaneda (1968), which states,

...you must keep in mind that a path is only a path; ...and there is no affront to oneself or to others, in dropping it, if that is what your heart tells you to do. But your decision to keep on the path or to leave it must be free of fear or ambition. I warn you. Look at every path closely and deliberately. Try it as many times as you think necessary. Then ask yourself, and yourself alone, one question: does this path have a heart? All the paths are the same: they lead nowhere. They are paths going through the bush or into the bush... Does this path have heart? If it does, the path is good: if it doesn't, it is of no use. One makes for a joyful journey; as long as you follow it, you are one with it. The other will make you curse your life. One makes you strong; the other weakens you. (Castaneda, 1968, p.76 as cited in Chambers, 2004, p.4)

I wondered: was I clinging to certainty? Was I searching out confirmation or justification for the things I believed and some of which I had already written? The idea of dropping that path certainly struck fear in me and my ego and ambition were threatened in some way by the prospect. But my questions, the path that had brought me here, were unharmed and seemed to be nudging me in this new direction. Was this my heart telling me what to do? If all paths “lead nowhere” (Castaneda, 1968, p.76), then why was I hesitating? I wanted to know how teachers were teaching self-regulation; what does a ‘self-regulation classroom’ look, sound, and feel like? I wanted to know about SR and praxis; if these teachers were teaching SR and creating SR classrooms, what had they done or were they doing to push the CMN aside? Or was the CMN operating with SR *and* supporting progressivist goals and democratic aspirations? Neither praxis nor inquiry should have a destination. This needed to be about *process* and not *product*

and I wanted to keep myself open to possibilities outside of my understanding. I let go of where I thought I was headed and, in that moment, rather than sensing a void or the fearful question of ‘what do you have without that thing of which you were certain?’ I felt quite full. Joyful, even.

Sitting in this classroom, waiting to conduct the final interview with a teacher participant, my heart was overflowing. The peace I felt in that room was real and reminded me of all that I had experienced over the last five weeks in both this classroom and in another one down the hall. I had expected to recruit participating teachers who would demonstrate a disconnection between the theory of SR and its practice in classroom teaching. I thought that I would observe a wolf (CMN) in sheep’s (SR) clothing. But, since walking into those classrooms for the first time, I had plenty of evidence that SR was happening here. It wasn’t just momentary glimpses, like the rainbow of light shining through a prism and difficult to catch clearly on an adjacent wall; rather, it was like being immersed in a different world. SR’s manifestation was pronounced, salient, self-evident, and sometimes striking and incontrovertible; the room, the teacher, the students, the atmosphere, the language, the tone, the relationships, and almost everything else was perceptibly consistent with SR.<sup>237</sup> As mentioned above, the aesthetic of the classrooms in which I had been observing were obviously dissimilar from most classrooms and aligned with principles of SR.<sup>238</sup> But along with

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<sup>237</sup> Later in this chapter, and in the following one, I will discuss the data that I use as evidence of this statement.

<sup>238</sup> In SR, the classroom esthetic is used as a tool to lower stimuli that cause stress and increase individual control over the stimuli a person needs in order to feel optimally regulated (Shanker, 2013b). Both classrooms that were observed had a lot of open space, many seating options (sitting, standing, kneeling, laying, soft or hard, personal or shared), the lighting was soft, sounds were muted (the bottoms of chairs were felted, toys did not make much noise, music was used carefully), there was very little hanging from the ceilings, and the rooms overall were decluttered and organized (bins on shelves, a curtain across busier shelving units). These choices for room décor are not *only* in service to downregulation (or calming), but also upregulation; access to food and water, space to

the room, which both participating teachers described as “the third teacher”<sup>239</sup> (adults and kids in the classroom communities being the first and second teachers), there was SR-in-action, from the moment the students arrived in the morning until they left for the day. I am *not* speaking of the commonly assumed practices, such as yoga or meditation, reading picture books on SR, or walking kids through Siegal’s hand model of the brain<sup>240</sup>—although there was some of that—in my observations, I witnessed SR as a way of *being* rather than just an action one *did*.<sup>241</sup> Shanker remarks on how SR is meant to “deal with all the ups and downs, the variations and fluctuations of daily life” (MEHRIT, 2016b). He also points out that SR is something in which we “immerse ourselves,” something we “live” so that “our understanding of stress and our ability to manage energy flow is transformed. We become increasingly sensitive to the signs of being over-stressed and better equipped to turn negative situations into positive growth experiences” (MEHRIT, 2016b). An example of SR in action, the *living* of it, may be best articulated through a startling contrast that is evidenced by the following stories noted early into the observation period.

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walk, stretch, and move, as well as an overall mindset that all members of the classroom (teachers, staff, students, and visitors) can take ownership over the space and use it as they need it while considering the regulation/needs/freedoms of others. The inclusion of both up- and downregulation in classroom set-up, as well as teaching approach, will be discussed throughout this chapter. Examples of both up- and down-regulation will also be catalogued as the effort to notice the status of the sympathetic as well as the parasympathetic nervous systems are what set SR apart from a CMN interpretation of behaviour.

<sup>239</sup> The emphasis on children learning in a prepared environment is a progressivist theme; this was discussed in the Chapter One through Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762/1974) and his text, *Émile*. Rousseau recommends the teacher take time “to prepare [the student’s] surroundings, so that nothing shall strike [the student’s] eye but what is fit for his [sic] sight” (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.59). But, the difference is that unlike Rousseau’s effort to have everything in a room “carefully chosen” (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.30) so that the child will be likely to do as expected, in SR the room is designed for the teacher and students to be optimally regulated and therefore in supported in their self-governance.

<sup>240</sup> Siegal’s (2016) hand model of the brain was discussed in Chapter Four.

<sup>241</sup> Also a progressivist theme, but more akin to Dewey (1916), is the view that democracy is not a mode of governance but a way of life; SR is a way of being and so less prescriptive and demanding an engagement with praxis and philosophical reflection.

## A Regulation Request: Part One

Days after the initial interviews, and on the third day of in-class observations of Classroom A,<sup>242</sup> I watched as Ms. Asher and the students of this Grade One class explored storytelling. After the early morning activities of the sensory circuit,<sup>243</sup> calendar time, and a brief discussion on the carpet, the students migrated around the classroom, picking out materials and talking excitedly. A few minutes later, and the students were focused at their table spots, developing stories using felt mats, glass beads, rocks, popsicle sticks, some cards with First Nations art on them, and other materials. They had done this before; they knew that their first step was to play and create, then to tell their stories to a friend, and finally to write their stories down in their Language Arts notebooks. There was plenty of eagerness among the students in the room. There was also a lot of energy; the students had missed going to the gymnasium because of picture day, and recess and snack were coming up.<sup>244</sup> The noise level

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<sup>242</sup> There were two classrooms observed, both in the same school. Classroom A was observed first, and both Classroom A and B were observed for 5 days each over 3 weeks with one week of overlap. Classroom A was taught by a person I am calling 'Ms. Asher' and Classroom B was taught by a person I am calling 'Ms. Calum;' all names of teachers, staff, and students have been changed. Ms. Asher had about 6 years of teaching experience, both inside and outside the public system. She was a non-permanent teacher with a one-year contract. She was Canadian (white) and educated in Ontario. She had experience teaching abroad. Ms. Calum had more than 10 years of teaching experience, primarily inside the public system. She was a permanent teacher and new vice-principal. She was Canadian (white) and educated in British Columbia. At the time of participating in this study, she was working on her Master of Education degree.

<sup>243</sup> In this classroom, a 'Sensory Circuit' was a list of activities on a clipboard that a small group of students would do together. The activities were things like jumping-jacks, push-ups, deep breaths, or balancing on one foot. The students used an erasable pen to put a checkmark beside the activities they completed.

<sup>244</sup> Students needed to be in their 'green zone,' have their 'lids down'; they needed to be 'well-regulated' so that they might create, communicate, sequence their thoughts, relate to others, conjure the letters and words from their thoughts and transfer them to their papers, and take social, emotional, and/or cognitive risks. They also needed to make some noise as they handled materials, thought out-loud, shared their stories with others, spoke with their adults, and enjoy being in community with others. In SR, the energy of the room, the noise, lighting, smells, as well as the level of challenge in a task is understood as having a varying degree of impact on each person. SR also takes into account that each person in the room has a life before and after this moment; our Biological, Emotional, Social, Cognitive, and Prosocial stress loads may already be heavy in ways that we may know and consider, as well as in manners of which we are not aware.

was a little higher than usual, but everyone was engaged, and the teacher was moving from table to table, crouching down and listening to the stories. She would occasionally stand up and scan the room.<sup>245</sup> I noticed one student, at the table closest to me, named Charlie.\* They<sup>246</sup> had already created their story and told it to a tablemate, and they had their notebook and a pencil in hand. They looked frustrated, their face was twisted, and they moved their head closer and closer to the page until their chin was nearly on the table.<sup>247</sup> Beside them, their classmate was dropping a handful of pebbles on the table and then picking them up. The child dropped them again and again, focused on the rocks, and like many of the children they were mumbling a story to themselves. Without looking up, Charlie said, “I’m trying to write a sentence here!” Their voice was sharp, and they sounded irritated. They abruptly put down their pencil and took a deep breath.<sup>248</sup> They looked around the room. Then they stood up and walked to Ms. Asher, who had also just risen from a table and was scanning the room again.<sup>249</sup>

“Ms. Asher?”

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<sup>245</sup> Ms. Asher scanned the room, as many teachers do, but not for *misbehaviour*. She explained to me that she searches the faces of the students for ‘green zone’ and when she picks up on ‘yellow zone,’ such as big sighs, a red face, the wiggles, or ‘blue zone,’ a head down on the desk, a dazed expression, she goes to connect with that student. Shanker (2013a) writes about scanning for stress behaviour. During my observations, I began to scan for stress behaviour, too.

<sup>246</sup> I want to remind the reader that I will not call the students in the research classroom ‘boys’ or ‘girls’ and I will use they/them/their pronouns because they have not disclosed their genders and I choose not to assume them.

<sup>247</sup> The student who became frustrated demonstrated that they were challenged by their stress load; their face indicated their struggle, their body moved closer and closer to the paper onto which they were trying to coax a sentence, as though they were trying to get away from the room around them.

<sup>248</sup> Charlie attempted to communicate their needs to the student dropping the rocks on the table; this was unsuccessful and, in my opinion, further reveals their stress load. When we are dysregulated, we lose our ability to communicate effectively. But after Charlie spoke those words, they exhibited their stress resilience skills when they put down their pencil and took a deep breath. With their current stress load, they *couldn’t* focus nor *could* they write a sentence.

<sup>249</sup> When we are stressed, we are vulnerable—encumbered by the weight of our distress—and it can be difficult to pull ourselves up and off the slippery slope that leads to the ‘Red Zone,’ our ‘Threat Brain,’ and a limbic reaction. But this child had the skills, and the comfort level within this classroom and with this adult, to ask for help. They were connected enough within themselves to hear their own needs and they were connected enough to others and their environment to both identify and speak those needs.

“Yes, Charlie. What do you need?” responded the teacher, with a big smile and bright eyes. I could see her face change when she registered the look she was getting from the student. She changed her own expression to one of soft and genuine concern.<sup>250</sup>

“I am finding it a bit noisy in here. I think that there is a lot of yellow zone.”<sup>251</sup> The student was direct and calm. In their voice, I heard some relief in speaking those words.<sup>252</sup>

“Ah, I see. And how are you feeling about that?”

“I’m frustrated. I’m yellow. I can’t concentrate. I can’t write my sentence.” The little one let out a sigh and stood with their arms crossed and one foot out to the side.<sup>253</sup> The teacher gave them a little smile and gently put her hand on the student’s shoulder. She crouched down so that she was face to face with this somewhat exasperated child. Ms. Asher breathed in

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<sup>250</sup> When the child approached Ms. Asher, they were met with a well-regulated teacher who immediately perceived the stress and shifted her tone, body, expression, and possibly her inner state so that she could be even more tuned into the child who needed her.

<sup>251</sup> The term “yellow zone” is part of *The Zones of Regulation*<sup>®</sup> program (Kuypers, 2017). The program identifies four zones, each indicated whether one is regulated or dysregulated, as well as whether one is in need of up- or downregulation. The ‘blue zone’ is low energy and dysregulated, and associated with feelings such as sadness, boredom, feeling tired or ill, and moving slowly (Kuypers, 2017). The ‘green zone’ represents feeling regulated and calm, also happy, focused, and ready to learn (Kuypers, 2017). The ‘yellow zone’ is when one experiences frustration, anxiety, feeling silly, over-excited, or just lacking a general sense of control over self or a situation (Kuypers, 2017). And the ‘red zone’ indicates when someone is experiencing anger, feeling terrified, or exhibiting what might be perceived as a limbic response (Kuypers, 2017). Although there is a lot more to the program than simply the four zones, these are the elements that are often brought up in classrooms that I observe and particularly in the metalanguage used in the ‘self-regulation classrooms.’

<sup>252</sup> The child was asked what they needed, but they may have already had in mind what they wanted their teacher to know; they had noticed the volume level and felt that it was high and that the class may have been dysregulated. This act of coming to the adult and giving an assessment of the class in this way demonstrates how perceptive they were being of their own needs as well as their skills in communicating for regulation; I noted that they didn’t express this with judgment. Charlie *didn’t* say ‘They’re being loud’ referring to their classmates, nor did they remark on the tablemate who was dropping the rocks. They simply expressed that *they* found the room to be too loud for *them*. They had also looked around the room and *they* thought they sensed dysregulation (what they called ‘yellow zone’). Again, this terminology lacks a moral judgement of x behaviour being good or bad; we are all dysregulated sometimes and being in the yellow zone is not tied to morality and doesn’t make one a ‘bad kid’ or poorly behaved.

<sup>253</sup> The teacher does the SR work of drawing attention to feelings, needs, and a resolution; she asks the student how they feel, and the student goes further than simply ‘bad,’ but rather uses the ‘meta-language’ of the class community (such as feeling ‘yellow’) and relates it to their learning (they can’t concentrate or write).

deeply and let it out slowly. The child's shoulders lowered slightly. About ten seconds went by and neither of them said anything. They just gently stared into each other's eyes. The student shifted their weight from one hip to the other, then they uncrossed their arms and stood up a little taller.<sup>254</sup>

"Okay. I am here. What do you think we can do? You need it quieter. You can't focus with all of this noise. So, what is a solution?" Ms. Asher's voice was quiet, almost a whisper. Even so, she sounded confident.<sup>255</sup>

"I think we need to take a breath and check in. I think that I just need them to know." The student offered with a livelier tone; their energy had returned, and they looked as though they were ready to move on. The teacher nodded and they paused together for another few seconds. Then, Ms. Asher offered another nod and stood up, and the student skipped back to their table.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> The teacher responded by lending her calm; she placed a hand on the child's shoulder, she changed her position so that their faces were closer (so were their brains, recall the discussion of 'interbrain' on pages 231-232), she took a breath—perhaps for herself, keeping her calm, or maybe in an effort to model this release and trigger a similar action in the child—and she seemingly said and did nothing. But, this effort of the pause, this apparent inaction was hardly passive. She was waiting for the student to find their way back to 'green,' for their stress load to shift, and for them to feel regulated enough to problem-solve together and find a resolution. I read this moment in this way in part because of the length of the pause and the clear shift in body language, but also in the teacher's next word: 'Okay.' Rather than saying 'Okay' as simply a filler, a space made with language so that the speaker can think, she said it as though she was acknowledging the child's move toward calm. I could feel that transformation from where I sat, and the word 'Okay' symbolized that they were ready to talk strategy.

<sup>255</sup> After the teacher says 'Okay', she does not put all of the onus of solving the problem on the student; the teacher is 'here,' and 'we' can do something. She reiterated her own understanding of the problem, demonstrating that she listened, and she understood. Her whispered voice, as she remained crouched next to the student, was calming and soothing, private and personal, and also gave the impression that they were working together on something; a whispered council of war. The teacher's position, in that confident whisper and body position, suggested consensus, and the capability of the student as a collaborator in the situation; her confidence was in the student and their connection in that moment.

<sup>256</sup> The student's voice and body language had shifted, they looked calm and alert. Ms. Asher's pause allowed time for the student to add more ideas or thoughts, and for the teacher to further assess their regulation. There was space in these pauses for needs, feelings, and connection.

The teacher lightly sang, “Take a breath.” And the room slowed down. Nearly everyone, including Ms. Asher, took a breath or two and she continued, gently.<sup>257</sup>

“My friends, take a breath. Check in with your body. Where are you at?” Her voice was just audible, and her tone was inviting. She offered a long pause in between each request. Some students closed their eyes. Some looked around at their peers. Some continued to quietly move their materials. Some whispered a colour (Green, Yellow, Blue).<sup>258</sup> She continued, “I can feel the excitement. How do you feel when all of the rocks hit the table?” Some students responded, ‘not good’ or ‘yellow,’ “Ah, so I’m not the only one. I have sensitive ears. Let’s be more careful with our rocks. Let’s check in with the room.”<sup>259</sup> As she was speaking, a child

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<sup>257</sup> When the teacher sings the ‘Take a breath’ cue, she pauses but she does not wait for complete stillness or silence. There is not a uniform response to this cue. The room does seem to slow but not stop. The students are not passive, but actively doing *something* in this moment. The teacher can pay attention and take note of the students who *can’t* take a breath; some of the students who are still playing or talking are exhibiting stress behaviour. Enough students are taking the moment, are quiet and reflective, and the culture of the room is to accept that not everyone *can* do this all of the time.

<sup>258</sup> Ms. Asher’s voice does not cut into the room in the same way that I have observed in other classrooms. Throughout the observations in both SR classrooms, I reflected on the way in which I use my own voice when working with 20 or more people. When I am gaining the attention of a small group of preschoolers, a classroom, or a large dining hall, my voice is projected—both in volume and tone—in a way that demands attention and that takes up space in the room so that my position becomes a central focus. My presence and my words, regardless of what I am saying, become inescapable. Ms. Asher’s voice, in this moment and at other times I have observed, leaves space for the other people in the room; the volume doesn’t disrupt or force attention. And, yet, the students listen. One could argue, they have been cued to listen and, because she is quiet, they have to be quiet so that they can hear her. But she doesn’t wait for them to be still and quiet. She pauses only to give the students time to reflect and breathe. At this time, some students didn’t stop what they are doing and yet the room felt calm and reflective; it was neither chaotic nor was it disruptive or disrespectful. It is as though Ms. Asher respects that each person will participate in this moment in their own way and with the needs of others in mind. For some of the children, they welcomed the pause and breath. For others, they spoke the meta-language in whispers, identifying their zones almost to themselves. For some, it would have been dysregulating to stop their creative momentum, so they quietly continued to move a popsicle stick here and a picture card there. An understanding of needs was happening here.

<sup>259</sup> The teacher pointed out that they were excited, without judgment. She read the room, perhaps she had surveyed her own domains of regulation and noticed the sound of the rocks. She focused on the rocks and not on the voices or movement; her acknowledgment of the excitement indicated that she was not blaming them for the noise, she was not finding fault, but she was drawing their attention to the noise. She trusted them to care about how the noise could be affecting others in the room. All of what she said was without judgment. There was no bribe or threat. She did not say that the noise needed to decrease/stop, *or* she would have to take away the rocks. She simply drew their attention to the room, asked them how they felt, asked them to ‘read the room’ and notice how others may be feeling, and to change their behaviour to reflect the needs of self and others.

dropped a handful of rocks onto the table.<sup>260</sup> Ms. Asher smiled and with the same tone as before said, “Now, Blair,\* can you pick up the rocks and, instead of dropping them on the table, can you drop them on the felt mat? Maybe more carefully, gently, with our friends with sensitive ears in mind? Everyone, listen.” Blair did what Ms. Asher asked of them. The sound of the rocks hitting the table was muted by the felt. “How was that, everyone?” They responded in varying ways, but overall there was confirmation that the sound was more tolerable.<sup>261</sup> “Gentle construction and being careful with the sounds that we make, please.” And the students went back to their task. Ms. Asher began to circulate once more. The formerly distressed student, Charlie, wrote four sentences and they were happy with their work. The room remained noisier than usual, but the rocks were no longer a problem, and everyone stayed engaged in their storytelling to varying degrees until snack time.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> At this moment, I held my breath. I have seen this moment play out many times in other classrooms and the teacher’s reaction is more often than not one that is swift and disciplinary. When we, as the adults in the room, are dysregulated ourselves, it is challenging to respond to these moments without passing on our stress. Also, The Story that students can’t handle their freedom and *won’t* listen/stop dropping rocks/comply, that this kid is ‘testing boundaries’ or ‘trying to get attention,’ might sneak in and override the SR perspective. SR asks us to *Reframe* the behaviour, but this is difficult sometimes, especially when a person has just done the opposite of what was requested.

<sup>261</sup> Ms. Asher engaged with the child who had dropped the rocks. She reframed what appeared to be (with The Story in mind) defiant behaviour as something else. Perhaps she thought that Blair dropped the rocks on the table so that they could hear the sound to which she was referring. Ms. Asher calmly used this moment to exemplify the difference between dropping the rocks on the table and dropping them on the felt mat. She called on the students to assess the sound for themselves *and* others; their classmates around them voiced how the rocks being dropped on the felt mat made the sound less dysregulating. Within this moment, the teacher demonstrated her understanding and consideration of Blair’s needs (reframing behaviour as the unmet need of understanding the sound and the reason for the teacher’s request) for all of the students. Disciplining Blair would have added to the dysregulation; Ms. Asher kept her focus on her long-term goal of connection, self-governance, and collective SR skills and resiliency.

<sup>262</sup> This is not to say that the students were all exhibiting well-regulated behaviour for the rest of the time. The teacher was always circulating, scanning for stress, attending to the students who needed help, and collaborating with Educational Assistants in the room who were working closely with a child on the Autism spectrum and another student. But as a researcher I observed students carefully dropping rocks on the felt mats. And, more importantly, the message to the student who asked for help with regulation was positive and supportive; the rest of the class also experienced the support of the teacher in regulation as she guided them through Shanker’s (2016) steps toward regulation: *Recognizing the stressors* (noticing the noise, understanding that the noise has an effect on others), *Reducing the stress*, *Reflecting: Stress awareness*, *Respond: Restoration & resilience* (reading the room,

A week prior, she had brought up moments just like this one in her initial interview. When I asked her what SR looked, sounded, and felt like in her classroom, she responded by saying “Self-Reg sounds like children articulating stress with a language we’ve created, a meta-language that we’re developing every day, and just their own word choices. Just identifying how you’re feeling. How they feel. And just checking in.” She went on to speak of using cues to encourage them to stop and pay attention, such as when she sings ‘Take a breath,’ and she is clear that her “point is not to set them off more, but to encourage them to assess how they feel and to read the room. I’ll say, ‘read the room’ and ‘how are you feeling right now?’ and we will notice that people’s shoulders are up, that some people feel tired or irritated. Or, we’ll notice that we are in the ‘Green Zone.’ We aren’t always doing this in a time of crisis, but also when things are calm. We need to know what it feels like to be calm. They need to know that it feels good. And I love when kids pick up on this *on their own*. They will come to me and say, ‘I think we need to ‘Take a breath’ or ‘Ms. Asher, I think that this room is going Yellow.’ I just love that!”

#### A Regulation Request: Part Two

As I mentioned earlier, during the observation period my time was divided. I was spending mornings or the entire school day in SR classrooms, watching and listening and sensing feelings and reflecting, and then madly writing notes and journaling at any spare moment that I had. I was spending afternoons and sometimes alternate school days in classrooms, staff rooms, and school libraries meeting with teacher candidates and their mentor

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identifying our own regulation/dysregulation, using the felt mat, speaking our needs), and *Reframing the behaviour* (interpreting Blair’s actions as indicating curiosity rather than defiance).

teachers, observing the lessons of the former and discussing progress with all involved. At the time, I was treating the schools where practicums were taking place as completely separate from the observations for this project. They were not part of the plan; they were not officially participating. They just happened to be something that I had to do at the time. Don't get me wrong, this is a role that I value; teacher education is a strong passion of mine and the difference I can make by supporting these students in praxis mentorship—asking them questions about their reflections, as well as drawing their attention to the connections and disconnections between their theory and practice—is rewarding and interesting work. But this schedule was challenging and although it offered evidence of the juxtaposition I had posited, I hardly noticed. Even though the classrooms I visited in both roles were in the same district, they seemed light-years apart, decades seemed to separate them, and so to compare them was not on my radar.

I would spend time in a SR classroom, my cheeks sore from the constant smile on my face; at the end of the day, walking back to my car, I noticed that my energy level was exceptional, and my proverbial cup was full. Despite my excitement over what I had observed, and the calm resonance I took with me as I left the school, there were other feelings. On the drive, as I spoke to myself on a recording device, or when I pulled over to journal, I noted again and again that my feelings of great enthusiasm and eagerness brought on by seeing SR in action, and the sense of connection, calm, and self-governance in these classrooms, was accompanied by feelings of dread and agitation. I had started this project with a sense of confidence in a disconnection between SR and progressivist goals; I was quite sure that SR was being talked about, but mostly misunderstood and probably not practiced consistently or even

in connection with the theory. I was open to the idea that there may be a teacher out there practicing SR, but I believed that I would also see the CMN sneaking in, distracting and disconnecting one's actions from their thinking/beliefs. So, if the predicted trajectory of my project was veering down a new and unexpected path, where did it leave me? The teachers in the SR classrooms had been demonstrating praxis; their methods supported SR theory and progressivist goals.<sup>263</sup> Maybe the problem that I had been depending on for my project didn't exist.

One morning, as I arrived at a practicum school for the last time, I put my lanyard over my head and glanced down at the nametag that hung from it. I had been changing out the piece of paper that said my name and "Primary Researcher" for another paper that said my name and "Practicum Supervisor." I was tired and I had a moment where I looked at the nametag and I wasn't sure which paper was the correct one. Before I walked into this primary classroom, I took a moment to scan my domains<sup>264</sup> and make sure that my own needs were met so that I could give my full attention to my student and have as little effect as possible on everyone else. I walked into the classroom and the students were participating in a yoga program using a

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<sup>263</sup> Later in this chapter, and in the next chapter, I will dig into this statement and provide evidence as to why my analysis reached this conclusion. I should also note that at the moment I am writing about, this was a preliminary analysis of my observations. My thoughts became more nuanced after I worked with the data, but at the time the democratic nature of these classrooms, the apparent self-governance, and the space being created for everyone to have the freedom to be fully human was palpable.

<sup>264</sup> 'Scanning my domains' is a practice that I have made standard before I enter a school or classroom. It has also spilled over into other areas of my life, such as when I step out of my home office and into the goings-on of the playschool, my children, and my partner. Essentially, I take a moment to reflect or 'scan' each of my domains as outlined by Shanker (2013b). When I observe my Biological domain, I might notice I am thirsty; when I review my Emotional domain, I might notice I am nervous; my Social domain might tell me that I feel connected to a friend with whom I shared a long phone conversation the previous evening; my Cognitive domain is in overdrive as I try to remember my list of to-do's; and my Prosocial domain is also agitated because I listened to the news. After scanning my domains, I can tend to my thirst, perhaps do something about my nerves, and just in acknowledging the rest I feel more in control because I *can see* my stress load.

screen that had an online yoga story projected onto it. I smiled and greeted the practicum student, who was stretching with the children, with a nod. I made my way to my usual place and set up my laptop. The mentor teacher walked into the classroom and said hello and offered pleasantries. I responded that I was doing well and how nice it was to see a teacher candidate taking time to help her students get regulated before a lesson. The teacher shrugged and said, “Yeah, when you have time for it you might as well.”

After the observation of a math lesson, the young students were having a snack at their tables before recess, and the teacher candidate walked around opening yogurts and reminding them to only eat their ‘healthy snacks.’ I planned to meet with her during the break, and the mentor and I stood and talked while we waited for the bell. I asked the teacher, a veteran with over 15 years of experience, whether she noted any positive impact or effect on her students after an activity like yoga or dance. She knew that I was studying SR, and I assumed that she was aware that this was what motivated my question. She remarked that the movement break probably helped with their behaviour and she agreed that they seemed more focused during the lesson. She added,

“But if the lesson is well planned and executed, if there is a strong teacher at the helm, then the kids usually behave.”<sup>265</sup> I smiled and was about to ask a follow-up question when a small child crept up to us and waited to be acknowledged by the teacher. She looked at them,

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<sup>265</sup> In this single sentence, the weight of the Hobbesian narrative that people necessitate a sovereign is felt and the CMN’s presence is unambiguous. A ‘strong teacher’ is one who maintains external control (both through planning and execution) and is in a clear position of power; one who exerts dominance, self-determination, and autonomy, while the students are governable, and this is evidenced by their compliant behaviour (“usually”). This also suggests that without the effective teacher “at the helm” of the ship that is the classroom, the crew of students would demonstrate their inability to be calm, focused, or well-behaved.

“Yes?” She remained standing and I noticed how small the student was; they might have been the smallest person in the class. Their face held tension; even without knowing them I could sense their anxiety.

“Ms. Lyle,\* it’s pretty loud in here. Can you maybe tell the kids to be more quiet?” I smiled. Here was a child who was noticing stress and dysregulation and was requesting assistance. It reminded me of Ms. Asher’s students and her glowing recounting of how she felt when kids voiced their needs: she had said, “I just love that!” I waited calmly to see how a similar scenario in *this*<sup>266</sup> classroom would play out.

“Well, maybe if *you* weren’t out of your seat and talking it wouldn’t be loud in here.” I was stunned but I stifled any reaction. This was *not* my place to intercede. The little one froze and looked straight ahead, more or less at the teacher’s hips. The teacher continued,

“I don’t find it loud in here. Go back to your seat.” Her emphasis on how *she* found the volume of the room highlighted to me how little importance was placed on the experience of the student. Without looking up, the student went back to their seat, but I didn’t have time to register their reaction before the teacher spoke again.

“Yeah, so, I think the trick with this class is to keep the carpet time to a minimum. I never go longer than seven minutes. They can’t handle it. So, you have to have strong classroom management skills to move them from the floor to the tables to an activity and so on. A lesson is successful when you keep them under control by keeping things short.”<sup>267</sup> She

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<sup>266</sup> I had never asked directly if the mentor teacher considered herself a SR teacher, but from my observations of the classroom décor, routine, teaching strategies, as well as our conversations regarding teaching practice, I was fairly certain that she had a strong predilection for the typical understanding of classroom management.

<sup>267</sup> The effort to control, organize, and keep things ‘short’ and manageable reminds me of Hegel’s MSD and the control or chaos dichotomy. The Story translates to the belief that the students aren’t capable of more than seven

had effortlessly returned to our conversation. I felt as though the student's request for regulation was still hanging in the air.

*Who* (or what) is the story?

Even though my experience in the participating school was overwhelmingly positive, and the data rich, the moments I had captured and the conversations I had had were like puzzle pieces that didn't yet fit into the bigger picture; I was taking in all of the parts rather than the whole. The route was unclear, branching like a tree, circling back, and no direction felt comfortable. I knew that the path had heart, but I may have been unknowingly foraging for certainty. I had come into this project with some confidence; I was comfortable with critique. I was practiced in *seeing* Productive Power operating in classrooms, on the playgrounds, in the grocery stores, and so on. I could hear teachers tack on bribes and threats to their clear and confident leave-no-room-for-interpretation instructions every time I walked down a school hallway; I have heard 'good job' peppered around the play structures I visit with my own kids more often than any other phrase; I have witnessed tired parents and children shout and 'flip their lids' and drag each other out of parks, restaurants, and hardware stores interchangeably. I have also done all of the above. My lived experience was and still is what got me here and asking questions; it was because of the disconnection between what I believed about teaching and parenting and how I practiced teaching and parenting that got me curious about progressivist goals and the question of humanity within these relationships of teachers and students, parents and children. I came into the research with proficiency in assessing each of

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minutes of carpet time. This is about a moral deficiency and not stress; the master knows best and without guidance the slave will act inappropriately.

these moments for connection or disconnection, and it was the *disconnection* that was so pronounced and unsettling, that had become so easy to spot, and the problem for which I was seeking answers. Looking for praxis and seeing its subversion was my *action*. The SR classrooms from which I was collecting evidence of praxis, moments of connection, reflection, and compassion, thwarted my efforts to highlight the complications of progressivist education. What was I to do with the absence of disconnection? What exactly was I undertaking if the *problem* was not there?

When I separated my life from the data, I lost track of the *problem* and I fell into the trap of searching for the answer as though there was one. ‘The answer must be in the data,’ and whispers of The Story that my *life* and all that I was experiencing at the time of data collection did not ‘count’ or matter to my analysis were creeping into my psyche. Going into the interviews and observations, I found myself attempting to let go of my assumptions—my expectations of seeing the CMN in these SR classrooms—but also checking at the door all that I had lived. Classrooms that employed the CMN and its techniques were *not* being studied, but the problem of this narrative *was not gone*. Tools of CM were still prevalent in so-called ‘progressivist’ classrooms outside of these ‘SR classroom’ walls. Well-meaning, caring, dedicated teachers were, even now, distracted by The Question of ‘how do I get them to do what I want them to do?’ Teachers were still under a complex compulsion<sup>268</sup> to elicit

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<sup>268</sup> The drive to employ practices that maintain a CMN and distance teachers (and parents) from their students (and children) is evidence of its power and *not* of ill intent on behalf of teachers and parents. The CMN arises out of social structure—the-stories-that-we-all-know tell us that control is preferable to chaos, there are no other possibilities, and that kids aren’t capable and necessitate external discipline, normalization, and surveillance—and, just like other societal norms, the structures that keep us here are invisible. The compulsion to elicit compliance, especially in ways that undermine our goals as progressivist educators, are *complex* in that our agency to choose how we teach or parent is compromised. Catherine Pelissier (1991) pulls on Vygotsky (1962) when she argues that “higher mental functions are social before they are internalized by the individual, and that they become

compliance and enacting this in ways that damaged their connections to the learners in their classrooms and undermined societal efforts to raise democratic citizens. My understanding of this was being sidestepped by my newfound focus on teachers who did *something else*. And yet, it was not as though SR was theorized without the CMN in mind. I found myself wondering if one could practice SR lacking any knowledge or without reflection about the dominant narrative of what it means to ‘manage’ a classroom.

As I sat waiting in a chair that was much too small for me, taking in the calming space of a SR classroom, and reflecting on my time spent observing SR in action, I took a moment to revisit my interview questions. The questions had been designed before I had seen this ‘SR classroom,’ before I had met the teachers in this school, and when I had built my project around a different path. I was planning to ask questions about SR, and I expected the teacher interviewee to respond by describing classroom management. After these answers, my tactic was to switch gears and ask about CM only to (I had suspected) have the responses be more or less the same as they were when the questions were about SR. I felt justified in designing questions in this way because I had every reason to believe that the teacher-participants would not have deliberately, consciously, or openly taken up the CMN and would therefore have their efforts to employ a SR approach undermined by the disconnection between theory and practice that I have called the Progressivist Paradox.<sup>269</sup> Up until observing these SR teacher-participants,

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internalized by means of social interaction” (p.81). Most teachers were once students and through public schools were taught; most parents were once children and through families were parented. We are products of our upbringing and not entirely culpable for The Stories we have adopted, and which influence our practices. Education is “seen as the means by which individuals are recruited to be members of a culture, and by which culture is maintained” (Pelissier, 1991, p.82). The CMN is the culture in which we are socialized, and teachers and parents who embody such a narrative presume to have agency just as my students and I presumed to have agency when choosing ‘progressivism’ over ‘traditionalism’ (a story from Chapter One).

<sup>269</sup> The ‘Progressivist Paradox’ is detailed in Chapter Two.

I had only observed and been told one Story. In my experience, teachers (outside of those practicing SR) who are asked about their practice with students who are dysregulated tell stories of what “works” (to get kids to do what the teacher wants them to do) and sometimes this is accompanied by a preamble about employing gentle<sup>270</sup> approaches that “just didn’t work” (to get the kids to do what the teacher wanted them to do) which implies that the problem is that the child just isn’t capable of controlling themselves. In response to a question about dysregulation, teachers (outside of those practicing SR) have told me about those challenging kids who “take a mile” if one is not firm; they describe the choice they make to employ “tough but necessary” approaches, which is an iteration of the control or chaos dichotomy. These responses also indicate to me that ‘dysregulation’ is being interpreted as ‘misbehaviour;’ I interpret their answer in this way because they are telling me how they manage behaviour so that the students will comply. But, when I discussed the same question with the SR teachers, they told me about their process of reflecting on when something worked or didn’t work, and their questioning of *why or why now*. They told me of the steps they took to understand the needs of the student(s), the classroom, as well as their own needs and about how this process is ongoing because the needs of children (and adults) change. They let me into those vulnerable moments when they had to find a way to connect with a child who was pushing everyone away and how that changed their relationship with that student. They walked

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<sup>270</sup> By ‘gentle,’ I am referring to practices that are based on reconciliation rather than domination. As with SR, when ‘gentle’ tactics are employed without reflection, or critically engaging with The Stories, they are misinterpreted and misused and can undermine efforts to connect with others. In my work coaching parents and providing workshops for caregivers and educators, I encounter the misconception that ‘gentle’ approaches are permissive, for example.

me through the daily choices they made<sup>271</sup> to let go of The Story that kids ‘won’t’<sup>272</sup> (and other CMN-related Stories) and let in a revised understanding that reframes kids and effectually all of us. They expressed that sometimes kids (or humans) ‘can’t’, and when they (we) ‘can’t’ they (we) are indicating unmet needs, skill deficits, and disconnection. SR teachers offered no answers to me—they didn’t have stories of what ‘works’—but, rather than expressing certainty, they told me stories of the empowerment that comes with following a path less travelled, of letting go, and of reconciling. They discussed ongoing resistance and transformation. So, if SR teachers could *see* the CMN<sup>273</sup> then the CMN could not be separated from SR, and my own query that began with *seeing* the CMN could not be separated from the data.

I need to include *my* stories. I need to include the stories of which I have been a part. I need to tell the stories of my *lived experience* of the CMN both inside and outside of SR classrooms. I have been telling these stories for years. I use stories in my teaching, my workshops, with other parents, and with myself to better understand my questions and the problems that I want to explore. I want to tell stories from the data; these are stories of hope and possibility and I know that many teachers and parents need to hear that there is hope and other possibilities. The stories from the data have meaning because they are subversive to The Story. The subversive stories make The Story visible. I needed to let go of *seeing* The Story and let in the evidence of a resistance to it.

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<sup>271</sup> Both participating teachers indicated that they have to let go of the CMN Stories about kids regularly (although they didn’t use this language). This indicates praxis and I will discuss this as a finding later in this chapter and the next chapter.

<sup>272</sup> The Story that kids ‘won’t’ do x, versus the revised SR approach of seeing kids who ‘can’t’ or ‘can’t yet’ do x, is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four and is accessible in figure 5.1.

<sup>273</sup> The teacher-participants did not call the CMN by its name, but they articulated its features clearly in the interviews and I will discuss these details in the next chapter.

*Who* (or what) is the research subject?

The meaning of stories changes depending on whether one is telling The Story or storytelling. The Story of 'research' has a distanced researcher who sees the data objectively and interprets results in a way that proves or disproves a hypothesis. This linear approach was one that I initially followed, perhaps without thinking, and I expected to travel the path of least resistance. When I found SR teachers in 'SR classrooms' in a school engaging in an inquiry of SR, the stability of my research trajectory was lost. One way in which to approach this problem could be to change my methodology to a 'case study' of two teachers in a school such as Pathway. But I found that this would change *what* I was questioning; the research subject felt separate from my own queries. S. B. Merriam & E. J. Tisdell (2016) describe case study as a "bounded system" (p.38). What one studies, or the research subject, is enclosed; they write that the "'what' is a *bounded system*, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.39). One collects data from specific conditions that typify a certain occurrence, such as a single classroom with a teacher practicing SR, and then one examines or "investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (Yin, 2014, p.16 in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, pp.38-39). But to me this seemed to create limitations that decontextualized the subject (teacher) from The Story of the CMN as well as separating the researcher (me) from my own path. This becomes evident in the way in which Miles et al. (2014) graphically interpret a case study as "a circle with a heart in the center. The heart is the focus of the study, and the circle 'defines the edge of the case: what will not be studied' (Miles et al, 2014 on p.39). Is the unit of analysis the teacher or the classroom or the school or SR? I

felt uncomfortable drawing lines that left me out of my own stories. This was mostly because I do not see myself as a researcher *outside* of the data; I am immersed, and I am also a subject *within* the circle. If I am telling stories then they need to include the ways in which the stories and I interact; after all, “[t]he power of narrative is not so much that it is about life but that it interacts in life” (Daiute, 2014, p.xviii). It was pointed out to me that I was probably trying to do narrative analysis, or engaging with “(People’s Stories), Analysis of ‘text’, biographical, psychological, linguistic analysis” among other things (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.43). If my approach to the data falls into narrative analysis, *who* or *what* is the data? I found myself resisting the ‘bounded system’ found in case studies. Although my data comes from a limited number of sources, there is an unbounded nature to the ways in which the data is situated in the broader context of schooling and teaching, as well as schooling narratives. Also, my own stories and path are interconnected with the data as I cannot observe or analyse or engage with the data in ways that are separate from my life.

There is a Story that due to the quantity of my research participants I am *bounded* to a small circle of phenomenon. Emmel (2013) writes that we should try to thwart the impulse to think about qualitative sampling from a quantitative viewpoint; I became determined to let go of my inferred limitation to case study. But without case study, I found myself struggling to articulate my methodology; and then I considered how “qualitative sampling is not a single planning decision, but it is an iterative series of decisions throughout the process of research. A reflexive researcher then makes adjustments and considers the implications of sampling on interpretation” (Guetterman, 2015, p.2). When I stopped resisting that which may have been

staring me in the face all along, and repositioned myself as the research subject, I found the data came into focus.

I have been caught in the Progressivist Paradox and relied on dichotomous thinking and certainty, searching out confirmation or justification for my methods. I have run away from the vulnerability that comes with facing the disconnection between my goals and the impact of my practice on those goals. My experience and the stories that I am telling, these tales from hallways, classrooms, libraries, and playgrounds, workshops and Faculties of Education, may make us uncomfortable, but they are necessary because they are not outliers. These stories reflect the *culture* in which I find myself. What I experienced in the SR classrooms is as essential to the research questions as the culture that they counter. This is not an autobiography, but my life is certainly “a site of inquiry” (Chambers, 2004, p.1). I cannot help but write a “disclosure of self through and in the text” (Chambers, 2004, p.1). I am telling my own story of praxis, my own rumbling and reckoning and reconciliation journey, as well as my reflections on it (autobiography). I am also engaging with a method that “seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)” (Ellis et al, 2011). I see my own stories not as solely mine but also in relation to others and the narratives we all carry and with which we engage; The Stories told through us and our collective storytelling are part of both our individual and social transformations. The progressivist goals and the CMN are part of the schooling culture<sup>274</sup> in Canadian public education. If school culture

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<sup>274</sup> Frederick Erickson (1987) argues that “*Culture* is a term that presents difficulties as well as interesting possibilities when we try to apply it to a school as a whole” (p.11). Although “notions of social structure” and the political nature of schooling may speak more clearly to the “actions, beliefs, and sentiments of individuals and groups” (Erickson, 1987, p.13) than ‘culture,’ I believe the term can be helpful when discussing ethnography and my experience of autoethnography. Erickson contends that ‘culture’ “is essentially ideational—not behavior itself but a set of interpretive frames for making sense of behavior” (1987, p.13). He understands three conceptions of

is like water, then we are like fish; it is difficult to see that you are in it and this is especially true when one benefits from belonging to the dominant culture because one is less likely to encounter conflict. My point of inquiry was from *inside* the fishbowl; I wanted to know if anything other than the water of the CMN could be used, and whether or not the water would suffocate it.<sup>275</sup> Although SR seeks to support progressivist goals, it does not simply “sit apart”<sup>276</sup>

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‘culture’ as relevant in terms of “the nature of daily life and instruction in schools” (Erickson, 1987, p.13). Because of the topic at hand, I will speak of culture in terms of how it dispenses knowledge of a CMN to social groups. In the first sense, Erickson describes ‘culture’ as analogous to a computer (1987); all within a social group store bits of information or Stories, and because we can’t know all of the information or Stories our behaviours may vary. CM may be practiced in diverse ways, but there are shared Stories or understandings of how to manage students or children and why one *should* maintain control through compliance. These “core symbols” or a “limited set of large chunks of knowledge” form Erickson’s second conception of ‘culture’ (1987, p.13); the Stories across school boards and provinces and even beyond are “central organizing constructs” that are “seen as being shared widely throughout the bounded social group” (p.13). Within the schooling culture, I have experienced and share a deep understanding or “coherence in the meaning system, and identical (or at least closely shared) understandings of symbols across diverse members of the social group” (Erickson, 1987, p.13). From school to school, there is The Story that if you give kids an inch, they’ll take a mile; there is a lack of trust; there is the overarching belief that kids aren’t capable of self-governance and that *effective* teachers manage classrooms through discipline, normalization, and surveillance. But in Erickson’s third conception of ‘culture,’ he outlines the possibility of praxis and social, political, and cultural transformation. Our social structure is not separate from culture, but rather “Cultural difference is seen as tracing lines of status, power, and political interest within and across institutional boundaries found in the total social unit” (Erickson, 1987, p.13). In this stream, culture arises “through social conflict” and the consideration of “daily experiences” and the sense “people make of it” and how “this sense-making influence[s] their usual actions” (Erickson, 1987, p.14). If the CMN is cultural knowledge, but as social beings we are able to accept or *reject*, reframe, reconsider, reflect, or re-create when the cultural norm conflicts *socially*, there can be variation and transformation. Teachers can, as members of a culture, be inculcated with the CMN *and see* it; but only in this third conception of culture can there be change and only if there is reflection/conflict. I am concerned about whether school culture is static in nature (the second understanding of culture is more fixed) or changeable (the third option). As Erickson points out, the three different conceptions of culture differ in their “basic assumptions about the nature of people, institutions, and social relations” (1987, p.14). Also, “[m]ost of our cultural knowledge is implicit, consisting of over-learned ways of thinking and acting that, once mastered, are held outside conscious awareness. Consequently, we are too close to our own cultural patters to see them without making a deliberate attempt to break our learning set—to introduce a bit of distance between ourselves and our taken-for-granted ‘reality’” (Erickson, 1987, pp.14-15).

<sup>275</sup> In terms of Erickson’s (1987) conceptions of ‘culture,’ I wanted to know if we were stuck with the second conception and unable to *see* or to question the core symbols of culture, or if we are open to shift when culture is considered through being a social being.

<sup>276</sup> Graham McDonough (2010) speaks to the etymology of ‘dissent’ and, as I have discussed elsewhere (Harvey, 2015), a dissident is different than a rebel. Where a rebel resists the system itself, a dissident engages in “loyal disagreement” or “sitting apart” from an aspect within the system but not the system entirely (McDonough, 2010, p.424). A dissident would be closer to Erickson’s (1987) first two conceptions of culture and the nature of people (see above two footnotes). If we change ‘system’ to ‘narrative,’ I would argue that the SR teachers are not dissidents but rebels. They resist the CMN and all that goes with it; they see it as “irrevocably tainted and incapable of improvement” (McDonough, 2010, p.424). The response of SR teachers as social and political as well

from typical classroom management strategies but rather SR resists and subverts this culture (McDonough, 2010, p.424). This conclusion was an essential finding from my research, and it arrived simultaneously with the realization that SR could not be understood or defined without comparison to the CMN. I am compelled to engage with the process of telling my stories, or narrative inquiry, together with the stories from the classroom data; this “embraces narrative as both the *method* and the *phenomena* of study” (Pinnegar & Danes, 2007, p.4).

Autoethnography came late to me even though I had been doing it all along, perhaps because “it is often only retrospectively that we come to understand and give meaning to events” (Polkinghorne, 1995 in Chambers, 2004, p.3). The crisis of the missing puzzle piece, or rather missing the box with the picture that tells me what the puzzle is supposed to resemble, may be an essential quality of this methodology and my process. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) point out that autoethnography “characteristically begins with the researcher's autobiographically oriented narrative associated with the research puzzle” (p.40). My stories are part of the picture, if only the background that will allow the main subject of SR to pop.

The Story tells us that you are either a storyteller or analysing the story, but you can't do both. However, Ellis (2011) argues that “as a method, autoethnography is both process and product” (p.1); the process is to gather the pieces—part autobiography and part ethnography—to *do* and to *write* autoethnography. When a researcher does autoethnography, “they retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity” (Ellis, 2011, p.3).

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as cultural aligns with Erickson's third conception of 'culture;' this further articulates my concern about praxis and its relationship to 'culture.' The CMN and the SR cannot coexist as one undermines the other. In the next chapter, I will offer the words of the SR teachers as evidence of this conclusion.

Traditionally, an ethnography investigates a culture outside of the status quo, which allows “*insiders* (cultural members) and *outsiders* (cultural strangers) [to] better understand the culture” (Ellis, 2011, p.2). The researcher is immersed in the culture, usually as an outsider, and must consider The Stories that make up their lens, which impacts how they might analyse what they *experience* and how they translate the results into *product*.<sup>277</sup> But in the case of my research, I am both a cultural member *and* a cultural stranger.<sup>278</sup> I was parented and schooled in the CMN and I taught employing the CMN. I am a cultural stranger in that I have recognized and rejected the CMN and I do not “sit apart” from the dominant paradigm but rather I resist in

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<sup>277</sup> Erickson notes that in ethnography, the researcher usually assumes both a cultural and social distance or “the ethnographic stance of moderate alienation,” which is possible because the researcher is an outsider who goes to an “exotic setting” and is trying to see how the “‘natives’ understand things” (1987, p.15). But, in studies like this one on culture in mainstream Canadian schooling, the research is a “domestic ethnography” and “[o]ne’s energy need not go mainly into developing insight into strange customs as comprehensible and, so to speak, familiar. Rather... when we try to make new sense of the setting in which we live routinely, the initial task is to make the familiar strange” (Erickson, 1987, p.15). When we enter into “domestic ethnography,” Erickson recommends that we “do educational *ethnology* at the same time,” which he defines as “the comparative study of ethnographic case studies and historical evidence that take into account the full range of variation in human lifeways, in contemporary times and in the past” (1987, p.15). I believe that I have entered into autoethnography and ethnography with a solid foundation of ethnology through a thorough study of the philosophical, historical, and theoretical backdrop for the CMN and my own experiences practicing CM and SR and observing CM. Also, in considering culture in the third and more social way, I hope to be open to the imagining of “new possible options beyond those we know to have already existed” (Erickson, 1987, p.15).

<sup>278</sup> In an article entitled “‘Ethnographic Dazzle’ and the construction of the ‘Other’: revisiting dimensions of insider and outsider research for international comparative education” (McNess *et al.*, 2015), the authors argue that the concepts of the insider/outsider in ethnographic research needs to be revisited, updated, and envisioned. They contend that the distinctions between researcher and researched have shifted, as have the “essentialist dualisms such as insider/outsider,” leading to a blurring of the “distinctions that have been drawn between the ethnographic ‘emic,’ which seems to understand a culture from the inside, and the comparative ‘etic,’ which seems to compare across different cultures” (McNess *et al.*, 2015, p.298). McNess *et al.* also say that to position ourselves as outsiders “can entice us to place more emphasis on that which is unfamiliar, rather than that which is similar” (2015, p.298). This tendency is called “ethnographic dazzle” (a term coined by American ethnographer, R. Fox, 1989); the separation of researcher and researched—a false binary, especially in my case—can “distract us from more subtle comparisons and meaning making and lead us to draw simplistic causal relationships, for instance between student outcome and classroom practice” (McNess *et al.*, 2015, p.298). I was separating myself from the research subjects and falling into dichotomous thinking. Identifying and letting go of my own ‘cultural dazzle,’ and situating myself as both a cultural member *and* a cultural stranger was important in being able to reflect on my own experiences, my own understanding of the culture of schooling, the stories that were shared between the participating teachers and myself, and also to consider the ‘strangeness’—or the remarkable resistance—within the ‘self-regulation classrooms.’

an effort to subvert it. It is *my* stories that situate me as both insider and outsider. When I act as a *participant observer*, or an outsider, who “by taking *field notes* of cultural happenings as well as their part in and others' engagement with these happenings... interview[ing] cultural members, examine members' ways of speaking and relating, investigate uses of space and place,” among other things, I am doing this with both the lens of the dominant narrative and a lens of resistance in mind (Ellis, 2011, p.3). I found that SR can't be enacted, observed, or analysed *without* acknowledging the CMN; part of what defines SR is its refuting the CMN *while at the same time* its active distinction between the two is essential to overcoming the ways in which the CMN and its Stories creates a paradox and undermines SR. In addition to the process of collecting and telling stories, “autoethnographers often are required by social science publishing conventions to analyze these experiences” (Ellis, 2011, p.2). My analysis is not located only analytically, using reason and logic, but also emotionally and in relation to my own transformation and the stories of that shift. Discussing *just* my stories is not enough for the academy and not enough to serve my own queries. As Ellis (2011) points out, autoethnography benefits from extending methodological tools and research literature to analyse the subject's stories,

...but also must consider ways others may experience similar epiphanies; they must use personal experience to illustrate facets of cultural experience, and, in so doing, make characteristics of a culture familiar for insiders and outsiders. To accomplish this might require comparing and contrasting personal experience against existing research, interviewing cultural members, and/or examining relevant cultural artifacts. (Ellis, 2011, p.2)

So, this is my approach; my product is a blend of stories and theories. I am “self-consciously value-centred” and I recognize “the innumerable ways personal experience influences the research process” (Ellis, 2011, p.1).

In what follows, the phenomena and analysis—reflections on theory and practice, praxis and transformation—are all brought together in a narrative way. Like a footnote that draws the reader’s attention elsewhere (Ruitenber, 2016), perhaps away from the place they may believe the more valid or essential information—the product—is located, my method of autoethnography is an interruption to the presentation-of-results-and-analysis-as-usual. I choose narrative autoethnography because it is process-driven; to be curious, thoughtful, and reflective is also to be uncomfortable, uncertain, and vulnerable, as well as to expect that answers do not always come in the singular or clear-cut format that we are often fed. Rather than ‘answers’ there may simply be ‘connections’ to be made. And this leads me to the other reason I choose narrative autoethnography; I find it equalizing. I share the position of subject of the research with the teacher-participants *and* the reader/interlocuter. We are all immersed in a collective dominant schooling system and the CMN that historically, philosophically, and practically makes up the progressivist tale. I can tell the stories that emerge from the interviews and observations but Chambers (2004) argues that for this sort of inner work to be ethical or rigorous there needs to be “a careful examination of the autobiographer’s own doings and actions, her [sic] character and spirit, as well as how those are historically shaped and socially situated” (p.2). But, in sharing this information in the main body of the text, I am relying on the reader/interlocuter to derive what they need to reach their own conclusions. As I often tell myself when I am teaching: ‘I cannot control the lesson.’ That is to say that I can’t manage what

outcome or learning is attained by the interlocuter. I can't force a shared meaning—a meaning that reflects my own meaning-making—without saying that there is a Truth. I am not seeking a Truth, but rather a connection; in an effort toward reconciliation I want to practice what Little Bear (2000) calls “noninterference” (p.80).<sup>279</sup> Letting go of controlling the analysis or how the data is read is part of allowing truth and uncertainty to cohabitate and to allow the ‘tricksters’ to do what they do best because they will anyway. I also choose this path because I want to resist the desire for pedagogical Truth, for a perfect method, because the pursuit of Truth is different than the speaking of truth (Rancière, 1991). Rather than coaxing the reader to take in the Truth as I tell it, I want to share stories of my truth that invite the interlocuter to speak their own, if only to themselves, and to use their truth to verify mine.<sup>280</sup> After all, the “autobiographical / is itself a construction that is capable of seeing only parts of itself, or the topic of its gaze, and of revealing even less on the page... That truth—about the self or the topic—is elusive, suspect, and mostly likely impossible and does not release the researcher from her [sic] contract with the reader to be a truth teller, to tell the truth as best as she's able, sometimes at risk to herself” (Chambers, 2004, p.2). Which brings me to the reliability of memory. Much of my data is drawn from my memory, and even the moments that are transcribed from interviews and observations are still written from what / heard and from what / saw and experienced. The data is derived through *my* lens and I want to acknowledge both my worldview—which is not to be understood as more or less valid than other worldviews—and that “memory is always selective and plays tricks on us. It lurks in the shadows waiting to catch

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<sup>279</sup> An Indigenized approach to research and storytelling is discussed in Chapter Three.

<sup>280</sup> The Ranciérian concept of verification is discussed in the Introductory chapter.

us out—'(It) is far from uniquely (auto)biographical (...) (it) is grounded in what is tellable'" (Atkinson & Coffey, 2003, p.118).

My final note on narrative inquiry is practical. The names and places and events have been changed to protect and show respect for those who make appearances in these stories. Although the teacher-participants consented to a survey, interviews, and observations, their colleagues, students (parents/guardians), and other community members need to be protected. I have named some of the people who are directly in my life (such as my eldest child and my partner), but I have left out the identities of others whom I know because they are not research participants but rather simply part of the subject matter that is my life. They have not consented to be discussed in this research, so I respectfully conceal any distinguishing information to keep hidden their identities. Disguising the people, places, and events so that the people in the stories I present cannot be identified may confront a problem of truth and rigor. Is it 'truth' when some of the 'facts' have been changed to protect the privacy of people? Is it 'truth' when these stories are not (always) verified by those in the stories but rather drawn from my memories (which are faulty), which can "call into question the assumption that the autobiographical necessarily equates with either objective or subjective truth" (Chambers, 2004, p.2). I will not take up these questions here, but I do want to acknowledge them as possible limitations. But, as Chambers (2004) notes, "[p]erhaps what distinguishes autobiographical inquiry most clearly from fiction is the autobiographer's contract with the reader to keep the details of those events, places, and others as truthful as possible" (p.3).

## Questioning the 'Code'

After its design and receiving approval from the university Human Research Ethics Board, the 'study' or data collection began with approaching school principals, getting their permission to recruit teacher-participants, and gaining consent from participants prior to surveys, observations, and interviews. The recruitment process and its challenges has already been discussed, but I would like to briefly outline the data collection tools and process. Teachers who expressed interest in participating were asked to consent to a survey.<sup>281</sup> The survey is based on one created by Thomas G. Ryan<sup>282</sup> (2008), a professor in the Faculty of Education at Nipissing University in North Bay, Ontario. His research using this tool centred around pre-service education students and their philosophical orientation in teaching (Ryan, 2008). The original purpose of the survey was to "facilitate the discovery, understanding, and identification of educational philosophy" so that one could learn from and engage with others and self because this task affects "the teaching-learning process as it contextualizes, underpins, and connects educational theory to praxis" (Ryan, 2008, p. 252 & 250). The survey was first created and tested in 2002-2003, and during this time it was edited to further "ensure comprehension, accessibility, and ethical soundness" (Ryan, 2008, p.252). The original survey from Ryan's study consists of 48 "closed-ended statements...which required the respondent to indicate the extent of agreement on a scale that ranged from strongly agree (SA / 5), Agree (A / 4), Neutral (N / 3) to disagree (D / 2), strongly disagree (SD /1)" (Ryan, 2008, p.252). Each statement corresponded to one of six philosophical ideologies found in Western educational

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<sup>281</sup> See Appendix A for the survey.

<sup>282</sup> The survey was used with the author's permission. My thanks, again, to Dr. Ryan.

settings. The “philosophies” or ideological orientations included in the survey are Essentialism, Perennialism, Progressivism, Existentialism, Social Reconstructionism, and Behaviourism (Ryan, 2008, p.252).<sup>283</sup> The participant writes a number in a blank box indicating their level of agreement with the statement and when the numbers are tallied the score correlates to one’s orientation strength to certain philosophies and the highest score in one orientation is 40. I made some minor adjustments to the survey for clarity and consistency. I also added some questions about self-regulation, such as how often the teacher uses SR (always, often, sometimes, rarely, never), a lined space for a written response to the question of what a ‘self-regulation classroom’ is to the participant, as well as whether or not they consider their classroom a ‘self-regulation classroom’ (yes, no, sometimes). The purpose of the survey was to anchor the philosophical orientation of the teacher-participants to progressivism and to establish whether they were identifying as teachers who practiced SR in classroom teaching. Both teachers scored highest in Progressivism, Existentialism, and Social Reconstructionism in

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<sup>283</sup> The philosophical ideologies are outlined by Ryan (2008) in the ways in which they are typically realized in schooling/education. Beliefs about schooling/education can be described as ‘Essentialism,’ which Ryan defines as “described as a focus on core subjects... and centres on basics: the three Rs, of reading, writing, and arithmetic. It is a teacher-centred approach with detailed prescriptive structure, lecture, practice, and drill;” ‘Perennialism’ is “closely aligned with Essentialism, yet Perennialism [sic] emphasizes a liberal education to facilitate rational thought, and European-American traditional values in a prescriptive curriculum;” ‘Progressivism’ “involves the whole student, their interests and abilities, and endeavours to produce independent thinkers within a democratic society. Progressivism is activity based [sic] and inclusive as all students are prepared to live and contribute to a democratic society (Dewey, 1916);” ‘Social Reconstructionism’ is defined as “an outgrowth of progressivism that demanded reform to instill noble ideals and erase social injustices (prejudice, discrimination) via multicultural exposure and community service in the real world. Being politically active, working in society, and challenging the status quo was encouraged within this curriculum;” ‘Existentialism’ is clarified as “not a quest for truth, but rather a matter of choice as students choose what matters and construct their own curriculum via electives. Education is student-centred and teachers promote personal responsibility in a consequential environment;” and finally, ‘Behaviourism’ is in reference to “core reflexive responses to stimuli and the positive classroom environment characterizing this mode were emphasized to produce desired behavior in a classroom” (Ryan, 2008, p.251).

their surveys,<sup>284</sup> indicating that they subscribe to progressivist educational aims. Because I am interested in the connection between progressivist goals, the progressivist Story *and* SR, and whether SR supports progressivist goals (such as self-governance and democracy), establishing the philosophical orientation of the teachers was important. The fact that they both scored high in Existentialism (I also had a similar score when I took the survey), tells me that freedom and democracy are important to them and further supports their progressivist position. Tied to democracy is social justice and equality, and a high score in Social Reconstructionism aligns with these values. As for SR, Teacher A indicated strongly that she identifies as a teacher practicing SR all day, every day of school. She considers her classroom a 'self-regulation classroom' and provided a textbook answer for what that means to her; she spoke of her classroom's shared 'meta-language' that offered students "ways to articulate their feelings to others and respond to other's expressions" as well as children being supported to use SR "strategies (self-selected or guided by peers or adults)." She also referenced her use of classroom décor, SR tools such as the "Zones of Regulation," "sensory breaks" and "self-soothing items that are accessible to all." This information made Teacher A an obvious candidate. Teacher B said less about SR but more about her beliefs surrounding students and connection; each student's needs were being attended to and this looks different for each student. She states that "Our end goal is always learning to be calm, alert, and ready to learn." She also identified her classroom as a 'self-regulation classroom' only 'sometimes;' she indicated in a side note that she was "working on it!" She disclosed that she was using SR approaches in her classroom once a day, every day of

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<sup>284</sup> Teacher A scored 28 for Progressivism, 27 for Existentialism, 27 for Social Reconstructionism, and low in all other areas (less than 15). Teacher B scored 28 for Progressivism, 28 for Existentialism, 29 for Social Reconstructionism, and low in all other areas.

school. This information made Teacher B a desirable participant because I was curious about with what she was filling these gaps; if she was only *doing* SR sometimes, what was she doing the rest of the time and was it connected or disconnected from SR theories or progressivist goals?

While the surveys were used to justify participant appropriateness, the interviews and observations were where the meaningful data was collected. Both the initial and post-observation interviews<sup>285</sup> employed questions that were designed to provoke storytelling and, in preparation for each interview, the participants were told that there were no defined answers but rather anything and everything could be helpful to the research questions. The participants understood that I was trying to better understand how SR was being taught and what connections and disconnections between progressivist theory and practice might occur when SR is being employed. The first question revolved around their identity as a ‘progressive teacher’ and what that meant to them. The latter questions surrounded their SR stories: how did they come to SR, what SR looks/sounds/feels like in their classrooms, and what informs their SR approach (such as training or education, resources or tools, experiences or personal beliefs)? I also asked them to tell me about a time when they used SR in their classroom. After the initial interview, we commenced with the five (5) days of observations. These days were not consecutive but occurred at various points within the following three weeks that were scheduled based off the teachers’ availability and student needs. An observation would consist of signing an ongoing consent form (allowing for the teacher to decline participation), and then my inconspicuous positioning in the classroom where I watched and listened, writing notes on a

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<sup>285</sup> See Appendix B for the Initial Interview and Appendix C for the Post-Observation Interview.

laptop or in a notebook, for four to six hours. To develop rapport, the teachers and I would often chat briefly before school or during recess, lunch, or preparatory periods. During class time, the teachers remained focused on teaching-as-usual, as though I wasn't present, and were not required to prepare anything special or do anything different from what they already had planned. The post-observation interview was conducted after the observations were complete. Without the risk of influencing the observations, the questions were designed to be more forthright and direct; I wanted to know how they felt about CM and the degree to which the CMN influenced their practice. I was also curious about whether the teachers would confirm my suspicion that SR is being undermined by CM practices; would they describe CM when asked to describe SR? How would they define CM and SR's relationship with it? Did they have an 'ah-ha' moment that transformed the way in which they practiced classroom teaching so that their methods aligned with their goals and beliefs? And, finally, what are the barriers to teaching SR; what currently stands in their way or interrupts their practice of SR in the classroom?

When analysing, I approached the data by rereading it and reflecting, and then by noticing themes that related to my inquiry. When I 'reflected,' I was continually asking questions that are similar to what Erickson presents as a "way of cultivating an alienated perspective—a way that is heuristically strategic for considering our own lives—is to imagine a different possible way in which a routine activity could be organized" (1987, p.15). From my perspective as both cultural *insider* and *outsider*, I asked questions such as "Why is the X way not done in the Y way?" and "What are all the different possible ways of perceiving/believing/doing/evaluating X?" (Erickson, 1987, p.15). I was listening and looking for

stories-that-we-all-know and how the teacher's or student's behaviour may or may not be informed by those Stories in the sense of "core symbols" or in terms of "social conflict" (Erickson, 1987, p.13 & 14). If there was questioning or resistance, or an acknowledgement of The Story, and when a typical classroom behaviour was upset, or when I felt uncomfortable or unsettled, then I followed that expression in the data. Initially, I was able to narrow this to six categories: 'Evidence of Praxis,' 'Evidence of SR,' 'Evidence of Democracy (or Progressivist Goals),' 'Evidence of Progressivist Paradox,' 'Evidence of the CMN,' and 'Evidence of (Foucauldian) Productive Power.' Once again, I found myself questioning my research-typical approach as it did not align with my overall process, which had been non-linear and relational. Stephen C. Pepper's (1970) work on 'worldview' was brought to my attention and the push and pull between what he describes as 'contextualism' and 'organicism' provided some solace. Pepper warns that "it is tempting to regard these two theories as species of the same theory, one being dispersive and the other integrative" (1970, p.280). But rather than contextualism and organicism being two sides of the same coin, Pepper sees them as "two theories" and separate, diverging at every opportunity (1970, p.280). While contextualism contends that the "phenomena of the world can be understood by recognizing that all events are unique and must, therefore, be related to the specific context in which they occur," therefore isolated, organicism is dynamic and a "*complex, integrated organic process* that is presumed to underlie the development of a phenomenon, which begins in one form, then undergoes change toward some end, and finally culminates in another form that must have been implicit in the earlier forms(s)" (Pepper, 1970, p.448). I was experiencing the conflicting forces of contrasting worldviews, both the dominant and resistant narratives, neither perfect; praxis and reflection,

asking myself about what Stories were being told through me, allowed me to see this struggle.

In the chart below (figure 6.0), I have mapped out Pepper’s (1970) discussion of ‘Contextualism’ and ‘Organicism’ as worldviews,<sup>286</sup> blended with some thoughts that arose out of Henderson’s (2000) juxtaposing Eurocentrism and Indigenous worldview in the Enlightenment era.<sup>287</sup>

<b>Quality</b>	<b>Contextualism Worldview/Preference</b>	<b>Organicism Worldview/Preference</b>
Model to describe circumstance:	Objects explain events, isolated	Inclusive of relationships, interconnected to other events
Important aspects of events (history):	Product (outcomes, duration of process), attention to objects (outcomes)	Process (unfolding, integration), attention to relationships and environment
World is organized by:	Categories	Relationships
Over time:	Sees stability, time is taken “seriously” (p.281)	Sees change, time is taken “lightly or disparagingly” (p.281)
Association with dichotomous thinking:	Absolutes, binaries	Rejects dichotomy, variation

*Lyndze Harvey © 2020, adapted from Nisbett, 2003, pp.44-45 and Pepper, 1970, pp.232-314)*

Worldviews Compared – Figure 6.0

I couldn’t help but see the categories I had identified as themes as overlapping, interconnected, and interdependent. They were relational, broad, and integrated. In each moment within the

<sup>286</sup> Pepper (1970) presents more than just Contextualism and Organicism as worldviews. He also offers ‘Formism,’ a worldview that is drawn from Plato’s theory of Forms, which is generally contested in philosophy, and ‘Mechanism’ (Pepper, 1970). While Formism sees the world in categories that only imitate reality, and therefore unknowable, Mechanism holds that the universe (and the natural world therein) is much like a complicated machine and that all matter can eventually be explained (Pepper, 1970). Formism and Mechanism are offered as equally reasonable worldviews alongside ‘Contextualism’ and ‘Organicism’ (Pepper, 1970). I am focusing on only Contextualism and Organicism because they more closely represent the two opposing approaches to knowledge and the world that I understand to be operating within a Progressivist Paradox. While Contextualism represents dichotomous thinking and the problem that is a lack of praxis, Organicism illustrates a worldview or preference that opens up to other possibilities, connection, and praxis.

<sup>287</sup> In Chapter Three, I discuss this juxtaposition and the dominant narrative, derived from Hobbes, that places a quest for singularity over diversity and supports the belief that the ‘natural’ is disordered and that humans are not self-governing but rather require explanation, the use of fear, and the presence of hierarchy (Henderson, 2000). Many Indigenous scholars reject this view and the dichotomous thinking that comes with it (Henderson, 2000).

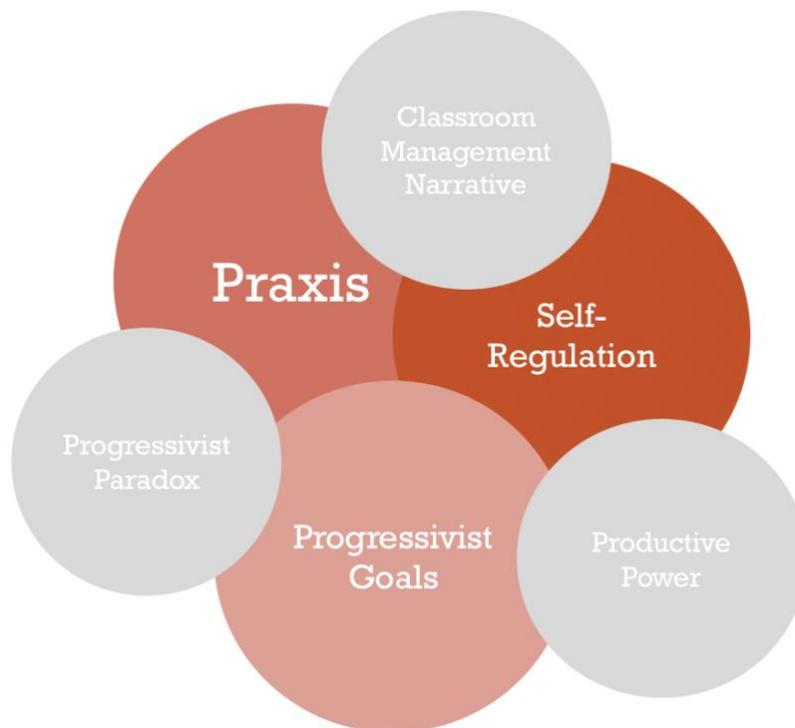
data that I attempted to isolate—in my attempts to classify, designate, or label whether an event was evidence of one category or another—I found that they couldn't be separated.

In every instance of praxis, I observed a resistance of the Progressivist Paradox. When there was SR, there was an absence of the CMN and CM tactics. Democracy was detectable because Productive Power was being undermined and reconciliation and a commitment to self-governance took precedence.<sup>288</sup> To me, these were obvious connections and there still could be three discernable categories. But, when I tried to locate evidence of just praxis (and resistance to a Progressivist Paradox), I found SR in action (and a subversive take on the CMN), as well as an alignment with Progressivist Goals (and a lack of the discipline, normalization, and surveillance found in Productive Power). This was partially because I could not separate one comment from a story, one interaction from the tone of relationships, or just one part from the whole. For example, when Ms. Asher stated in her post-observation interview that “What we say is our ‘philosophy’ is also what we actually do with children; how we talk to children” I could hear her speaking to praxis and the need to walk our talk. But I could not disentangle this remark from what she actually *does with children* and how she *talks to children*, which demonstrated a commitment to Progressivist Goals and established verifiable manifestations of SR theory and practice. What she does and how she talks to children also expressed her effort (whether conscious or unintentional) to let go of the certainty within the CMN, question and resist the Progressivist Paradox, and embrace vulnerability in the place of a reliance on features

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<sup>288</sup> Productive Power depends on discipline, normalization, and surveillance and The Story that control is necessary or there will be chaos. Democracy was exemplified through a belief in self-governance, trust of self and others, and compassionate communication that considers needs of self and others. This will be discussed more deeply in the following chapter alongside evidence of these elements in the ‘self-regulation classrooms.’

of Productive Power. Rather than ‘coding’ and separating the evidence into categories, I found that I was listening for *expressions* and relationships in a more holistic and Organicist sense. I have provided an image of my approach to analysing data in this way in *Figure 6.1*, which is depicted below. I think the method of analysing expressions in relation to a whole rather than categories or ‘parts’ is supported by this comment from Ms. Asher’s final interview: she said, “Self-regulation is not just a one-stop program where I point to something. It’s within everything that I’m doing.” My efforts to resist the research narrative, Eurocentricity, dichotomous thinking, and to reconcile the Master-Slave-Dialectic (Hegel, 1807/1977), engage with praxis, and relate with the interlocutor with freedom and equality in mind are in everything I’m doing and can’t be put aside for conventions.



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An ‘expression’ rather than ‘coding’ – Figure 6.1

Finally, before I share the stories that emerged from the data and discuss the expressions that pertain to my inquiry and the aims of this project, I want to acknowledge the bravery and vulnerability of the two teachers that agreed to participate in the study. Both of them entered into the arrangement expressing an interest in learning more about SR *and* in contributing to the learning of others. They communicated an eagerness to share their stories of SR and teaching, but not just their successes. They both voiced that they were always changing and growing, that they were still making mistakes and reflecting, and that they by no means considered themselves ‘perfect’ specimens of SR in classroom teaching. I am grateful for their openness and willingness to share in this process. The following stories, containing their words and actions from the interviews and classroom observations, paint pictures of the imperfections of teaching and SR. The need for constant reflection and reflexive action is evident in the expressions of the data. Both teachers mentioned the need for a commitment to being vulnerable when teaching and learning, as well as the need for compassion for self and others, when one is committed to a practice that is transformative rather than static. In her initial interview, Ms. Asher said that “Every year best practice evolves, and I am really open to evolving with it.” Ms. Calum expressed that “Progressivism is always learning and trying new things and being kind to yourself when it doesn’t work.” In the next section, I invite the reader to be as open to change and remaking, as self-compassionate and whole-hearted, as the featured teacher-learners.

# Chapter Six—A Progressivist Praxis of Self-Regulation

Well-Managed or Well-Regulated? Governing/Governable or Self-Governance?

I glanced at the clock on the wall. My back was sore, and my left leg was asleep. My wrist was on fire. I had been sitting and writing everything she said, as well as her tone, her movements, her reactions and expressions, and the interactions between her and the students. I was also trying to take in how the students were responding to their teacher from their own voices, discernable moods, and words. The students had begun their day with a ‘Sensory Circuit’<sup>289</sup> and then settled on the carpet. At first, they crowded around the teacher who sat in a chair beside a white board situated at one end of the carpet. I noted that some were on their knees and others on their bottoms with their legs crossed or stretched out in front of them. This variation in how their bodies were held was notable because in other classrooms I often hear ‘criss-cross-apple-sauce’ repeated regularly and students are usually required to sit cross-legged. There was dialogue as the teacher and students worked through their ‘Morning Message’—a sentence or two that has missing letters and carefully placed ‘mistakes’ in it for the students to notice and correct—and when the students were getting close to solving it, the energy level began to rise and the students squirmed or quivered and more of them shifted from bums to knees. With a calm and animated voice, Ms. Asher noted their enthusiasm and

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<sup>289</sup> This was described in Chapter Five.

asked them “How do our friends feel when others call out when they are still thinking?” She acted out having her hand up and then slumped over and pouted with exaggeration. She continued, “I see that you are getting excited” and she then invited them to write their answers on the carpet with their fingers. She added, “What else can we do?” with a knowing smile and a wink. The students were engaged, hands were up, and despite the excitement there was a sense of calm. One child got up and moved out of the carpet area, which was partially enclosed by bookshelves, and stretched and walked around the room, and then returned to the group. Ms. Asher barely broke her concentration on the rest of the group and the task at hand to say to them,<sup>290</sup> “I love the choices you’re making, Sasha.”\*

My alarm bells went off. This sounded like praise to me. I resisted my urge to analyze the moment and chose to note it in my book like anything else. But I couldn’t help but underline ‘love’ and jot down, ‘She sees them – surveillance? Praise?’ Back to the carpet...

Once they were finished the ‘Morning Message,’ Ms. Asher sang a little song and the students—remaining on the carpet—formed a seated circle while she walked to an empty space and sat with them. As she took her place and smiled, she inhaled deeply and exhaled slowly, many of the children did so as well, and I noted that she emitted a self-possession and something else I couldn’t quite put my finger on. And, as they gathered in this circle and shared and listened to each other tell stories about their weekends, I also noted several times the focus and patience within the group. On this first day, I was surprised by the level of

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<sup>290</sup> Again, I will not call the students in the research classroom ‘boys’ or ‘girls’ and I will use they/them/their pronouns because they have not disclosed their genders and I choose not to assume them.

\* All names have been changed. The \* indicates the name has been changed or a term has been altered to protect anonymity or privacy.

cooperation and comradery, the quiet and the calm, the friendly feeling that I was taking in as though breathing it from the air. What did I expect in a 'Self-Regulation Classroom'? Why was I so taken aback when, while a student spoke about a birthday party they attended on Sunday, another child quietly got up from their spot on the carpet and walked to a table to drink from their water bottle? The teacher didn't lift her gaze from the student who was speaking. Another child stood to stretch and then took their seat again. In between the sometimes elaborate and other times brief and simple tales about the weekends of six- and seven-year-olds, Ms. Asher smiled and demonstrated her own self-talk about how she was feeling or what she noticed. She remarked, "These stories are so interesting. Sometimes I can't wait for the next one. I bet some of us are eager to share about our weekends. What zone are we in when we just can't wait? What can we do? [some students quietly say yellow and take deep breaths] If we aren't feeling yellow, but rather [she pretends to yawn and rub her eyes and slouches], then what?"<sup>291</sup> A few kids excitedly moved an arm and snapped while brightly saying in unison, "Snap out of it." This brought on some giggles and other students tried it, too. Another child recommended they trace their hands on the carpet to keep their focus. The teacher nodded and continued, "Check in with your body. How do you feel?" The students whispered to themselves and the next student was queued to share.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> In this example, the teacher is drawing attention to feeling low in energy and the need to upregulate. Again, while the CMN focuses on a calm & quiet behaviour as a form of compliance, SR leaves room for stress behaviour that can be demonstrated through a sluggish lack of focus or a distracted form of the wiggles. 'Downregulation' should not be confused with behaviour management in the CMN, and upregulation demonstrates that SR is also on the mind of this teacher *and* the students in a SR classroom.

<sup>292</sup> As mentioned in the previous chapter, when I am reflecting on the classroom data and culture, I am invoking questions about why the teacher is doing X instead of Y (Y being more reflective of the dominant culture and the CMN)? What beliefs or experiences or knowledge allows for the teacher to engage in *this* practice *while* letting go of the acceptable and standard cultural practice of CM and The Story that it is necessary?

I checked in with my body and my body was sore. I rolled my right wrist that held a pen. When I glanced at the clock and noticed that 30 minutes<sup>293</sup> had elapsed since we first sat down, I was shocked. Not only had the time flown by, but I was immediately jolted when I turned my attention back to the circle of primary-aged children who were smiling and laughing with their classmates as one child told a story about their dog. After ten more minutes of storytelling about grandma's visit and baby brother's first steps, there was a subtle shift. I noticed the teacher scanning more, searching the students faces, and her attention was not on the speaker with the same fullness as before. I searched them, too, and there was certainly less eye contact with the speaker, but overall the group of grade ones was still quiet and collected. After the storyteller finished, Ms. Asher invited the students who had recounted their weekends to go to their table spots and write. She motioned for those remaining on the carpet to huddle together and make the circle smaller so that they might continue their activity. The sharing became more conversational, as Ms. Asher dipped in and reacted and asked questions while students talked about their weekends, and the others in the tight circle also mirrored this change. I noted the eagerness by all for connection with each other on a Monday morning. The students at the tables were humming as they wrote in their journals; with an Educational Assistant on hand to support two students requiring assistance, there was a steady murmur on either side of the bookshelf.<sup>294</sup> If anyone had walked into the classroom at that moment, they would probably see a 'well-managed' and 'well-behaved' group of students. They would see this because it was

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<sup>293</sup> When reviewing my notes, and writing this story, I recalled the teacher who had said that a teacher shouldn't have students on the carpet for more than seven minutes. Ms. Asher did not always spend long stretches of time on the carpet, but in this instance the students were self-regulating and I was interested in how she was supporting their regulation so that they *could* remain on the carpet for the sharing.

<sup>294</sup> A bookshelf separated the carpet area from another space that had four small tables.

relatively quiet; students were engaged in a circle on the carpet while others were writing diligently at their desks. It was an idyllic snapshot. For the CMN, the behaviour indicated a teacher's *grip* on the classroom (Garcia & Lewis, 2014). It being only my first hours in Ms. Asher's Grade One classroom, I felt as though it was *strangely* serene. I knew that there was something different from your average handling-of-behaviours happening in this classroom, she wasn't employing the typical methods to control the classroom, but I was hesitant to trust<sup>295</sup> the teacher-student bliss that I was feeling and observing at the time.

Flash-forward a few months later and my family is hosting two women from Europe. They are travellers who have agreed to work on our homestead, helping with gardening and painting, in exchange for a room, meals, and tips on travelling in the area. On the third night of their two-week stay, after the kids have gone to sleep, we shared some wine in the living room and checked in with each other about how our arrangement was going. My partner and I got onto the topic of our children and how excited they were to engage with any and all adults. We acknowledged the lack of fear they show when it comes to grown-ups and I rambled on about A.S. Neill (1960) and his writings about Summerhill School<sup>296</sup> and the idea that when we see children as equals and deserving of humanizing treatment, and we act toward them in this way, we end up with a trust and connection that engenders love rather than fear. I remarked that clearly many parents and teachers these days would not seek to spark fear in their children or

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<sup>295</sup> I hesitated to trust what I was seeing, hearing, and experiencing because I was in the moment and had not yet had the chance to sit back and reflect or analyze the expression. I had not yet seen classroom interactions that were subverting the narrative of control or chaos, that actually supported democracy, nor had I observed that level of *trust* between teachers and students in mainstream classrooms. *Trusting* what I was seeing, hearing, and experiencing, and the observed *trust*, will become part of the findings later in this chapter and in the concluding chapter.

<sup>296</sup> I referenced Summerhill in footnote 135 in Chapter Three.

students, but that we do so when we focus on their behaviour, use shame and punishments to elicit the types of behaviour we desire, or bribes and praise to gain their compliance. My partner and I took turns sharing some of our favourite things about SR and our communication style in our family. We let our visitors in on our meta-language; what it means when we gesture our lids flipping with our hands<sup>297</sup> or when we address our concerns by discussing feelings and needs. After a little while, I think I noticed how much we had been talking and I turned to our guests and offered more wine and a break in the conversation. One of the women responded as I poured:

That's so interesting because—and please don't take this the wrong way—well... It's just that at first, we were thrown by the way your kids just do whatever they are told. You would ask them to do something or stop doing something and they would do as you said without a peep. We thought that it was, well, creepy. It seemed as though you had strict control over them. I assumed that there was fear. But then we noticed how the kids will ask you both to do something for them, or stop doing something, and you will do as *you* are told. And there are times when you or the kids discuss how you are feeling almost instead of asking for something. There is a different vibe between you and your kids that is difficult to figure out. Yes, it is like they aren't afraid, but also you seem to trust them.

I was startled that my relationship and interactions with my children had, at least initially, appeared to be 'strict' and based in fear. But what I heard was my guest identifying The Story that kids couldn't possibly be capable of communicating with mutual understanding and respect,<sup>298</sup> especially not with the purpose of meeting their needs *and* the needs of others. She had assumed fear was the catalyst for the agreeable behaviour of my children, and this made

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<sup>297</sup> This is in reference to Siegal's Hand Model of the Brain, discussed in Chapter Four.

<sup>298</sup> Note that The Story is that the *kids* can't communicate in this way, but the *adults* are capable. The Story assumes that the problem lies with the children, usually with their behaviour or with their lack of maturity and not with stress or an understanding of/allowance for a variation of experience.

her uncomfortable (it was ‘creepy’). She was reading them as ‘well-managed’ rather than ‘well-regulated.’ It *would* be creepy if children just did whatever they were told—I think of the Stepford wives<sup>299</sup> and robotic obedience—because we would presume they were doing it out of fear, and we *think* or *believe* that we don’t want to control kids all day long. It would be strange to praise a parent or teacher with something to the effect of, “Wow, you’ve made those children so obedient! They must fear you.” The need for strong control of children by adults is *assumed* by teachers and parents in a Western context because it is implied by The Story; the *fear* of discipline—because one knows that they are being monitored (surveillance) for acceptable and compliant (‘normal’ and disciplined) behaviour—is the rule. This presents an apparent paradox; a teacher or parent is damned if they manage children in a way that creates obedience and/or fear, and they are damned if they don’t. Due to dichotomous thinking, the spectrum that is produced looks something like this (figure 7.0).



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An ‘Effective’ Balance – Figure 7.0

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<sup>299</sup> This is in reference to the 1974 novel, *The Stepford Wives*, by Ira Levin. In the satirical thriller, the protagonist, who is a young mother, suspects that the strangely submissive housewives in her picture-perfect neighbourhood in the North-Eastern United States of America are possibly robots programmed by their husbands (Levin, 1972).

A progressivist educator balks at the idea of being autocratic, relying on extrinsic motivation and external control, wielding so much power and dominance that their influence over children is unsettling to others. But they are also adamant about not being grouped into a permissive designation that relies on the nature of children to be intrinsically motivated (as The Story tells us this view is foolish) or capable of self-control (because The Story is that kids aren't capable). Permissive teachers and parents are thought of as just as extreme as the autocratic ones, just too far to the other side of the gamut; they let kids walk all over them (doormats) and are too submissive. The dichotomic range depicted above leaves us with seemingly only one option: an 'effective' balance. An 'effective' balance is thought to be an alternative to the black or white, the master or slave, Hobbes or Rousseau.<sup>300</sup> The 'grey' area, in-between the two 'extremes,' has to be entered with skill—it has to be 'effective'—and it is effectual/functional/successful when one party (the incapable) does what the other party (the capable) wants them to do. Although the grey area is a more delicate dance, one which is performed gently and with 'perfected pedagogy,' it is still on the same stage (spectrum) as the CMN. An 'effective' balance, or grey area, is a misnomer; it is not a reconciliation of the MSD, but rather a sanctioned or sanitized space in which to operate within it. No matter where one falls on the spectrum, one is *on it* and focused on behaviour and The Story—that we necessitate control and that our roles are master or slave—is being told through us. There is no *trust* within this spectrum; the master does not trust the slave to self-govern and the slave cannot trust the master with their humanity (which is arguably more important than anything else). A careful

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<sup>300</sup> Like the master in Hegel's MSD, Hobbes sees the need for a sovereign. There are those, such as Gutek (2001), who argue that Rousseau was "permissive" because he promoted the capability of people to self-govern (p.62).

use of stimulus/response with features of Productive Power,<sup>301</sup> to get someone to do what you want them to do, is not trust. My partner and I had to articulate our praxis, and express the resistance behind our actions, for *trust* to be seen as a possibility and for the spectrum above to be set aside and for another paradigm to take shape.

During my first days in the classroom with Ms. Asher, I felt that I was walking a fine line between wanting so badly to see SR work in a way that humanized all involved and being an objective and emotionally removed researcher who collects the data. I wanted to remain open to the fact that the data may or may not show that SR can subvert what I have argued to be the typically dehumanizing approach in classroom teaching with a CMN. I couldn't help but look at the classroom as an insider, with some background in the teacher's beliefs and the thinking behind her approach that I had gathered from her survey and interview, as well as from my research on SR in classroom teaching from texts and articles and my experience from my own SR journey. In my effort to be careful not to see what I wanted to see, I found myself hesitant to trust what I was seeing. I felt forced into the role of an outsider and, in what I now view as bordering on a cynical response or perhaps me being influenced by my years in classrooms rooted in the CMN, I questioned why the students seemed so subdued and I was quick to note anything that could be read as features of Foucauldian Productive Power. Let me be the first to admit that I was on high alert for evidence of CM tactics; I was assuming fear. I was at the ready to label discipline, normalization, and surveillance because a) it was standard in every

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<sup>301</sup> Foucauldian Productive Power was introduced on pages 160-163. In the CMN, discipline, normalization, and surveillance rely on stimulus/response (an element of behaviourism) to garner acceptable behaviour. For example, a bribe or promise of reward is found when one says, "If you work together, you'll get an A," also produces behaviour through its relation to its consequences.

classroom that I had ever spent time in, and b) prior to this project, even those teachers who claimed that they were teaching SR and believed in its theory discussed practicing CM tactics because The Stories of the CMN left them no choice.<sup>302</sup> I wanted to know if one could *do* things that are based in the CMN and at the same time be *doing* SR without undermining the *thinking* or theory of SR. In connection to this, could a teacher have committed to progressivist education, and goals of democracy, freedom and equality, while practicing in ways that place primacy on control and compliance? Could the techniques of SR be unconsciously employed in ways that simply mask a deeper commitment to the aims of the CMN? These queries were connected for me, and there was also the link to praxis and the connection between what we think and what we do, and our active reflection through action that reconciles the disconnections between the two.

When I returned to my notes weeks after the observations were complete, I was mindful of the moments that could easily be read as normalizing certain behaviours through praise, such as the cheerful remark recounted earlier of *loving* the choice being made by a particular student who was self-regulating. As I poured over the data, it should be taken into consideration that the number of instances that could be construed as ‘praise,’ ‘normalization,’ or ‘surveillance’ decreased dramatically for both teachers after the first six hours of observations.<sup>303</sup> It is possible that my presence impacted their ability to teach in the way that they normally teach. Separately, both teachers disclosed to me that initially they felt nervous

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<sup>302</sup> Or, as Ford (2003) argues, when the ‘progressivist’ ideal breaks down, one reverts to dominance and Foucauldian Sovereign Power (previously referenced on pages 160-163).

<sup>303</sup> It should be noted that I observed Ms. Asher with only the fifth day of observations overlapping in the same week as the observations with Ms. Calum. After the initial recruitment meeting, they always spoke to me separately and I did not disclose to either of them what the other was doing or saying. Each participant was treated as a separate ‘case.’

and dysregulated by my presence. They both wondered what I was writing and how they were being perceived; they were anxious about being judged. We openly discussed whether they needed to end their participation in the study and both teachers expressed that they wished to continue. I decided to try and build more of a rapport with them and as we talked more—without the pressure of a notebook or laptop between us—we both relaxed and I believe (through what was exchanged in our dialogue) we began to feel as though we were in the arena<sup>304</sup> together. After all, as supporters of SR we already shared some common ground. But, each teacher (independently from the other) articulated the struggle to *do* SR when there are certain adults around; there is a fear of judgement or misunderstanding that creeps into their psyche and impacts their teaching. I will touch on this problem later in a section on barriers to teaching with SR in the classroom. At this time, it is important to acknowledge that instances that may be perceived as praise (discipline), normalization, and surveillance decreased as the observation time increased and the participants expressed their growing comfort level with my presence. It is also essential for me to admit that because there is no control classroom—I was not officially observing another teacher who subscribed to a more typical and non-SR approach—I cannot with any accurate measure compare the amount of praise or other CM tactics rooted in the CMN being used in these SR classrooms with classrooms that I have encountered in the past (including my own). What I can say is that in this case it became clear that what I was hearing as praise was significantly less routine than my perception of what is

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<sup>304</sup> In her book, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*, Brené Brown (2012) discusses a quotation by Theodore Roosevelt and how it influenced her to rethink her critics. If someone is offering advice or criticizing you, but they aren't in the arena *with* you, and fighting the fight by your side, then their opinions shouldn't carry much weight. But when someone joins you in the arena, and is vulnerable in that place, it is their opinion on which you must place more focus; this is difficult when we are culturally compelled to hear only the loud voices in the seats of the audience (Brown, 2012).

typical in a mainstream public school classroom in Canada. Also, after analysing the data I have determined that what I was hearing either was *not* praise in the same sense of Foucauldian Productive Power in the CMN *or* was negligible in its frequency or bearing. Features of Productive Power, discussed previously as discipline, normalization, and surveillance, as employed within a CMN to control children/students and/or maintain compliance in consideration of The Question of *how do I get them to do what I want them to do?* was *absent*<sup>305</sup> in these SR classrooms.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the elements of Foucauldian Productive Power on which I am focusing feed off one another. In a typical classroom, where the CMN goes unnoticed or unchallenged, and a teacher says, “I love the choices you’re making, Sasha,” one can clearly hear the approval or praise coming from the teacher for the student’s behaviour. Discipline is the use of reward (my glowing approval is an example) or punishment (the withdrawal of positive attention can also be a punishment), but along with this comment the teacher is declaring for all students that they *see* this student (surveillance) and that what the student is doing is appropriate or right behaviour for this classroom (normalization). The goal of such a statement is to get others to do (or continue to do) what you want them to do; in this case, regulate themselves. One could easily assume that the self-talk of Ms. Asher—throughout the morning, she was modelling her inner dialogue and revealing what she was noticing about her feelings and needs, what she was doing, and her reflections on what she saw and heard around the classroom—is a form of discipline, normalization, and surveillance. But, before completing

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<sup>305</sup> This is not to say that Productive Power is *absent*; Foucault argues that Productive Power is everywhere (1975, p.175). But, in this SR classroom, the teacher’s use of discipline, normalization, and surveillance were not being employed to maintain compliance or a standard of behaviour typical in the CMN.

my observations, it became clear that there was something integral occurring that was not making it into my notebook that would dispel this notion. Despite the fact that the frequency of what could be interpreted as praise was not comparable to what I have encountered in my experience in typical classrooms embedded in a CMN, I still felt that instances of what might be interpreted as 'praise' (as well as other indications of discipline, normalization, and surveillance) were important to understanding a SR approach in respect to its relationship with the CMN. These rare instances appeared to be encircled or bookended by *something else*—other communication or a tone or a 'vibe' that was uncharacteristic of the classrooms I was used to being around—and without taking up what might be indiscernible to an outsider the classroom could appear to be 'well-managed' rather than 'well-regulated'. But, before I continue, I would like to reiterate that being critical of praise should not be conflated with a curbing or discontinuation of care or positive connection with students or children. Kohn's (2001) remark, from his essay critiquing praise, reminds us of this distinction; when asking us to stop saying 'Good Job' and using other praise, he writes:

This doesn't mean that all compliments, all thank-you's, all expressions of delight are harmful. We need to consider our motives for what we say (a genuine expression of enthusiasm is better than a desire to manipulate the child's future behavior) as well as the actual effects of doing so. Are our reactions helping the child to feel a sense of control over her [sic] life — or to constantly look to us for approval? Are they helping her to become more excited about what she's doing in its own right — or turning it into something she just wants to get through in order to receive a pat on the head? (Kohn, 2001, para.31)

Classroom management hinges on The Question of '*How do I get them to do what I want them to do?*' There is a focus on behaviour, but also a control or chaos narrative that says that kids aren't capable of controlling their own behaviour and that they shouldn't or can't be trusted. In

other words, our students can't self-govern, and this leaves us with one option: govern them or be governed by them.<sup>306</sup> When I looked at a single instance of praise, or one blissful morning with Grade Ones spent mostly on the carpet, it was unnerving. Here was the CMN inside of a SR classroom! But this was before I considered the *motives* for what was said as well as “the actual effects of doing so” (Kohn, 2001, para.31). SR still *sees* and responds to behaviour, but the conception of behaviour as an indication of stress, and the core belief that kids are capable of self-control and self-governance when they are well-regulated, modifies the goal and is a departure from the CMN. The perspective is different, the motive is divergent, and the paradigm itself is separate from the one with a focus on *An 'Effective' Balance* that was discussed earlier. The MSD only aggravates stress, it is counter-productive to the goals of SR, and it treats those people within it as part of a dialectic, which is dehumanizing; SR is dialogic and humanizing.

By day four of the observations, I had seen Ms. Asher's class in many manifestations. I had observed energy levels all over the map, I had witnessed students go from green zone to yellow, yellow to red, and back to green. Ms. Asher had even had a few moments of yellow.<sup>307</sup> But, the 'vibe' of the classroom community, and the unnameable characteristic the teacher inhabited, only became clearer and more present in my notes. And these instances of 'praise'

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<sup>306</sup> This is in reference to Hegel's Master-Slave-Dialectic and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's work surround *amour-propre* discussed in Chapter One.

<sup>307</sup> I would like to draw attention to the fact that no one is 'green' all of the time and that within SR the process is more important than its product. Feeling 'yellow' or 'red' or 'blue' is educative for many reasons, among them are the empathy-building elements; when I see a friend in the 'yellow zone,' I can ask myself what they might need by thinking about what I have needed in those moments. The purpose of SR is *not* to be 'green' all of the time, but rather to build resiliency to stress through recognition of it, as well as skills to reduce and respond to stress (Shanker, 2013b). In the CMN, the goal is for students to behave appropriately *all of the time*, the success of one's classroom management is based on the compliance (noise-level, amount of 'on-task' behaviour) that is observable. In SR, the variety of stress loads and stress behaviours is not only expected but also part of the *process* of building skills in resiliency, recognition, reduction, and response to/of stress.

would occasionally come up whether the students were regulated or not. On the fourth morning, the class congregated around the calendar on their bottoms and knees while one student attempted to work through the time-honoured steps of many primary classrooms. Ms. Asher was kneeling on the carpet, when she whispered to the child who was trying to work out the day of the week; “Ryley,\* I notice that they aren’t listening to you. What do you notice?” Ryley seemed to pause their own thoughts and looked at their classmates for a moment. Then they spoke, “They have the wiggles.” The teacher smiled and said, “They do have the wiggles. What should we do?” Without missing a beat, Ryley replied, “A movement break.” And the child turned to their classmates and said “Let’s do a bridge” and the students started to move, some crab-walking to a new space on the carpet to give themselves more room, and a wave of tummies arched their way up toward the ceiling and all that could be heard were deep inhales and long exhales. For the remainder of time on the carpet, which was brief, Ms. Asher was scanning the students diligently and offering more frequent guided SR. Once the calendar was finished and the Morning Message began, a student called out an answer and she quickly responded cheerfully with “Oh, take your hand and blow into it. Blow into it. Take a breath and blow. I am going to ask that question again.” All of the students had their hands to their mouths and, when she asked the question, their hands shot up. After another question or two, there were more wiggles and chatter and the room felt yellow. Ms. Asher smiled and sat up taller in her chair and took a slow breath. From the other end of the carpet, I could feel her shift back to calm serenity. She whispered, “Grade, Grade, One, One.”<sup>308</sup> And the movement settled and

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<sup>308</sup> This is not the actual language the teacher used, rather I have inserted a substitute call-and-respond. The changes were made to respect privacy and anonymity.

many of the students whispered back in a practiced manner, “Ms., Ms., Asher, Asher.” She smiled broadly and arched her eyebrows playfully. Leaning toward the students, bringing her body closer to the carpet, she whispered again, “Grade One, can you hear me? Can you hear the number I am saying? 99.” And the students were still and quiet and leaning toward her. They whispered back ‘99.’ She spoke again, “Come closer, come closer, we are close.” Then she led them in a fun clapping song. Afterwards, she laughed and said, “I love your smiles. You look ready to learn.” She took a deep breath and the students also shared in this ritual. She closed her eyes and whispered, “Back to green.”

They made it through their morning message, but with a much higher energy than usual and Ms. Asher spent most of the lesson guiding them back to green with careful consideration. Then she asked them to line up for the gym. I noted that the carpet time had been busy, but I also wrote, “The class is certainly more excitable and wigglier today. During the board message, there are a lot of hands and calling out, but *this* is a kind of focus and energy. It is remarkable how alert they are compared to the other classes I see [not SR classes].” In the gym, they ran. They played many versions of tag. They did the ‘Hokey-Pokey.’ Ms. Asher sprinkled in the occasional SR moment, asking the students to check-in with their bodies and meet their needs with water or rest or a stretch or a deep breath. She ran and played with them the entire time. At the end of the time in the gym, she asked them to cool down and, if they would like, they could join in on a group *savasana*.<sup>309</sup> Most students opted to lay on the floor, while a few sat close to the door with their water bottles. After a minute, Ms. Asher said quietly, “How can you

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<sup>309</sup> *Savasana* is a term used in Yoga, from Sanskrit, for ‘corpse pose.’ One lays on their back, with legs and arms stretched out, and lets the movement that was just done settle into the body. It is a mindfulness and meditation pose.

move to the line-up using knees or tippy toes?” The remaining students made their way to the door, some making animal noises. Once they were standing in a line, Ms. Asher said, “Remember we talked about stopping here and checking in. Show me. I see Jean\* with their hand on their heart. Ryu\* is taking deep breaths.” Most of the students had their eyes closed with one hand on their heart, and Ms. Asher did the same. She continued, “What does your body need? A bathroom break? Some of you have mentioned a dry throat. That means that you need more water.” She took a deep breath, “My trust for you is really, really big. Can you feel it? Take a moment for yourself while I put away the chairs. Then we will go.” The students meditated while standing in line; their eyes closed with their hands on their hearts. A couple of them whispered. When the teacher returned, she said, “Grade One, Thank you so much. So, you’ve checked in with your bodies. You know what to do. I’ll meet you back at the classroom.”

The students filed out of the gym and down the hall. I stood at the door and watched as some of them stopped at the fountain for a drink of water. Others went to the bathroom. Most of them walked down the long hall to their classroom, which was located at the other end. They were quiet. Ms. Asher was nowhere to be seen. She went to the staff washroom and then to the staff room for a cup of coffee. When I returned to the classroom, there were three students laying quietly on the carpet, extending their *savasana*. There were six students spread out over four tables with their lunch kits open and beginning their snack. A couple more students filtered into the room, some grabbed a snack, others changed their shoes. Ms. Asher came in with a calm presence, hot coffee in hand, and walked to her desk. She changed her shoes. The classroom hummed with purpose and tranquility. After a few sips of coffee, Ms. Asher picked up a book and began to read aloud, “If you find a rock...”

When examining moments such as the ones above, initially I found myself looking through a CMN lens; I was looking at the *behaviour* of the students in relation to what was understood to be appropriate or required. An outsider, lacking an understanding of SR or without a proper introduction to the intentions and beliefs of the teacher, might read the classroom as well conducted; the students appeared good-mannered, acted correctly, and they were exceptionally independent for kids their age. I was discomforted by this notion. I found myself asking whether what I was seeing was features of Productive Power at work or something else? In SR, Shanker (2016) asks us to *reframe* the behaviour and become *stress detectives*. In the early stages of observations and analysis, I was operating in the CMN and evaluating the classroom's eerie *absence of misbehaviour*. But the students were doing well because they *could*. They were well-regulated.

The teacher wasn't managing<sup>310</sup> behaviour: she was recognizing stress and making space for students to regulate themselves *or* she was guiding them in their regulation. Also, she was regulating herself and co-regulating through interbrains with her students. She didn't take the role of 'regulator' as one that is hers alone. She models her self-regulation with her self-talk, or with her body when she sits up straight and takes a breath, or with her presence when she shifts herself from yellow to green. She invites the students to share the responsibility of regulation when she asks them to check in with their own bodies, or to read the room (for body language and presence), and to do what they need to find their way back to green. She asks

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<sup>310</sup> There is a difference between being 'managed' in the sense of having one's behaviour presided over because one cannot be trusted to self-govern, or in an effort to teach/mandate 'self-control,' and being 'managed' in the sense of leadership or being led/organized with a consideration for your participation and capability to self-govern. One might argue that Ms. Asher *does manage* the students, but in the latter sense of the word; the classroom would look, sound, and feel different without her guidance. Both of the observed teachers also used a different language; they both said that they were 'regulating' rather than 'managing' the classroom and the students.

them to consider the needs of others and how their zones might have an effect on the zones of others. She listens to how the students read the room, even if it may differ from her interpretation, and she supports them in their recommendations when they have ideas of how to bring the room or themselves back to green. She *sees* her students differently—she is looking for stress behaviour rather than misbehaviour—and she sees different children. Her goal for her students has an effect on them. And the goal is not compliance.

These children are not a specially hand-picked group. They are not without their struggles. The school is publicly funded and situated in a suburban neighbourhood with a mixture of socio-economic statuses. The school hosts a StrongStart program, designed for early childhood learning that is free and typically runs in parts of the district with lower incomes. In Ms. Asher's classroom, there are 17 students (admittedly, a smaller class size) with three high-needs students with educational assistants (there are two EAs most of the time). There are three other students who also struggle with learning exceptionalities. There is a student with physical limitations and who uses a walker or wheelchair. The room appears to be evenly weighted when it comes to masculine and feminine personalities. Although all students have different needs and skills, and come to school with various experiences and levels of stress, all students are seen by the teacher as *capable*. Ms. Asher articulated, both in statements in her interview and through demonstrations in her classroom teaching, that she holds the opinion that kids can understand their needs and the needs of others, and “do well” or act with the freedom of self and others in mind (self-govern), when they are well-regulated. She expressed that her role is to create an environment that reduces stressors and to be someone who regulates the room by scanning for stress, lending her calm, meeting unmet needs, and

supporting students in building skills where there are deficiencies. If the individuals in the classroom community can regulate themselves so that the room feels good and supports regulation, there can be “autonomy” (self-governance).<sup>311</sup> Ms. Asher holds space while students learn to recognize their stressors and identify their own needs as well as the stress and needs of others. She does this with patience and understanding, without punishment, bribes, threats, or praise, and with a need for connection taking the place of a requirement of compliance.

The purpose of Ms. Asher’s ‘praise’ is connection; she seeks to recognize their autonomy and support their ability to self-govern. She observes their actions with understanding and often an authentic and genuine appreciation and enthusiasm. She announces her admiration, but it is not ‘praise’ because her motive is not to maintain their ‘good’ behaviour or motivate them to perform desired behaviour for her benefit.<sup>312</sup> Her ‘praise’ isn’t her approval, it is an expression of the way that she feels. Whether she is happy or dismayed does not change her desire for connection with the students, and, more importantly,

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<sup>311</sup> This differs from the CMN effort to have students behaving in a particular way, or telling students what they *have to do* to be regulated (telling a child to go to the cozy corner to calm down), because in SR the teacher is working with the students to develop their own stress detection and stress resiliency strategies and this can look different for different people.

<sup>312</sup> At least not *only* for her benefit. As Shanker (2013b; 2017a & 2017b) repeatedly argues, we need to know how good it feels to be calm. Of course, when we are calm and able to self-govern, we are easier to work with and more fun to be around. Being in the ‘Green Zone’ is more desirable in the classroom; when the people who make up the classroom are feeling ‘green,’ the environment is optimal for learning, but each person is also primed to learn because their neocortex is ‘online’ and this is necessary for all of the things we hope to accomplish within a classroom. Students benefit from feeling calm, because they can better self-govern and learn. As I have noted before, programs such as the Zones of Regulation (Kuypers, 2017) have been misapplied in ways that serve the CMN. For example, I have witnessed a teacher point to a Zones of Regulation poster and demand ‘Green Zone’ behaviour from a student she assessed as ‘red zone.’ The student was wiggling and talkative, exhibiting *undesirable* behaviour, which in my assessment falls under ‘yellow zone.’ The teacher took a CM approach and focused on *misbehaviour*, rather than noticing or assessing stress, and requested—with a threatening tone—that the student be still and quiet (desired behaviour). The *intention* and the *goal* are different when programs such as The Zones of Regulation are used with a SR theory-practice connection. Praise is also different when the positive reflections and expressions are *not* made with the purpose of control or manipulation, ‘reinforcement’ or maintaining desirable behaviour, but rather with humanization and capability in mind. What Story is behind our praise or any of our words or actions that carry with them the goal of compliance?

their ‘unexpected’ actions do not result in a withdrawal of that connection or care. Kohn (2001) asks, “[a]re our reactions helping the child to feel a sense of control over her [sic] life” (para.31)? In SR, the theory is that behaviour is communication; this subverts The Story that kids are manipulative or unable to control their impulses. Ms. Asher’s practice reflects SR theory; she is focused on helping her students feel a sense of control that comes from being well-regulated. Her methods demonstrate her understanding, which is rooted in SR, that a child does not choose stress behaviour in the same way that an adult doesn’t choose to break down in front of friends or colleagues.<sup>313</sup> Stress behaviour is not a choice but the result of a dysregulated brain that isn’t coping well. Ms. Asher is a stress detective, but also, she often pauses before she reacts, and her self-talk indicates that she is curious and asking questions about regulation; why *this* behaviour and *why now*? She approaches her students who express stress behaviour with compassion, reassurances of safety, and calm, rather than punishments, fear, or shame. Students are not being asked to suppress their stress and behave appropriately; rather than running from stress, in Ms. Asher’s classroom the community embraces stress because they know that they will be supported in their efforts to cope. They know what calm feels like, and it feels like connection, freedom, and equality.

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<sup>313</sup> The aim is *not* desirable behaviour, but self-governance. One *can* self-govern when one is well-regulated. We need to know how it feels to be well-regulated or calm (Shanker, 2013b). This is similar to A.S. Neill’s (1960) aim of happiness. Neill (of *Summerhill*) argues that the aim of education is “happiness” and that we need freedom to be happy (1960, p.22). Freedom and happiness are tied because a lack of freedom, or injustice, causes unhappiness. Neill surmised that children behave in more enlightened ways when they are treated with freedom in mind. In SR, when kids are seen as *capable* of self-governance, rather than as immature and misbehaving, their regulation is supported; these concepts are interconnected much like Neill’s happiness and freedom. Of course, Neill would prefer that children don’t break windows or disrupt his sleep, but he puts lessons in freedom and happiness first (1960). In a ‘SR classroom,’ calm or ‘green zone’ is preferred—because it feels good and allows one to achieve their academic and social goals—but the other zones are opportunities for a lesson in self-governance and self-regulation.

I am reminded of what Freire (1985) says about ‘radical love.’ Aside from self-possession, Ms. Asher radiated ‘radical love;’ an intentional acceptance that banishes *fear*. It is an *intention*. It is tangible in her demeanor, her tone and expression, but also in the things unsaid and unseen. Radical love is about humanization; it is “never about absolute consensus, or unconditional acceptance, or unnecessary words of sweetness...instead, it is unconstructed, rooted in a committed willingness to struggle persistently with purpose in our life...to be lively, forceful, and inspiring, while challenging and insistent...and intimately connected to what it means to ‘be human’” (Darder, 2002, p.34). Radical love isn’t violent, but neither is it silence. It is about reconciliation and vulnerability. For Freire (1985), radical love is a virtue, and a ‘virtue’ is a quality “which you re-create through action and through practice, qualities which make us consistent and coherent concerning our dreams—a consistence which teachers try to achieve within what they are doing” (p.15). It is located in praxis. Humility and patience, as well as tolerance, are virtues that Freire contends are all connected and necessary for the teacher to be humanizing; we must understand “the pain of others, the feelings of others” in relation to our own capacity for pain and feelings (1985, p.15). We “must be patiently impatient” in achieving our dream of making “a life together with our students who may be different from us” (Freire, 1985, p.16 & 15). Tolerance is understanding our differences, our “social locations” (Boyd, 2016, p.172), and accepting each other as equally capable of self-governance and yet with different experiences with it (Freire, 1985). But, for Freire, these interconnecting virtues culminate in love; he writes,

The final virtue, if possible, is the ability to love students, in spite of everything. I don't mean a kind of soft or sweet love, but on the contrary a very affirmative love, a love which accepts, a love for students which pushes

us to go beyond, which makes us more and more responsible for our task.  
(Freire, 1985, p.16)

The students feel these virtues and act without fear. The ‘task’ is reconciling the dialectic of inequality—The Stories that keep us in fear—and entering into solidarity with others whom we see as capable of self-governance. When Ms. Asher says that she loves the *choice* a student is making, she is *not* putting a condition on her acceptance of *the student*. She is not trying to manipulate their next choice or the choices of others. She is indicating her belief in their capability. The teacher trusts the students. When she says she “trusts” them, she is saying that she believes in their capability to self-govern. This belief is the ‘task’ and her practices of SR in the classroom are the embodiment of radical love. Praxis, the progressivist goal, and SR are intertwined and the empowerment of teacher and students in this classroom was palpable.

#### Communicating the Freedom to be Fully Human

“My motor runs high,” she stated when I asked her what informed her approach. She explained that she needs to focus on her own SR so that she can help the kids. She continued: “The easiest person’s inventory to do is someone else’s. But I need to be able to see ‘what does this mean for me,’ because I need to be able to see what it means for this kid and this kid. How can I implement this in my life, first?” Ms. Calum and Ms. Asher come across as *very* different people. Where Ms. Asher floats in a room, with an air of tranquility and her smile serene and inviting, Ms. Calum flits. She is also the vice-principal,<sup>314</sup> and this means that she often starts her days with meetings that take her right to the bell, when she darts to the classroom with her

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<sup>314</sup> I did not observe Ms. Calum during the portions of her day when her duties as vice-principal were primary. From our interviews and conversations, it sounded as though her approach to conflict and communication outside of the classroom matched her practice while classroom teaching. But I would like to acknowledge that my research centred on SR in classroom teaching and I will not be taking up the role of vice principal here.

keys jingling around her neck. I waited for her in the hallway each morning and I noticed that she *always took a deep breath* before opening the outside door and greeting 19 grade ones and twos as they filed into the building. She ‘flits,’ but she also conveys a commitment to the moment; she is genuinely present for herself and each person who crosses her path. An interaction with Ms. Calum is deep and heartfelt; her energy is high, but it is concentrated in a way that echoes her commitment to her task. She calls it ‘self-reg,’<sup>315</sup> and she speaks of “really trying to see the stress behaviour and what that is saying,” but her stories are also about her ongoing reflections and her commitment to democracy in the classroom.

Ms. Calum’s classroom has a similar décor to Ms. Asher’s; there are earth tones and a variety of seating options, the lighting is soft, and the space is tidy and provides a break from the stimulus of a typical classroom. There are also toys and tools to promote up- and downregulation, such as a basket of small toys with which one can fidget, open space to walk, a standing desk, and a sign in/out board for those who need a washroom break or a trip down to an alternative space called ‘The Burrow.’<sup>316</sup> There isn’t a teacher’s desk as Ms. Calum “didn’t need it, and I wanted more open space.” The extra space allows for movement and a corner of the room to be set aside for a ‘safe space.’ With a bookshelf on one side, and another shelf and small table making the fourth ‘wall’ of the corner, there is a little opening to a small and dark space with a large pillow. This space is reserved for a student with extreme anxiety and other challenges. I am told that Sydney\* often naps at school because they stay awake at night,

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<sup>315</sup> The term ‘self-reg,’ which is short for SR, has also been trademarked by Shanker as ‘Shanker Self-Reg®’ and ‘The Shanker Method®’. A lot of the literature and resources put out by Shanker use the short form of ‘self-reg’ when speaking of theory and the approach or method that he promotes. In our interview, Ms. Calum indicated that her use of the short form was influenced by her reading of Shanker’s website (self-reg.ca), but that she did not *only* subscribe to his methods.

<sup>316</sup> The Burrow will be described later.

worrying. Ms. Calum explains that, for this kid, “their goal is to come into the school. So, this [SR] is about seeing all kids and figuring out what they need to be um, I guess, see what the challenges are for each child and remove those challenges.” In her initial interview, Ms. Calum told me that aside from her classroom set-up, one of the more significant changes that she made when she began her SR journey was her tone and the classroom volume. She believes the two correspond. She explains that when she uses a softer tone and quieter voice, that the students do so as well. She said, “I am a pretty easily dysregulated person. I need things calm and quiet and I think they do, too.” But what I notice is her language—or word choices—and the dialogic approach she takes with the students. This was exemplified in her story about balancing Sydney’s need for a ‘safe space’ with the unique needs of other students.

When I asked her about how her progressivist beliefs about teaching, learning, and kids influences her approach to SR, Ms. Calum answered immediately. “Yeah. Totally. I believe that all kids at school should feel safe and for this one kid, that is not their story. I think that’s guided a lot of this [her inquiry into SR]. And, you know, what you do for one helps everybody.” The ‘one kid’ she was referring to is Sydney. I could see how giving them their own space helps them and may help the other students because Sydney would be calm and perhaps their behaviour contained. But that was not what the teacher meant. Ms. Calum told me about Robin,\* a student who was very disorganized; their backpack was often hanging empty in the coatroom, its contents spread around the classroom, and Robin was occasionally distressed because they couldn’t locate what they needed. The teacher recounted to me that she asked herself, “what is happening for you (this kid)? Is it ‘I need to be noticed?’ ‘I’m here too?’ But it was listening to the behaviour in a different way... I thought, okay, you *need* something, too.”

There was an unused hook beside the classroom door, and it became Robin's hook. The coatroom didn't work for this student, but for some reason the hook by the door supported them in staying organized. Another student, Lennon,\* also faced unique challenges; they started the school year unable to remain in the classroom. The school has a room they call 'The Burrow, '\* it is really a set of rooms that students can use when they feel dysregulated, or in need of a break or space, so that they can calm themselves when overwhelmed, take time to recuperate, or upregulate if the classroom is too slow for them (there was exercise equipment available). The room was designed as part of the school-wide initiative to learn about and try SR in classroom teaching. Lennon was regularly requesting to go to The Burrow; Ms. Calum noticed that Lennon's withdrawal often coincided with transitions and carpet time, when they would have to be close to other kids and perhaps have to socially interact. She also noticed that they often sat in the small rocking chair in the classroom, and that when they did, they didn't ask to go to The Burrow as often. She asked Lennon if they would like the rocking chair to be "their own," and they liked that idea. A small piece of masking tape that says 'Lennon' is stuck to the top of the chair. Ms. Calum would often say, "In our classroom, we try to help everyone get what they need." When she remarks that helping one child helps everyone, her point was akin to 'no one is free until we are all free.' When exceptions or modifications are made to meet the needs of one student, the message to *all* students is that your needs will be met, too.

Ms. Calum explains that SR says that behaviour is communication, and if we are not getting it, we need to ask ourselves about the translation. She clarifies, "So, instead of reading an unexpected behaviour as misbehaviour, if we just stop, and shift our mindset to think about 'what are their subtitles?' I just like that analogy." Behaviour can indicate unmet needs, and Ms.

Calum believes that SR and meeting needs has an effect on more than just the student who requires something different. She acknowledges that “It’s a process and it’s tricky. I don’t have a space or a special chair for every kid. But not every kid needs that.” Not only does the teacher understand this, but the students confirm this community understanding. She recalls when Lennon asked her why Sydney got to have the corner ‘Safe Space’? Ms. Calum responded by saying, “It’s sort of like your chair. This is what Sydney needs to feel safe and ready to learn in our class. And they [Lennon] just responded with ‘okay.’ And was satisfied. It’s just like that!” She continued by saying that she found kids were more open to the idea that one person being taken care of doesn’t mean others aren’t being considered, but rather that it sends the message that “we all matter and that all of our needs matter.”

“Like, oh, you are learning to keep your hands to yourself, and someone else is learning how to read, and we are all working on stuff. It’s kind of different just to, just a different approach. It works for them. It’s really changed our language and how we address their needs.” I mentioned that it sounded like SR added more dialogue to teacher/student interactions and she cut in by saying “And compassion. We think about how we feel and how other people feel.” It sounded like self-governance to me; the freedom to be fully human.

The language of needs and feelings, the dialogue of compassion, that Ms. Calum used consistently throughout our interviews and observations is known as Nonviolent Communication [NVC] or Compassionate Communication.<sup>317</sup> It is a technique for communication articulated by Marshall Rosenberg (2015). I say ‘articulated’ rather than ‘developed’ because, as Rosenberg admits, “it contains nothing new; all that has been

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<sup>317</sup> Ms. Calum’s relationship with and understanding of NVC will be discussed later.

integrated into NVC has been known for centuries” (2015, p.3). It is a way to talk *and* to listen that nurtures our “natural state of compassion when violence has subsided from the heart” (Rosenberg, 2015, p.2). The ‘violence’ of which Rosenberg is speaking disconnects us from each other; when we are seeking connection, when what we want is compassion and “a flow between myself and others based on a mutual giving from the heart,” we need to let go of the “cultural conditioning” that has us using hurtful and painful means to communicate (Rosenberg, 2015, p.4). NVC helps us to *reframe* what we hear others (and our self-talk) saying, as well as how we go about expressing ourselves (Rosenberg, 2015). The goal is no longer to get others to do what we want them to do, especially at the cost of our connection, but instead we observe without judgement, convey our feelings and listen to the feelings of others, speak our needs and be attentive when others speak their needs, and then express our requests and consider the requests of others (Rosenberg, 2015). This process invites us to observe our interactions and the behaviour of others for subtext, or ‘subtitles,’ and reflect on possible unmet needs that spark certain feelings or reactions, and perhaps even differences in values, so that we can act with compassion. NVC engenders empathetic engagement and is focused on connection.

Rosenberg makes the argument that specific forms of communication and language choices, such as moralistic judgements<sup>318</sup> or “a language rich with words that classify and dichotomize people and their actions,” contribute to a type of violence that is alienating for self and others (2015, p.16). He warns against the preoccupation with language that categorizes

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<sup>318</sup> Rosenberg differentiates between ‘value judgements’ and ‘moralistic judgements’ (2015). The two are not to be confused; the former is when we judge what we see as valuable in life, such as honesty (Rosenberg, 2015). The latter is a judgement about the people or behaviour that fails to support the values we want upheld, such as saying that dishonest people are liars and liars are bad people (Rosenberg, 2015).

other people (or one's self) as "good, bad, normal, abnormal, responsible, irresponsible, smart, ignorant, etc.," as it disconnects us, and he recommends that we shift our mindset to see all people as in need of the same thing: compassion (Rosenberg, 2015, p.16). Communication that employs the above cultural paradigm that pits one against the other is "tragic" because,

...when we express our values and needs in this form, we increase defensiveness and resistance among the very people whose behaviors are of concern to us. Or, if people do agree to act in harmony with our values, they will likely do so out of fear, guilt, or shame because they concur with our analysis of their wrongness. (Rosenberg, 2015, p.16)

Violent communication relies on either "external or internal coercion" to a norm<sup>319</sup> (Rosenberg, 2015, p.17). NVC subverts the labelling of people as 'good' or 'bad,' and instead of coercion, fear, or manipulation it relies on reconciling the dialectic by letting go of The Story that we can make people do something (Rosenberg, 2015, p.22). Rosenberg writes, "We can never make people do anything," but rather all we can do is "make them wish they had—through punishment" (2015, p.22). He suggests we stop the thinking that is based on "who deserves what," because this "blocks compassionate communication" (Rosenberg, 2015, p.22). We need to tear down those walls and establish common ground.

There is common ground between NVC and SR. Like NVC, SR is an 'articulation' of what we already know; when people are stressed, upset, acting out, dysregulated—whatever language you want to use—they *can't* self-actualize. They can't learn, socialize, understand the emotions and needs of others, plan, problem-solve, or so many other things *as well as they can when* they are well-regulated, balanced, feeling safe, etc. If SR is "an invitation to view

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<sup>319</sup> This is reminiscent of Foucauldian features of Productive Power, being discipline, normalization, and surveillance.

behaviour through the lens of compassion,” it is both a scientific lens that explains what the brain is doing when we are stressed, as well as a humanist lens that reminds us that in times of difficulty we all need empathy and consideration (Cranston, 2018). SR petitions us to choose connection over compliance; NVC also points to this choice as a practice worth adopting. Both SR and NVC also acknowledge that this is a shift away from ‘typical’ approaches to behaviour. Rather than focusing on misbehaviour, which inevitably involves labelling and judgements, stress behaviour reframes our assessment and our focus adjusts to consider unmet needs and skill deficits. Instead of emphasising what the other *should* do, or maintaining control of others through fear, guilt, or shame, SR and NVC ask us to meet needs and help create an environment where everyone *can* partake in our shared task; I believe the task is self-governance. SR and NVC are about humanization over dehumanization, stepping away from internal (Productive Power) or external (Fear-based) control, and embracing the idea that we are all people who are capable of understanding our own freedom and the freedoms of others.

One morning after recess, the students settled onto the carpet in the Grade One and Two classroom. Ms. Calum sat with them in the circle on the floor. They were unusually chatty and there was a strange tension in the air. I quickly discovered why there was this lack of focus. The teacher did a series of claps and the students fell silent and turned their faces toward her; some had expressions of concern, others relief, and many of them looked flushed and red.

“So, I heard that we had some difficulty during recess with our GAGA ball<sup>320</sup> time. That’s part of the reason we are all here. We are trying to learn how to communicate and how to work

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<sup>320</sup> ‘GAGA ball’ is a game that is a lot like the traditional dodge ball, but without teams and played outdoors in an octagonal court with low walls. Also, the ball can only be hit with a fist and not thrown. It is a very popular game in

things out together.” Her tone was calm, and her voice was barely audible to me; the students could hear her easily. I got up and moved closer. One student began to speak, and Ms. Calum carefully cut in.

“I notice that you are using names. I would like to focus on a solution. How could we tell our stories without blame?” The student began again. They told their own version of the story and when they were finished, the teacher responded,

“I like how you said, ‘some people.’ When you use that kind of language people don’t feel targeted.” She asked someone else for their story of what happened in the school yard. After they were finished, she repeated back what she heard them say and then asked, “What’s the connection?” The students discussed the ways in which the stories related to each other. Ms. Calum offered a version of what happened back to the students,

“So, it sounds like a child was tagged by the ball and therefore ‘out.’ Then, ‘some people’ started to say, ‘you’re out!’ The child who was ‘out’ then kicked the ball out of the court and it landed in a neighbour’s yard. Again, ‘some people’ began to yell and there was an emotional exchange of words.” The children murmur in agreement and one student added that the ball was particularly special to the class.

“Right, because it is one of the last original GAGA balls, isn’t it?” Her tone was empathetic. The student nodded in response and then hung their head. Ms. Calum spoke again, but this time to the class as a whole, “What do you think is happening for someone’s brain when they are kicking a ball out of the GAGA ball court?” The students immediately offer

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the school district in this study. The participating school had assigned times to use the court for each grade, most classes had their own ‘GAGA ball’ ball.

variations of 'flipping their lid.' She smiled and prodded further, "When someone is feeling that way, is their pre-frontal cortex online?" The students replied with 'no' and 'it's gone offline.' It was the final day of my observations and this was the first time I heard the students or teacher use these words. One student suggested that maybe the child shouldn't have kicked it like that,

"They could have done something else." There was some agreement in the group. Ms. Calum smiled with understanding and then returned,

"But that is hard when someone's flipped their lid. What can we do to support someone who's flipped their lid? What do you think? If you were 'out' and you really wanted to win, and what if your friends said 'you're out, you're out' like that? Let's act it out." Hands went up. The teacher selected someone to be the child who was 'out' and a couple other students to taunt that child. When the scenario was over, Ms. Calum asked the actor being heckled about how they felt.

"I would feel like I was really bad at GAGA ball." The students took their seats on the carpet and Ms. Calum posed another question,

"I wonder what would be happening in your brain. This reminds me of a book." She got up and retrieved *The Animals in my Brain*,<sup>321</sup> by Sarah Joseph (2018), and returned to the group to read it out loud. As she read, she interjected here and there; she brought attention to how we all have the same animals, the same parts with the same functions, in our brains. The students were engaged and sometimes they filled in the words, calling out when Ms. Calum

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<sup>321</sup> In the book, we hear the story of a child who has a "big fight" with her sister (Joseph, 2018, p.2). After she flips her lid, her mother talks to her about the animals in her brain. The "Wise old Owl" is the prefrontal cortex, "Anthony the Ape" is the threat response (fight, flight, freeze, faint, as discussed in Chapter Four), "Elsa the Elephant" is the hippocampus, and "Derik the Guard Dog" is the amygdala (Joseph, 2018). The book reviews what happens in our brains when we have a threat response through the personalities of these animals.

paused, indicating that they had previously read the book. She stopped to ask a student a question,

“So, Quinn,\* if your little sister was bugging you, would your brain know whether this is just annoying or a threat?” Quinn jumped right in,

“My brain thinks it is a threat. Like, when she messed up my Pokeman cards and I threw a toy at her.” The other children broke out in chatter, and Ms. Calum invited them to talk with someone nearby about what it feels like when “Derik the Guard Dog,” the amygdala or our stress/threat detector,<sup>322</sup> is barking in our bodies (Joseph, 2018). After a moment, she called them to attention with some snapping and clapping; they snapped and clapped and turned back to the circle.

“So, what does it feel like for your partner? Was it like the way you feel when your guard dog gets going? Jordan?\*” The teacher nodded and looked at the child to her left. Jordan looked thoughtful and said,

“My face gets hot.” The other students indicated that they felt similarly. Other students took turns sharing, and offered ‘clenched fists,’ ‘a bad feeling in my tummy,’ and ‘like I want to yell or run.’

“Or, kick a GAGA ball?” Ms. Calum interjected. The students nodded and there was a whirl of assent among them. She finished the book and took three deep breaths with her eyes closed. Many of the students did the same. She continued,

You know, yelling at someone and saying ‘you’re out, you’re out’ is kind of like the guard dog barking, isn’t it? And the guard dog alerts someone else’s dog. I am sure we have a lot of ideas about what we could do differently next time.

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<sup>322</sup> The parts of the brain and their roles in a stress reaction were discussed in Chapter Four.

But, for right now, I am asking you to have some compassion for the person who flipped their lid. We all know it doesn't feel good. And when we think about what is happening with the animals in our brains, it might just change the way we talk to each other.

In our post-observation interview, Ms. Calum said that she was new to SR, but that it felt like a natural progression in her teaching. I asked her about her use of NVC, and whether she took up the practice before or with SR. She looked genuinely confused. I rephrased my question, "You communicate like you know about NVC. I was wondering about that. Is there a formula you follow?" She wanted to know what I meant by 'NVC' and I elaborated and then said, "Do you see what I mean? Because you seem to speak it fluently. You approach unexpected behaviour, from a child leaning back on their chair to a school yard upset, *with* calm and *without* judgement. You relate feelings and needs. No one seems to feel singled out or in trouble. You listen with empathy and you offer requests in ways that include the students in the problem-solving. You reframe their behaviour with them."

She thought for a moment and then spoke, "Well, I think that all of that is just rooted in respect. Because they are people. *They are people.*" She emphasised this point. I could see that NVC just seemed intuitively obvious to her. But I wondered if she saw the connection to SR. She leaned forward and added, "I just kind of feel like it is being a human being." She related her communication style to her upbringing and how she was parented.

"But, do you hear other people communicating with kids in other ways that do not acknowledge their humanity?"<sup>323</sup> I asked. She moved back in her chair and put her hand to her heart and began to nod. She looked up at the ceiling and then back at me.

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<sup>323</sup> In this question, I am asking about a language of dominance (Rosenberg, 2015), which relates to Hegel's Master-Slave-Dialectic and the CMN. Within the CMN, a language of dominance is employed because The Story

“I actually hurts. It hurts me.” She said solemnly. She spoke again, as though she could read the question on my face and was responding to me.

Well, maybe it’s my own selfish piece. That kind of communication brings me to calm. Instead of an accusation or... I don’t know. I want to directly model communication in a positive way. If we have the right tools, we can do better. It’s all modelling, right? That’s how they learn. And then that becomes their language and how they learn to communicate. I mean, if you are constantly around a bunch of angry people who say mean things to each other, then that is what you learn. Because their brains are just constantly absorbing the information and then they try it out. Sometimes when a child says something mean they are just trying it on. Sometimes we talk about that. ‘Hey, I noticed you try that on. How did that feel? Oh, it didn’t feel good. That’s good to know.’ But that is them interpreting their world. I think if they have positive communication around them then they are more likely to communicate in expected and positive ways. And then everyone is a little more regulated. And we can communicate our dysregulation in better ways, too.

“Some might say that what you do is way too much work. What do you say?” I asked.

She nodded with a knowing smile.

“Yeah. Once they get it, though, it’s not a lot of work. I mean, there’s blips. But then they can start solving it themselves. Once they have the tools. That culture. Those leaders. It’s hard work, but it’s important work. It goes back to them being humans.”

This is *what* democracy feels like

The Stories are incessant. Where vulnerability takes shape, and we grasp for some kind of certainty, stories-that-we-all-know appear indistinctly and unannounced. Can we resist them? Can we do so in a way that is empowering? Perhaps, if we can see the differences between power and empowerment. Joyce Bellous (1995) argues that when considering this

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(the MSD) tells us that we need to dominate others or be dominated. It also tells us that some people (the slave in an interaction) are not capable of self-control, so our dominance is justified. These Stories dehumanize, or fail to acknowledge the humanity, of all involved (Freire, 2005).

difference, power “refers to *zero-sum* games in which one individual or group loses something while another individual or group gains something” (p.6). But both master and slave lose their humanity. Our humanity is not a commodity, and one’s power over others (or lack thereof) is not our *worth*; power *over* others is scarce, but there is no scarcity when it comes to empowerment (Bellous, 1995). My empowerment does not subtract from your empowerment. When we resist playing these games, when we *see* Stories that rely on the zero-sum, we are reconciling the dialectic and opening up to other possibilities. Much like getting into the habit of NVC is to constantly subvert the cultural language of domination (Rosenberg, 2015), praxis as empowerment requires consistent reflection and a commitment to action. *Seeing* children through a SR lens means that we need to acknowledge that our eyes have been formed by the dominant narrative of CM and other Stories. And, when I consider the data and all that I have experienced, I must be unremittingly engaged in dismantling the narrative of what constitutes ‘research’ and *how* I should be undertaking analysis so that it is rigorous.

I noticed that my default was to reduce the data to the *how*. When decoding what has occurred in a classroom, it is easy to revert to an examination of cause and effect. The teacher paused and took a breath; students also breathed and were perceived as calmer and more focused. But, what about the *who* and the *what*? In Chapter Two, I discussed the way in which CM and its tactics are often studied and discussed only in terms of the *how*. Straume’s (2015) distinction between these three perspectives allow for a more nuanced and political look at SR in classroom teaching. Rather than the focal point being on the practice, the *doing* and *how* it is being done, I need to consider the *who* and the *what* surrounding the action. *Whose* aim is being supported? *Who* is affected by the aim and the method; who benefits? *What* is the aim

that this technique is supporting? *What* is The Story surrounding this aim? Does *what* one is trying to achieve align with one's actual goals? These aspects are deeply related to the *how* and need to be reflected upon; they help us to see the connections and disconnections between our theory and practice.

Returning to the questions that brought me here, I am searching the data through a lens of resistance. There is no perfected pedagogy; the *best practice* is being reflective, bringing one closer to praxis. Does SR provide a connection between the theory and goals of progressivist education and its enactment or *how* it is done? I have argued that SR theory argues for progress and transformation, for democracy and resistance to The Stories that subvert these aims. But, when in the context of the classroom, because "being in a world is not purely mental but also moody, embodied, and embedded," can one make the theory-practice connection (Garcia & Lewis, 2014, p.145)? Managing a classroom within the CMN can be done without this connection; if we are distracted by dominant narratives, we can find comfort in dichotomous thinking and certainty, and maintain the status quo. No reflection required. Bearing in mind what I have experienced in these 'SR classrooms,' can the *how* of SR be separated from the *who* and the *what*? Does SR in classroom teaching address the CMN—are The Stories resisted—or does the CMN sneak in and distract SR from its progressivist aims? Does the progressivist classroom practice of teaching SR support the progressivist goal of preparing people to be self-governing participants in a democratic society?

Sitting in a tiny chair, listening to Ms. Asher as she tried to articulate her goals for her students, I smiled widely. She echoed the many other teachers to whom I has posed this query;

she was giving me *The Answer*.<sup>324</sup> She wanted them to be empathetic, kind, to have perseverance, “because you’re going to get knocked back,” and to be compassionate (including self-compassion), confident, “Confident in who they are and that they have a voice... Use your voice but also listen to others and that’s so, so important,” vulnerable, “Embrace vulnerability and its beauty,” and happy, “Just happiness. Happiness for yourself looks different from other people. Just be happy.” When I asked her why she wanted this for her students, she paused to think and then spoke,

But they already are all of these things and more. I want them to know that they’ve lived it and that they continue to live it. I just want them to continue to be curious and to learn and to find what makes them happy and to be kind to other people. But these are just my values, my hopes. I would hope they have their own as well.

The image of the child<sup>325</sup> that Ms. Asher shared through her words was subversive to the traditional one; it turns the idea that the teacher must lead the child out of ignorance on its head. In her eyes, the students were already capable and *fully human*. She continued, “I don’t think I’m the be-all and end-all. I want to give them their own autonomy. Their own experiences are just as valid.”

*Who* are the students within this ‘SR classroom’? They are capable co-contributors, they understand the freedom of themselves and others, and their teacher (another *who*) holds them to their role through SR. *What* are they doing when they travel from the gym to the classroom, walking down the hallway, stopping to drink water and use the washroom without teacher

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<sup>324</sup> *The Answer* was discussed in the Introductory chapter.

<sup>325</sup> The image of the child in respect to both traditionalist and progressivist perspectives is discussed in Chapter Three.

oversight? Or when they arrive in the classroom independently and lay on the carpet to cool down? *What* allows for these students to do this? *Who* trusts them and *what* allows for this trust? Do they trust themselves and believe in their own abilities to self-govern? *What* holds us back from this trust or a faith in self-governance? When I designed the questions for the post-observation interview, I thought that I would be asking them of participants who unknowingly (or without reflection) subscribed to the CMN. I have heard *The Answer* come from the same mouths that purported children necessitated control or else there would be chaos. There was a difference in the way Ms. Asher presented her answer; she didn't present her goals for the students as something to be achieved in the future, she believed that *kids could handle their freedom now*.

Ms. Calum echoed this notion.<sup>326</sup> In her post-observation interview, she listed the standard characteristics found in *The Answer*, but when I asked her 'why,' she said,

Children have a lot to contribute and I think they get into this school system and somehow they learn that if their idea is not a certain way then it isn't worth sharing. Like they could share with each other and not just with me. They could learn to hear and share with each other rather than just learning to say what they think I want to hear. We need our learners to be able to notice, adapt, and respond to situations that are unexpected. And I think that when they use good thinking with a kind heart it sets the world further ahead.

Ms. Calum identified The Story that teachers teach, and learners figure out how to obey their teachers. She also rejected this Story and proposed that not only should kids handle their own freedom in school, but with empowerment their contributions would be innovative and forward-thinking, or 'progressive.'

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<sup>326</sup> It should be noted that Ms. Asher's and Ms. Calum's interviews were conducted separately. I have blended the presentation of their responses for narrative purposes.

My next question, and Ms. Asher's response, threw us both for a loop. I asked her, 'What is Classroom Management?' She groaned and said, "It's a beast." And then fell silent. I waited with my best 'researcher face;' I wanted to show that I was listening, but at the same time disguise my emotions and expectations. I knew from my observations, and from our previous interview and all of our interactions that she did not practice CM. Her answer was either a pivot-and-deflect, or she misunderstood the question. She described how she views her role as a teacher; she is a "facilitator of learning." She is the "safe adult" for her students. And then she described SR. She spoke about how she uses SR to "promote and monitor the climate of learning," but also their "shared values." She referred to 'respect' and the need to have it for each other and for self. Then she said,

I think that comes from a deep understanding of who we are, so sharing that and playing in that vulnerability... And, with that I hope we can respect each other. We also need clear expectations and boundaries. What is expected and not expected,<sup>327</sup> 'unexpected'. And why do we agree? You hear constantly, you know, 'feel the room, how does it feel, how does it sound, how does it look? Is that safe? Is this productive? Can we learn? Can we do our best learning right now? We can't? Okay, then how can we adjust that?' And taking their voice as just as valuable.

What I heard was a commitment to progressivist goals. The humanization of students and teacher; empowerment rather than power. *What* I didn't hear was the CMN. How could I rephrase my question? Would that even help? Perhaps she didn't use CM because she didn't

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<sup>327</sup> When the participating teachers use the language of 'expected' and 'unexpected,' the focus is not on behaviour but rather the needs of self and others. Also, placing actions or words into one of these categories is not a judgement. There can be both expected and unexpected things that are positive. For example, when a student was late coming back from recess (unexpected) because they wanted to return the ball another class had left in the yard (unexpected), Ms. Asher called it "an unexpected act of kindness." Ms. Calum relied on this distinction to help a new student adapt to the classroom. She would say to the new student, "Sorry, I bumped you with my arm. That was unexpected, wasn't it?" And then later, she would coach that student on a social interaction by talking about what the other students may have expected or what was unexpected.

know what it meant? Perhaps the tactics were foreign to her? I took a chance and asked her this follow-up question: “You’ve described your interpretation of CM, but how do most people think of CM? If you were to define it in the more mainstream sense?” She didn’t hesitate at all and immediately responded with, “The teacher controls it. The teacher owns it.” Her voice was low. Her body language had gone from relaxed to tense. She continued slowly and carefully,

They sometimes share the power. Sometimes they keep all the power. But I think having the children manage with you is key. And, sharing that power, because it’s their classroom. I have the privilege—I am the assigned adult—and I think we have to be respectful. This is a group of learners and they need to have a say in the management and how it’s done. And we need to check in, reflect. So, yeah, I think traditionally the teacher manages and the children comply. And if they don’t, then you’re not managing the class. But I think you need to work collaboratively with the children.

When I asked, “What’s classroom management?” Ms. Calum heard my question clearly. She grimaced a little and then spoke.

It’s what I learned when I came out of teaching school. There was a lot of 1-2-3, eyes on me. You stop, you listen, I’m the teacher, you are going to do what I say. I see it a lot in schools. Stillness and quiet is mandated rather than... It didn’t feel right for me, because it felt disrespectful. And I know that’s... Um, it’s really, really important to me to have a respectful relationship with the students I teach. And, there has to be mutual respect.

She paused for a moment, and then broke the silence when she said, “I think that the traditional CM thing—and this is just from my experience—is just, you know, asking whether or not the kids are doing what you say.<sup>328</sup> And, safety is important for me. But I don’t actually need the kids to do what I say because maybe what they say is actually better.” She laughed and so

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<sup>328</sup> This is a variation on The Question: How do I get them to do what I want them to do?

did I. She continued, “You know? And so, if we are restricted by that than our learning is restricted. And so, I really want a classroom community where children contribute, or they say, ‘I don’t understand,’ instead of chugging along, and oh geeze, ‘sit down, shut-up, and do your worksheet’ when they don’t understand.”

Ms. Calum had been teaching for more than ten years. She had “tried on” the CM approach, but it wasn’t her style. The school-wide inquiry into SR came at the right time. She credited her reading of the new curriculum in British Columbia as an early catalyst for her moving away from a CM approach, saying, “That change for me was like, ‘Let’s raise kind, curious people who know how to think and know how to communicate’ and that just felt a lot better to who I am and how I want to be in this role. And with children, when their learning comes from them, that’s the real learning.” But SR added something else; her own SR strategies. She explained,

Self-regulation puts us at our best. Like for myself, when I am calm and alert, I am putting my best teaching forward. And in doing that I am getting the best out of our kids. We are able to ask those questions that really stretch us. The flow is able to carry on, instead of being stopped by CM. The flow of the learning just happens in an organic and meaningful way. But when learners aren’t regulated, it stops. I can see that happening, but so can they.

Ms. Asher told me about her CM style before SR. She had taught primary overseas and was asked to use a school-wide program that employed a stop-light picture symbolizing behaviour and pegs that represented the students. The teacher could move the pegs to indicate

the quality of the students' behaviour. Green was compliant,<sup>329</sup> and she said that I could guess the meaning of the other colours.

"I'm now a little bit ashamed of myself for doing that." She laughed with some discomfort, "I feel like that was shame. I was using shame unknowingly at the time." Some teachers would call the green light kids their 'superheroes' or 'super-wow students;' the consequence for being a red-light kid was usually a phone call home about poor behaviour. Ms. Asher stopped using it, she explained, "I didn't feel like I needed to. I didn't feel good about it. I just thought that there were more effective ways to work with children's emotions. Children were communicating to me through their behaviours." But she was criticized by her principal for her transgression and her seeming lack of management skills. We shared a laugh about that last point and then I asked her if she ever finds herself slipping back into a CM approach.

"No, I don't think I use that language anymore." She began to talk about her favourite language to use with kids, and she described a meta-language that included aspects of NVC, the SR theory of domains,<sup>330</sup> some elements of The Zones of Regulation®, and the differentiation of 'expected' and 'unexpected'. She explained that she wanted to be very mindful of the language she was using, and she expressed,

...it takes time and practice and just hearing different things and playing with it. Um, and I think what a lovely way of showing children 'I expect this' and

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<sup>329</sup> The stoplight program that is being referenced here should not be confused with The Zones of Regulation®. The former program is an overtly compliance-based CM tool and the latter is intended to help students assess their regulation so that they can employ tactics to reduce stress. In the stoplight program, I would guess that 'yellow light' would be a warning about misbehavior and a 'red light' would be a punishment or threat surrounding misbehaviour. Again, 'green' is associated with desirable behaviour, but the *goal* within a CM tool is compliance, which a SR program *should not* employ discipline to maintain or achieve desired behaviour because this would cause more stress. The focus in a SR approach, regardless of whether one is using a tool such as The Zones of Regulation®, should be stress behaviour and practices that can assess self and others for stress, stressors, and stress reduction.

<sup>330</sup> The domains of SR are discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

the link to that is ‘I believe in you,’ ‘I know you can do it,’ ‘I can help you,’ ‘I trust you.’ I do think trust is a great thing to talk about. I do trust them, and I want them to know that. It’s their learning and I want them to own that. ‘Oh, and if you have an idea for that, let’s talk it out.’ I think they feel respected.

I had heard this in her practice. This was the language she and her students used all day, every day. Even when a student had “Gone red zone,” as they had called it, or when Ms. Asher was dysregulated and struggling, she *and* the students used the language and relied on their ‘strategies’ to bring themselves back to green. Her classroom wasn’t a utopia—it wasn’t without problems—unexpected things happened regularly, and members of the classroom community would occasionally arrive at school or back from recess with stress loads that were unmanageable. So, how did they avoid being distracted by The Story that this was chaos in need of control? I asked her, “What do you say to those who say that what you do is too much work? That without CM there would be chaos?” Ms. Asher smiled and answered with confident ease, “Oh, I would say it’s actually easier. That’s the secret.” She laughed, and repeated “Easier!” I asked her how it was easier. She offered the following:

Try to be vulnerable. That’s connection. That’s instant connection. You’re giving them a bit of yourself. Give them a moment. Try that and it’s actually so much easier. You don’t have to hold it all in. I think as teachers, and we talk about this as a staff, we have empathy and we bottle it all up and we worry about that. Being kinder to ourselves and the stress we take on. The empathy, the emotions that we hold, and we carry every day, take a toll on the body. And that isn’t healthy. In that way of looking at it, we do need to make a change. Teachers are burning out. Maybe that is the argument. Maybe we need to look at that. The way we manage [classrooms], it is exhausting. I’ve done it! It is exhausting being the one voice all of the time. Sometimes, yep, what I am doing, it takes work. It takes practice. But then the children start doing it. The children are absolutely capable.

I responded with, “Are the teachers capable?”

“Yes!”

“But, do you see people who misinterpret SR?” I needed to know that what I had seen in schools, the teachers who had said that they practice SR, but seem to rely on CM, wasn’t an anomaly or possibly unique perception. Again, with no hesitation, she responded with an assurance that comes from experience.

“Yes.” And she mentioned that there seems to be a disconnect between what she does, such as her room décor, and what she is really doing all day. She said,

I have been recently approached by other teachers with ‘hey, what are the Zones of Regulation? Can you email me that stuff? Can you send me that binder? Can you send me the online link?’ They want me to tell them how to do SR in an email. I said, I actually can’t... It’s more than a shared language. Then, I’m finding that I say ‘Well, let’s sit down and talk. Because I don’t want to overwhelm, but self-regulation is not just a one-stop program where I point to something. It’s within everything that I’m doing.’ So, that’s their misconception. I can’t just offer you something in a quick email. For some people, I don’t think that’s what they’re looking for.

It sounded as though the teachers were requesting a tool to help them “tactfully cope” (Garcia & Lewis, 2014, p.157): the inclination toward certainty, to be given an ‘answer,’ rather than the vulnerability that comes with the questioning, reflection, and action that comes with praxis, gives the illusion of simplicity. Up until observing these ‘self-regulation classrooms,’ the (so-called) SR to which I had been exposed seemed almost faddish; the buzz around it, along with the enthusiasm for yoga balls and feelings posters, felt superficial or perfunctory. CM texts and programs are often marketed as a quick and easy fix, but SR is about a “mindset shift” (Hopkins, 2017). A shift in our worldview requires a consideration of what we believe and our aims, as well as how our actions connect or disconnect—support or undermine—our beliefs and aims.

SR may be *easier*, but it is not a superficial change. Praxis and changing one's mindset take effort, practice, and time. It also requires self-compassion and ongoing resistance.

I asked Ms. Calum about the first months of school. She had mentioned in passing one morning recess that the first three months were dedicated to “community building” and not to curriculum content. Cynthia Charter's (2002) CM textbook that I discussed in previous chapters, *Teaching Children to Care*, states, “I spend the first six weeks of school teaching children how to behave... I do not apologize for this use of time. It is not a waste... It is the critical foundation of learning. It is the first curriculum. I call it ‘classroom management’” (p.27). I have heard this timeframe stretch between ‘weeks’ to the first half of the school year. I wondered about the work it takes to set up the routines and structures in a ‘SR classroom;’ I asked Ms. Calum what the challenges might be. She said,

It's not the kids. There are children who have needs. We all do. But if you have children with special needs in a more regulated classroom then they are more likely to be successful, too. Because then there isn't the overstimulation, there are expected behaviours and they have been coached and supported in how to understand this. But I think that there is always going to be different things that different kids need, that is how you identify the stressors, so in the classroom you reduce those stressors. Is it going to be different next year? Yes, because you have different kids! But we are still going to do what we can during those three months and ask ourselves ‘what do they need?’ It's new children and a new community and we have to work with that.

“But isn't it more difficult to do SR? Some teachers say that their students couldn't handle it.” I asked. She smiled and laughed, then offered the following:

Well, they probably would've thought my kids couldn't handle it in September. Really. But, in our classroom, SR means that one child is sleeping in a corner of our room. Someone is on a wobble seat. Someone is going to take a few trips to the drinking fountain, running their hands along the walls

as they go, and that is just what they need to come back and do their best. Because that's what they need. And, you know what, some needs are harder to meet in these walls, so we go outside. And I think my job is to keep trying until we find something that works. Sam\* had three different chairs this year. They had a rocker and then we got this wiggle chair and it wasn't right until they turned it on its side, and it was almost like they got this intense pressure, and everything clicked. It was great. And there's a kid who has a lot to contribute. A lot to contribute.

"So," I started, "why isn't everyone using SR? What stands in our way?"

I think that people feel comfortable with the 'known,' with the way they did it, with the preconceived notions. We all have experience in education because we all went to school. And it feels comfortable when school happens in the way you already know it to happen. And so, as progressive educators we need to stretch that understanding. You know, why we learn outside, why we communicate, why we create a culture where we can disagree.

The barrier appears to be a lack of praxis. SR is *not* too big of a commitment to adopt. SR is not over-complicated. Research, school boards, and Faculties of Education across Canada support SR. It is not our students who stand in the way; they are capable. Children with exceptional needs benefit from SR; they are not an excuse for CM. What does it mean to 'stretch our understanding?' We have done this before; we have let go of corporal punishment, we have taken on the call for more outdoor time, we have embraced the role of play in learning. We have questioned The Stories that caused us to balk. Praxis is possible.

# Making Easter: A Conclusion

*Many teachers unfortunately have been destroyed by the dominant ideology of a society and they tend to impose that way of seeing the world and behaving on kids. They usually view it as "saving" kids, as a missionary would. This tendency stems from a superiority complex. When we fall into this way of thinking, we are touching kids with surgical masks and gloves.*

–Freire, 1985, p.19

## Rising from the Ashes

The quotation above hurts me. I consider myself among those teachers who “unfortunately have been destroyed” (Freire, 1985, p.19). My demise was not in a single moment, but rather it was a death by a thousand cuts. I had good intentions; at least I thought that I was not motivated by a goal that was unsavory. I did not wake up and rub my hands together in glee as I imagined all the ways in which I would control children each day.<sup>331</sup> My time was not spent calculating every move of the kids in my care.<sup>332</sup> Rather, I was constantly asking myself, how could I make a classroom *better*? I regularly wondered, was there a more *effective* method of teaching? Was there a more *innovative* way in which to explain this concept? How could I *reach* this child? And my goals for my students were in line with The Answer<sup>333</sup> and progressivist education; I wanted them to gain the freedom to be fully human and learn self-governance. I set out to accomplish my aims through perfected explanations, communication that depended on dominance, and classroom management tactics that were

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<sup>331</sup> In other words, I did not embrace a Hobbesian version of the role of a ‘sovereign.’

<sup>332</sup> I did not break down the daily movements of my pupils in the way that Rousseau was discussed as doing in Chapter One of this text.

<sup>333</sup> The Answer was discussed in the Introductory chapter.

seemingly innovative and positive but garnered compliance by a means almost undetectable.<sup>334</sup> And when my efforts were met with opposition, when what I was *doing* seemed to dwindle in effect, I would question my *practice*. I did not consider the disconnection between my aims or beliefs and my methods; I did not consider the distance between progressivist goals of democracy and the messages of CM tactics. I was distracted by The Question of *how do I get them to do what I want them to do?* Echoing in my ears were the stories-that-we-all-know about ‘good’ kids and ‘natural’ teachers; kids aren’t capable and competent teachers have well-managed classrooms.<sup>335</sup>

I would occasionally reinvent my approach, but only in ways that were supported by—or maintained—the existing Stories; after all, control begets resistance, and then there is a need for more (or at least another form of) control. I continually found ‘new’ methods that would work. What they ‘worked’ to achieve was always the same, and undermined my goals, but I didn’t notice. Compliance was necessary.<sup>336</sup> Without it, there would be chaos. And I could help kids learn to control themselves, make appropriate decisions, problem-solve with acceptable outcomes, and confidently follow the expectations. A little praise in the right moment, giving certain kids ‘choices,’ letting others know that I was watching them, and making an example of the positive and on-task students were the best (most effective) ways to conjure *self-control* among them. Besides, wasn’t I passing on a lesson in freedom through offering options? As

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<sup>334</sup> These elements seemed to be modelled after Rousseau; I wanted to teach self-governance, but I did not trust that students were capable, so I relied of Foucauldian features of Productive Power so that I could be in control without appearing to be a Hobbesian sovereign as that clearly conflicted with my progressivist identity.

<sup>335</sup> This is The Story of Hegel’s Master-Slave Dialectic: A master knows that the slaves need to be controlled or else there will be chaos.

<sup>336</sup> The Story of the MSD, and The Question, distracted me from praxis. What I *thought of as reflection* was only The Stories being told *through me*.

Rousseau says, “[t]o lead them as you will, they must be led as they will” (Rousseau, 1762/1974, p.47). And, in turn, my well-managed classroom was praised.<sup>337</sup> In my outdoor education career, the calm and organized dining hall also drew accolades. I could stand on a wooden platform at the front of a room with twenty tables, each seating ten people, and raise my hand for silence and receive it. But, one evening, as I delivered some announcements to 200 middle-school children waiting for their ice cream, I was suddenly overcome by one question.

I had initiated a Simon-Says-like game to get the crowd to put down their spoons while I spoke. I hadn’t heard the clinking sound of metal since every spoon had been set onto each table. I caught the eyes of a veteran teacher, who earlier that day had commended my methods of managing the meals. He said, “Without you, it would be a disaster in there. You are teaching them to sit and calmly eat. A lot of kids don’t know how to do that.” It had been a month since our staff team’s experiment with Alfie Kohn’s (2001) article and refraining from praise; from that time, I had grown wary of receiving a ‘Good Job!’ as much as doling them out. I was still vulnerable about how Kohn’s article caused me to feel about my own practice. Cecelia’s\* comment that ‘Good Job!’ was “a conversation stopper” had been revelatory for me. The way in which my commitment to positive reinforcement had undermined my goal to connect with others, and support their freedom to be fully human,<sup>338</sup> had been a springboard into critically thinking about other aspects of my approach. After locking eyes with the teacher who had

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<sup>337</sup> I was also subject to The Story; I was surveilled and my behaviour was normalized and disciplined. My ‘effective’ teaching was rewarded and what was judged as ‘effective’ was a well-managed classroom (the use of these very features of discipline, normalization, and surveillance), rather than the connection or learning of my students.

<sup>338</sup> At the time, I was not using the language ‘freedom to be fully human,’ but I had done an inventory about what I wanted for the students and staff in terms of values that I hoped were cultivated during their time at the camp. These values or characteristics were similar. The Answer and the freedom to be fully human that was discussed in depth in the Introductory chapter (pages 40-50).

praised my management of others, I turned my gaze back to the faces of the managed. I finished giving directions in my whimsical and yet prudent way. But my stomach felt full of uncertainty and my heart was weighted with discomfort. By the time I stepped off the podium, and the students had dug into their desserts and conversations around the tables, I was formulating a question that I am still troubling on a daily basis.

*Does what I am doing reflect what I believe?*

This question allows me to ask other difficult questions; questions that are unsettling because the answers, if I am honest, may dispel the notion that I am the teacher or parent that I think I am.

The evening after ice cream was served, I asked myself whether I was teaching the students to be calm, or if I was teaching compliance? What was the *belief* behind what I was *doing*? Swirling perturbation ensued and I swatted away the gnats that seemed to interrogate every tried and tested method I have used when running a meal or teaching a lesson or leading a staff meeting. I settled the swarm of concerns with an inner monologue that argued that the dining hall *needed* to be managed in the way that I managed it. There was safety to consider—hot food, allergies, choking—but also the comfort of those at camp was always a concern; getting the right food and enough food in a timely manner, not to mention within a comfortable environment, was essential to having a positive experience while being away from home and trying new things in an outdoor setting. Much like a classroom, it would be chaos if everyone stood up at once to get what they needed. Some people would be uncomfortable to eat a meal while others ran circles around their tables or shouted. Things *needed* to be orderly.

Someone needed to tell everyone what ‘orderly’ looked like and how it could be done.<sup>339</sup> It was comforting to reason with myself in this way; there may be *better* ways in which I could manage the dining hall. But, I wondered, ‘better’ at what? Was the goal *order*? Was the belief that the students would be disorderly without my management? Was I imposing a “way of seeing the world and behaving on kids” (Freire, 1985, p.19)? If so, for whose benefit? Did I know what was best? Was I “‘saving’ kids, as a missionary would” (Freire, 1985, p.19) from their poor behaviour? Was “a superiority complex” causing a disconnection between us—me and those with whom I worked—and was this “way of thinking” maintaining a distance much like “touching kids with surgical masks and gloves”<sup>340</sup> (Freire, 1985, p.19) or a “conversation stopper?”

My practices seemed more committed to The Stories than my aims as a progressivist educator. The dominant narratives were reinforced by the words of the teacher who commended me—it would be chaos without my careful-yet-fun management—but the success

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<sup>339</sup> The Story that I was telling myself, or was being told through me, was the MSD and left me with no other possibilities; the *only* options were control or chaos. This offered certainty. It offered security in my role as ‘capable’ and the role of children as ‘incapable.’

<sup>340</sup> In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (2005) works through Hegel’s MSD in relation to the teacher-student relationship. He assessed this Story as one of subject [master] and object [slave], and argues that “in order to transform it” we need to *see* The Story and end our dependency on it (Freire, 2005, p.53). For Freire, in order to “resolve the teacher-student contradiction, to exchange the role of depositor, prescriber, domesticator, for the role of student among students would be to undermine the power of oppression and serve the cause of liberation” (Freire, 2005, p.73). Just as Hegel argues, the slave or object cannot be *given* their liberation; Freire contends that students must struggle for empowerment (2005). Also, teachers cannot paternalistically supply students with freedom (Freire, 2005). But for Hegel, the master is not emancipated; Freire offers a way for teachers, too, to become empowered. Overcoming the problem of a subject-object binary requires letting go of The Story and letting in the possibilities of humanization (Harvey, 2015). Freire sees feasibility in the emancipation of *all* in uniting in solidarity; “consciousness and world cannot be dichotomized” (Torres, 1994, p.437). Just as there is always unity between “theory and praxis, between content and method, between thought and being, and between objectivity and subjectivity” (Torres, 1994, p.437), the teacher can relinquish the dominating and oppressive features of their position “which restores at once the humanity of both the oppressed and the oppressor” (Torres, 1994, p.441). As hooks explains, teachers need to make their practice a site of resistance because “empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging students to take risks” (1994, p.21).

of my methods to garner desirable behaviour from children who were eager to consume their frozen rewards also fortified my position. Trays of dessert were available first to the tables that were cleared and quiet; this was motivation, *not* a bribe. Only one person from a table could retrieve the tray of ice cream from the kitchen trolley and if pairs of excited children attempted to fetch the dessert for their table, they would receive their *just desserts* (pun intended) and be sent back empty-handed. This was *not* a punishment; *one* of the kids could return to get the tray. The rule had to be abided. If we allowed for pairs, then there would soon be entire tables storming the desserts. Every excuse, all of my *reasonings*, sounded like an argument for control or chaos, which is a close cousin of 'kids can't handle their freedom.' My focus or aim was on *my need to get them to do what I wanted them to do*. I know this because my success, the accomplishment of my goal or purpose, was measured by the compliance of the managed. But what were their needs? Was I setting aside their humanity in favour of desired behaviour?

Freire continues,

We often believe the ideological words that are told to us—and which we repeat—rather than believing what we're living. The only way to escape that ideological trap, to unveil reality, is to create counter-ideology to help us break the dominant ideology. This is accomplished by reflecting critically on our concrete experiences, to consider the *raison d'etre* of the facts we reflect on. (1985, p.19)

A concrete example of unveiled reality, living and breathing "counter-ideology," was what happened when we stopped saying 'Good Job!' Praise had been used to elicit what we thought of as ideal conduct. We believed that it was necessary for self-esteem, or because we thought that the only alternative to positive reinforcement was negative reinforcement, and we wanted to build kids up and not tear them down. We wanted to motivate them to be 'good' (*not* bribe

them and *not* punish them for ‘bad’ behaviour). Reflecting critically on what we were doing, and how it may or may not subvert our goals, was only the first step. Opening up to other possibilities and putting them into action was the hardest part, and yet so very simple. It was *easier* to build connections with students and each other when the goal of compliance was abandoned and there was a shift to considering needs (both mine and yours) and how to meet those needs. It wasn’t uncomplicated; there was a lot of unlearning and new discovery—there were mistakes—but there were opportunities for compassion, creativity, and empowerment for *both* teachers and students.

Praxis, or questioning the connections and disconnections between thinking and doing, helps us to see The Stories; the ones we cling to because they seem to be the *single* or only Story, and the ones that comfort us, underpin how we move about in the world, and reconcile our places in it. Our questions can be transformative, but we have to allow them to have this effect. As shame researcher, Brené Brown, says, “[w]e can choose courage or we can choose comfort, but we can’t have both” (2017, p.4). When we notice the hold that a Story has on us, or that our practice has been co-opted and is in service to a Story that subverts our goals, we can feel defensive, weak, powerless, and/or deceived. A common reaction to the notion that one lacks control is to try to regain it. Vulnerability is confused for being threatened. When we feel threatened, it becomes more challenging to ask critical questions, to problem-solve, to engage in a prosocial manner, or to remember any aim outside of regaining a sense of self-possession. But vulnerability is a part of praxis. It is about vulnerability, but it is also transformative. We are transformed through our action; we notice disconnection and, rather than throwing up our hands in exasperation, shrugging our shoulders because there are

seemingly no other options, or reasoning our way out of our discomfort, *we act to re-establish connection*.<sup>341</sup> Freire finishes his point by pressing that “[o]nce teachers see the contradiction between their words and their actions, they have two choices. They can become shrewdly clear and aware of their need to be reactionary, or can accept a critical position to engage in action to transform reality” (1985, p.19). We can lean into vulnerability and probe further: *Can I connect my theory and practice? If so, how? If not, why not?* And we change what we are doing. And then we reflect again. We are destroyed, but we rise from the ashes.

This process closely resembles what I observed in ‘SR classrooms.’ The teachers had shifted from a focus on behaviour to an awareness of needs. They had let go of The Story that kids aren’t capable and let in a trust in the abilities and nature of their students, and of humanity more generally. They continually assessed for disconnection and stress, which often involved accepting a critical position even in the midst of classroom life, and reflected on their theory-practice connection. They could identify the dominant ideology surrounding the classroom and they chose courage, vulnerability, and discomfort; they chose action and transformation. They did not relinquish their own humanity in this process; it was not a matter of moving from an authoritative end of a spectrum toward a permissive one. This paradigm, the one in which we try and find the ‘gray area’ in between master and slave, relies on false dichotomies; it relies on dehumanization. The SR teachers understood their own need for regulation, their own struggles, and saw these needs and struggles in their students. They expressed that the CMN served no one; both teacher and student were caught in the

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<sup>341</sup> I interpret Freire as arguing that entering into solidarity with students is an act of re-establishing our connection and our humanity. Solidarity is humanization and it is praxis-in-action.

dehumanizing dance of master and slave. Freire calls the action of reconciling the dialectic “‘making Easter’ every day, to die as the dominator and be born again as the dominated, fighting to overcome oppression”<sup>342</sup> (Freire, 1985, p.19). The SR teachers rejected the CMN, the language of dominance, and The Stories that maintained, justified, and validated the preoccupation with The Question. They chose The Answer, they demonstrated a belief in the ability of others to self-govern, and engaged dialogically in solidarity with their students. Their success was not measured by the ‘desirable behaviour’ in their classrooms, or the calm or ‘green zone’ that was felt by the students and others, but by engagement in self-governance.

Ms. Asher noted her own excitement about students who could assess and request assistance with regulation. She beamed with pride when students stated their anger and frustration and requested an alternative plan or a change from business-as-usual. Resistance was indicative that resiliency was being challenged, and Ms. Asher was clear that vulnerability “and its beauty” was where learning happens. On the school grounds, she was confident with her trust in students. But her vulnerability was palpable when we went for a walk to a nearby forest and river. After the short walk to the woods, but before she dismissed them to explore, Ms. Asher stated, “My trust for you is big. And I know that you are all responsible.” But she seemed to be saying these words more for her own reassurance than for the students. The Grade Ones dispersed, and the teacher began scanning the students more urgently than usual, her shoulder-length hair was swinging as she turned her head this way and that. The students gravitated toward the water. They were challenged to look for rocks and make up a story about finding their treasures, and the shore was peppered with pebbles. Her presence seemed an

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<sup>342</sup> This is a reference of overcoming or reconciling the MSD.

outlier in the calm of the woods; she radiated ‘yellow zone.’ The students were in their ‘green zones.’ Many crouching close to the ground, in pairs or small groups, picking up stones and putting them back. They were talking or singing as they wondered and searched for their rock. I noted the soft smiles on their faces. Several students were observed pausing to breathe in deeply and sighing as they gazed into the trees. One student perched on a boulder, away from the group, and sat silently and watched the water. Two students begin to throw rocks into the water; without words, they thoughtfully selected a couple of stones from the riverbank and gently tossed them in. I noticed Ms. Asher pacing and then beelining to three students on the embankment, one of whom was crouched close to the edge and with the stream to their<sup>343</sup> back. The teacher knelt beside them and gently placed her hand on their back. She took a deep breath and whispered her concern about the position of their body. The child looked over their shoulder and nodded. They moved and continued their hunt.

She returned to her previous position, further up the shore, and sighed, “That was a close one.” But she wasn’t talking about the student narrowly escaping a wet walk back to school. Ms. Asher stood and faced the river as she spoke to the educational assistant. She said, “I want to control them. I need to take control of myself. We’ve worked so hard to get here.” I realized that, although she was conscious of the need for safety, she was also aware of her relationships with the students and the threat to it.<sup>344</sup> Her need to control their behaviour was

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<sup>343</sup> Again, I will not call the students in the research classroom ‘boys’ or ‘girls’ and I will use they/them/their pronouns because they have not disclosed their genders and I choose not to assume them.

<sup>344</sup> There is tension between the teacher’s ability to self-govern and the Sovereign Power that the institution of the school (through field trip forms and policies) has over the teacher. When off the school grounds, the expectations of the teacher’s behaviour shifts and her autonomy seems to decrease as sovereign oversight through her internal surveillance takes over. Letting go of tight control becomes more challenging when the judgement and/or penalties for it may be harsher.

a threat to the trust<sup>345</sup> they had built and to the self-governance she was trying to foster. It was a 'close one' when she darted to a child in a precarious position because she almost chose comfort. It would be more comfortable to tell them what to do and where to stand. Instead, she took a deep breath and spoke about her observations and her feelings, her concerns and her needs. Also, she honoured the space for *their* needs in their relationship; their autonomy, their own ability to know where to move their body when someone notes risk. They were able to stay focused on their task.

From afar, the teacher silently watched the children throwing rocks. She mumbled quietly, "They can throw rocks. I trust them." After a minute, her body seemed to melt into a more comfortable stance. She took a deep breath again and floated between groups of students and engaged with them. Before they returned to the classroom, they gathered around her and she exclaimed, "My friends, my trust in you is absolutely growing. We were even throwing rocks today!" It dawned on me that there had been no instructions for behaviour. There had been no careful, prudent-yet-fun explanation about safety. I had not heard a reiteration of rules from past visits to the forest. Ms. Asher had simply said that she trusted them and thought of them as responsible. When students made mistakes, she engaged in dialogue. She resisted managing the students; she heard the call for teacher control over students and she acknowledged that from within there was a fight raging between her counter ideology and the dominant ideology.

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<sup>345</sup> The MSD was present and there was a threat to the solidarity that Ms. Asher chooses; she had to make her teaching practice a site of resistance and choose solidarity. She had to notice the dominator within and make Easter and "die as the dominator" (Freire, 1985, p.19).

The students were not allowed to do whatever they wanted to do. It was likely that safety guidelines had been established over previous walks. And I acknowledge that not having been privy to the initial rulemaking or the development of what was considered *expected* or *unexpected* on these forest explorations leaves me in the dark about the approach that may have been employed. But what I was bearing witness to was significant and contrary to a CMN. Rather, the focus was on trust and self-governance, success was measured by the ability of the children to act with their own freedoms and the freedoms of others in mind. Students stood near the water, some got their feet wet, some threw rocks or sticks. Ms. Asher never intervened by saying the ever-so-common “Careful!” or any other related comment. Safety was a priority, but so was trust. She needed to control her own regulation, build her own resiliency in this challenging moment, and trust in her students when The Story told her that they were untrustworthy. *She* was stopping the dominant ideology from destroying what she and her students had worked so hard to achieve. She was resisting. Communication that is dialogic and intentions that reconcile a dialectic of dominance are part and parcel to self-regulation *and* a progressivist goal of self-governance. She was immersed in praxis, “making Easter” (Freire, 1985, p.19), and transforming her actions while deeply embedded in the context of classroom teaching. She also appeared empowered by her process.

Incomplete

My story is not finished. And the story of SR is still playing out in classrooms and schools, families and communities, the media and in faculties of education around the world. Research into SR is a burgeoning field, and as I completed this manuscript, The MEHRIT Centre published articles on freedom, democracy, and the relationship with SR (Shanker, 2019b). Shanker argues

that SR has “an important role to play in the defence of Democracy” (2019b, para.12). He contends that if we are well-regulated, in “Blue Brain,” then we can make free choices, while in “Red Brain” our choices are co-opted by threat reactions that may make us “overly dogmatic” and cause us to have “no self-reflection; no personal growth” (Shanker, 2019b, para.10). What was of particular interest in this brief blog post was in the final lines, when Shanker says,

But most serious of all is the flight from self-awareness. This is the reason why freedom is in peril today. Take away the desire to be free and you are well down the road to embracing authoritarianism. (Shanker, 2019b, para.12)

Praxis is a self-awareness; it is drawn on self-reflection and its action carries the potential for personal growth and transformation. Shanker sees these are elements that are essential to the “defence of Democracy” and in living with freedom (2019, para.12). If we are simply learning to “tactfully cope” (Garcia & Lewis, 2014, p.157), if we trade in self-awareness and self-discovery for an inclination toward certainty and opt to be given an ‘answer,’ we miss the opportunity for empowerment. After all, SR is about a “mindset shift” (Hopkins, 2017).

But the message that SR requires praxis seems to be lost in the same place as the memo that progressivist education necessitates a connection between theory and practice. My students own Shanker’s (2013b) book, *Calm, Alert, and Learning*, and they are exposed to explorations of SR theory and its prescribed shifts for classroom practice. But, when I bring up Kohn’s (2001, 2005, 2006b) work they argue that kids need control or there would be chaos. They come back with the *language* of SR wrapped in The Stories of the CMN. They say we need to help a student downregulate or upregulate so that they may ‘calm down and behave’ or ‘focus and behave.’ They encounter a scenario and identify that a child may have been dysregulated and they concern themselves with the *lesson* that certain behaviour will not be

tolerated. I encourage them to practice and strengthen their own SR, their own awareness of their stressors and resiliencies, and they ask what that has to do with student misbehaviour. They mix SR and CMN, but they do not meld.

Educational research needs philosophy like progressivist education needs praxis. Choosing comfort means staying still, static, and unchanging. When educational research is separated from philosophy, The Stories that surround us, in which we are immersed and told through us, become invisible or normalized. Maintaining the dominant narrative is the illusion of certainty and the fear of vulnerability. In the “everydayness” of the classroom (Ruitenbergh, 2014, p.90), the philosophical footnote needs to be dialogic. All that is meant to support progressivist education, self-governance, and the freedom to be fully human must be rooted in freedom *and* equality. The separation of theory and practice, or the science of research and philosophy, reason and emotion, the capable and the incapable, and so on are all part of a dialectic of disconnection and drawn from a point of departure rooted in the opinion of inequality. My initial questions surrounding whether a commitment to SR goals, and efforts to adopt its theory and practice, was being distracted by the CMN and The Question took me on a journey that combined educational research, autoethnographic reflection, philosophical discussion, and a deep consideration of classroom teaching both within and outside of ‘SR classrooms.’ The conclusion was affirmative, but in ways that were unexpected. The role of praxis was more pronounced and integral, as were the barriers to it. And, as I try to dialogically engage with the research, and the path of my own heart, I encounter more questions.

*What if choosing connection is easier?*

*What if we are all capable of reflection and action when we are well-regulated?*

*Is self-regulation essential to realizing freedom and equality?*

*What is missing in our education that translates to a lack of praxis?*

*How do we overcome barriers to praxis?*

*Could the role of 'praxis mentorship' be further developed and implemented?*

When I consider these questions, I also consider the limitations I have identified on the path this research took. I have chosen to view the gaps in the research, the missteps and the oversights, as opportunities to identify the ways in which The Stories work through me, as well as the places and circumstances where I cling to certainty. One limitation that was not taken up is the role of systemic oppression in classroom management. Research shows that factors such as race, gender, and class deeply effect *who* is most managed in classrooms, *who* is disciplined more often and more severely, and *who* is expected to discipline (Blake *et al.*, 2016; Glock, 2016; Kohn, 2006; Mediratta & Rausch, 2016; Skiba *et al.*, 2016; Welsh & Little, 2018). Along these lines, 'students' were discussed as a homogenous group. They are not. Students are diverse and so are their experiences, interests, and needs. Social location<sup>346</sup> impacts how we move through the world, the ways in which we see others, and also how we are *seen*. It is more likely that a child who is outspoken, and asks challenging questions, *and presents as a girl*, is perceived as being impertinent (Glock, 2016). It is also probable that students who have learned that making eye contact is disrespectful, or that it is a sign of respect to elders when one listens without response, has their behaviour interpreted as withdrawn or as not paying attention and this negatively effects Indigenous peoples as well as some immigrant communities (de Plevitz, 2007). How do our social locations, cultural experiences, and systemic

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<sup>346</sup> In the Introductory chapter, the term 'social location' is discussed. In footnote 4, Dwight Boyd's (2016) definition is evoked: locating ourselves within the social and situating ourselves in relation to others in terms of the categories that we have created and that we focus on for our own identities, such as sex, gender, race, language, physical or mental ability, religion, class, etc.

oppression play a role in our commitment to the CMN? How might addressing these integral elements of our *thinking* have an effect on our *doing*? How might a consideration of these factors effect a SR lens? How do we make space within SR for the impacts and legacies of systemic oppression? Although I did not address these factors specifically, I did observe two teachers who—through their commitment to praxis—were addressing difference and inclusion with understanding and compassion. I could not address these efforts in this text, but I believe that I have data to support an argument that SR and praxis does more to resist oppression than practices drawn from the CMN. Certainly, by making the argument that SR supports self-governance and progressivist goals of democracy, and by demonstrating the associated tool of non-violent communication, there is already some support for making this case.

I also discussed ‘Teachers’ as somewhat homogenous. We are not. We have many different experiences and skills, knowledges and cultures, limitations and challenges. Some teachers may be judged more harshly or face limited autonomy due to their workplace, social location, community expectations, degree of support, or a myriad of other reasons. Other teachers may be more prone to avoid feeling judged and have personal inhibitions that prohibit them from risking upsetting others; the status quo may be necessary for some. How do we support *those* teachers? How do we create a schooling culture in which trying new, innovative, and challenging methods—progressively pushing the boundaries of the ‘norm’—is possible? As I have previously stated, I do not believe that teachers (or caregivers) are intentionally being oppressive; much like ‘choosing’ the CMN, teachers may unknowingly be supporting the status quo due to the message that they need to be apolitical or that there are no other options. Teachers may not be practiced in anti-oppression. This supposition may overlap with my

conjecture about praxis. Teachers may not be practiced in praxis, may not know what it is or that they do it, and may not be able to identify moments that would benefit from praxis. This is not because they aren't capable of praxis. This raises the question of why teachers (and other caregivers) may demonstrate barriers to praxis? What stands in our way? Why do so many of us find ourselves impacted by a Progressivist Paradox and distracted by an artifice of the dominant narrative?

Finally, because of the autoethnographic nature of this research, and my own inexperience as I navigate the more qualitative elements of this work, I find that I am part of what limits this research. I am incomplete—a work in *progress* and trying to *progress*—and I am often encountering new realizations, problems unknown to me, and possibilities that I had not yet considered. Also, I am limited by the concern that there is not space for me and my wonderings in this research. I find myself speaking to other researchers or philosophers of education at conferences, or in the faculty at the University of Victoria, and with teacher candidates and practicing teachers, and I hear my concerns, questions, and speculations echoed all around me. What I am problematizing appears obvious to others; of course CM tactics negatively impact self-governance and undermine democracy! This is not a new argument. There's no doubt among my colleagues that progressivist education is misunderstood and that the overwhelming message to teachers-to-be and teachers alike is supportive of the status quo, relativism, and being politically neutral. Those in the field of educational research with whom I have shared my concerns about SR and its confusion with self-control are either new to SR and therefore do not feel equipped to offer opinions *or* they believe that SR should be abandoned for something else and often take me down roads even less travelled. I enjoy these journeys,

but all roads always lead me back to praxis, and some of these destinations are far too theoretical. And then I venture into the real world, into actual schools, and immerse myself in amongst living and breathing children and the people who care about them, and I am overcome with consternation coupled with impatience. My alarm bells for disconnection go off, and I can't believe my shock at what I am experiencing when I know very well that the CMN lives.

Research in SR needs a philosophical bent to it. And not just a footnote that pulls the reader's attention away for something that appears peripheral and unnecessary (Ruitenber, 2016). Our Stories and our storytelling are central to our praxis. Praxis is central to our transformation. And transformation is what makes us progressivist educators. "Making Easter" (Freire, 1985, p.19) is about a shift; it is about death or letting go *and* rebirth or letting in. It is about relinquishing what was never rightfully ours; loosening our grasp on something of which it is not worth clinging. It is about embracing our capability and the capability of others and entering into relationships with solidarity. Where SR is concerned, we need to give up The Story that kids can't handle their freedom. To do so, we have to resist the call of the Progressivist Paradox. A lack of praxis serves no one, and The Story that we (teachers, parents, caregivers) can't handle reflection and action also stands in our way. SR helps to flip the script on The Story that children *choose* misbehaviour and other elements of the CMN. As Shanker notes again and again, *reframing the behaviour* is an essential and necessary step toward a SR lens (2013a, 2013b, 2017a, 2017b). Perhaps the last line of Toni and Slade Morrison's children's book, *The Big Box*, is also a good jumping off point, or a question that could reverberate within those of us who hope to realize our progressivist goals,

*Who says they can't handle their freedom?* (Morrison & Morrison, 1999, p.40)

# Epilogue

*Theory is not inherently healing, liberatory, or revolutionary. It fulfills this function only when we ask that it do so and direct our theorizing toward this end.*

*—hooks, 1991, p.2*

It wasn't really about Self-Regulation

In my defence of this dissertation, I was asked if my view of self-regulation [SR] was an 'uncritical' one. Did I seek to present SR as the ideal and perfected pedagogy? Absolutely not. In fact, I don't believe that I was writing with a focus on SR at all. For me, this work was about praxis. SR was a path I took in understanding the way praxis works or doesn't work among those who subscribe to progressivism. Just to be clear: I believe that there is no best practice, only praxis. What is 'best' in one situation, with *this* kid and *this* teacher/parent in *this* moment, is subject to change. This is why I am so critical of classroom management and its supporting narrative [CMN]; its Story maintains binaries and locks us into a static way of being. I see possibility as a tool for supporting progressivist aims in SR because it is responsive to needs and open to variation; stress looks and sounds and feels different for different people in different situations and SR is open to this difference.

Am I committed to SR? At this point in time, SR plays an essential role in my practice as a parent, teacher, and generally as a person. As I write this epilogue, the global COVID-19 pandemic rages outside. Many people appeal to their faith, spiritual practices, or other passions such as gardening or their relationship with their dog to help them cope and keep them calm and connected during a challenging time. I find myself using SR theory for keeping perspective;

there is so much stress around me and within me and I am comforted by the reframing of behaviour that SR offers. For example, I acknowledge that what appears to be 'a lack of productivity' is a symptom of stress. I reframe my self-perception away from interpreting my own behaviours as 'lazy' or 'distractible' and instead as coping with stress, and I consider revising my coping mechanisms from their pre-pandemic habits to new ones that reflect the changes around me. SR also encourages me to keep connected with others; it reframes my judgment of their behaviours, too. I can see stress as unmet needs, and I am empowered by this. But SR has its limits and when I find myself reaching them it is praxis that keeps me steady. SR is a tool, and praxis is the foundation, the provocation, and the point of departure that supports it. Without praxis, SR is likely to be distracted, undermined, and employed in ways that more deeply embed its limitations. This statement is supported by my research into progressivist narratives and their philosophical foundations, the aims and methods within both the CMN's approach and that of SR, and the analysis of, and reflections on, both autoethnographic and teacher-participant data.

But I did not present the results in a traditional way. What were my 'findings?' In this Epilogue, I will present a summary of the results in a more typical and academically expected scheme (or at least I will try). I will also discuss the epistemic limitations of the research findings. An epilogue should offer readers a firmer sense of resolution and make the story seem more realistic. I hope that the following will meet this need.

Loose Ends

The research objective was to examine whether what progressivist educators believe/think/aim to achieve is supported by their practice/methods/techniques in classroom

practice. According to the review of literature, as well as autoethnographic data, the progressivist educator seeks to teach students so that their ability to self-govern is supported and so that the aims of pluralistic democracy (freedom *and* equality for people as both individual *and* social beings) is upheld. The contemporary progressivist tool of SR was selected as a point of interest in exploring the problem of connection and/or disconnection between what progressivist teachers (and parents) think and what they do. There is evidence in the literature that this tool is mainstream in Canadian education, and it is verifiable that the large majority of Canadian teachers identify as 'progressivist,' so it follows that examining the ways in which this tool is employed would lend to ample information for analysis of progressivist praxis.

I began the research by asking how valid my claim that mainstream Canadian teachers who subscribe to goals of progressivist education may be employing practices that undermine progressivist aims. The literature review and reflections on the philosophical and foundations of progressivist education was conclusive: the majority of teachers in mainstream Canada employ classroom management strategies that undermine progressivist goals of promoting self-governance and supporting aims of a pluralistic democratic society. The results of the data collected from the teacher-participants and autoethnographic reflections indicates that when praxis is employed the common paradox that maintains or justifies our disconnection is overcome. Praxis, through leaning into vulnerability, taking account of what one thinks and how this connects or disconnects to what one is doing, identifying and/or letting go of dominant narratives that confirm or justify the thinking or doing that disconnects us from our progressivist goals, supports progress and transformation. The teacher-participants and I tell these stories of reflection, revision, rebuilding and renewal, as well as how this is ongoing and

without end. The data aligns mainstream Canadian teachers with progressivist goals and demonstrates disconnection is common as CM subverts these goals, but it also indicates that connection and praxis have something to do with one another.

The second part of the research question relates to SR and the validity of the claim that this tool, and its theory and practice as specified in materials and resources accessible to mainstream Canadian teachers, is not addressing philosophical elements (such as the Classroom Management Narrative or praxis) that weaken its progressivist goal. This claim is supported in two parts. First, the literature review demonstrates that classroom management literature and the practices it prescribes are common among mainstream Canadian teachers who identify as progressivist. Within materials and resources promoted by proponents of classroom management, self-regulation is commonly misinterpreted as self-control. SR theory discusses the problem with this misinterpretation and contends that it is widespread. Academic journal articles on SR show evidence of this critique, but along with materials popular and/or accessible to teachers and parents (as well as the general public) they do little to address this problem. The question of why teachers and parents consistently and almost exclusively misinterpret self-regulation for self-control and continue to employ classroom management tactics that fly in the face of SR theory and practice, goes unanswered. Through both the teacher-participant data and autoethnographic reflections, there are strong indications that praxis is the missing link. Without praxis, we are trapped in what I call a 'Progressivist Paradox,' searching out confirmation or justification for the current practice (ie. Classroom management) or 'new' method (seeing SR practices through a CM lens, and therefore misinterpreting and misusing SR tools for self-control rather than SR). The teacher-participants told their own

stories of praxis and recognizing the ways in which CM practices didn't connect to their progressivist beliefs or goals. They both took on vulnerability and uncertainty and let go of CM. Soon after this transformation, they either adapted SR knowingly or without being aware. This storytelling also aligns with the autoethnographic analysis.

The question of whether or not SR, and other progressivist tools designed to promote/teach/support self-governance and supporting cultural aims, can be enacted and effective without addressing possible contradictory philosophical goals was partially answered. When it comes to SR, the data supports a negative answer; praxis, philosophical engagement, teacher/parent theorizing, and critical reflection of other dominant narratives all play essential roles in implementing this progressivist tool without having it undermined by a CMN. One must be able to see dominant narratives, in the case of SR this would be the CMN, in order to resist them. Teachers who appear in the autoethnographic reflections speak the CMN without acknowledging it (even with alternative language); they imply that their approach *does* support progressivist goals and show no discernment for how their tactics undermine their goals. Their attempts to use SR is impeded by their reliance on the CMN and its tactics. Other teachers do not use SR because the CMN tells them it is too difficult or won't work; the result would be chaos and the CMN demands control. The teacher-participants discussed in their surveys and interviews, and demonstrated in the observations, their resistance of the CMN and their ongoing reflections and questioning of dominant narratives while they worked to implement SR. SR demands that we reframe our feelings, actions, words, and choices—as well as those of others—and this reframing is informed by praxis. SR aligns with progressivist beliefs in that children (and humans more generally) are understood as capable and worthy of trust and

compassion rather than judgment, mistrust, and in need of control. But, without praxis and an awareness of this shift it is likely that this integral feature of SR is overlooked or misinterpreted and the lens of the CMN and self-control remains in place and disconnects us from our progressivist goals.

The final question that I address is whether the classroom practice of teaching SR supports the progressivist goal of preparing people to be self-governing participants in a democratic society. The results showed that SR aims to do so, and that with praxis the teacher-participants demonstrated the ways in which this occurs. Teacher-participants spoke about their commitment to the humanity of their students and their beliefs in the capability of their students to self-govern. They spoke about the theory of SR as a tool that is both humanizing and oriented toward the growth of skills that allow us to better regulate so that *we can* self-govern. The data collected demonstrated the teacher-participants employing SR with practices that supported progressivist goals and beliefs that they articulated. In particular, it was noted that they used a communication strategy that is akin to Marshall Rosenberg's *nonviolent communication*. This approach resists dominance and supports compassion; it also has a regulating effect for all involved. Narratives of trust and capability are strong in both progressivist education and SR; the teachers used methods that demonstrated their trust and their beliefs in the capability of their students in regular and tangible ways. They spoke about their trust, they offered opportunities for students to be trusted and responsible, they spoke about trust being damaged or built, and they articulated moments of learning to trust. These examples also related to capability; the CMN tells us that others are not capable of self-governance and that they must be taught in a scaffolded way to control themselves (self-

control). SR, as enacted by the teacher-participants, rejected the CMN model and saw children/students as *already capable*. Hence when they noticed a student struggling, they reframed the behaviour as possible dysregulation, stress, unmet needs, or skill deficits. But with a SR lens, the student remains *capable*; working toward practices that support SR honours capability. The teacher-participants approached preparing their students to be self-governing participants in a democratic society by treating the students as self-governing participants in a democratic society and being in solidarity with them.

One more point of interest in addition to the above results and in relation to praxis is regarding vulnerability and resistance. Both teacher-participants provided evidence that makes the case for vulnerability and resistance in praxis; they didn't only speak of, or demonstrate, occurrences in which SR 'worked' and people were regulated, classrooms felt 'green,' or those who were stressed or dysregulated employed skills to regulate themselves. The teacher-participants spoke of their own doubts and the ways in which they are challenged by barriers to praxis; they articulated that they worry about the judgment of those who see their classrooms through the lens of the CMN. They struggled with their own momentary lapses and disconnection; their struggles were observable, and they did not shy away from admitting that they are still learning how to let go of the Story that directs them to dominate, control, and mistrust students. The word 'praxis' did not cross the lips of the teacher-participants during interviews or observations, but they used terms such as 'reflection' and 'connection,' and they consistently expressed the need to lean into vulnerability and embrace uncertainty. They used these feelings as indications that there is an opportunity for compassion, resistance, and/or transformation. This is praxis.

## Knowability & Knowledge

When it comes to the results of research, it is typical to address possible epistemic limitations. Is there a limitation relating to the knowability of the results? Here, I will call back to Rancière and his remarks surrounding ‘truth’ and storytelling. My goal was not to present ‘Truth’ or a defining knowledge that is a constant. For Rancière, learning is about relationships and making connections; we relate everything we encounter to what we have already learned, and we make associations from our experiences to our existing interpretations (1991). When we are learning, we are translating what is presented to us (through books, experience, interactions, etc.) in our own unique ways according to what we already know and what we don’t yet understand. Rancière contends that there is no ‘right’ way to reason (1991). Knowability is about verification. How do I verify the knowledge presented here? Are there limitations to how *I* or the *interlocuter* may interpret the results?

Verification is limited in the traditional sense. It is difficult to demonstrate that something is true, accurate, or justified when one rejects truth as singular, considers accuracy to be based on perspective, and finds justification to emanate from subjective thinking. When I ask my child or student to verify their answer, or their thoughts on how or why something works, I use my own truth *and* theirs, both of our perspectives are considered, and I accept that it is possible that we are both right in our own ways (or both incorrect). There are times when verification is not met; when another ‘truth’ has more substance to it, when another answer is *more* right, and when one cannot justify their position. In this dissertation, I use a survey to determine philosophical orientations of both teacher-participants as well as myself. Whether or not we subscribe to progressivist education is, to some degree, more knowable and verifiable

than opposing 'truths.' Mistakes in the design of the survey (which was designed and tested by Dr. Ryan) are possible as is user error (such as misunderstanding of questions or answering dishonestly). Perhaps there is a perception that quantitative data and analysis is more acceptably verifiable. Much of my research approach relies on qualitative data collection and analysis, as well as autoethnographic data and reflection. I did not take a traditional approach of coding the data, but rather I looked at the data as a whole and locate 'expressions,' which I justify with dialogue, trust, and other elements of praxis. This limits the acceptability of its verification.

The knowability of what progressivist education aims to do, its foundations and philosophical background and posture, has been explored by many people from multiple backgrounds and philosophical positions of their own. I tested my theory through Story; I looked for the dominant narratives and then sought them in the literature. Usually, a review of the literature tells a researcher what the dominant positions—or what is accepted as having validity—are with a high degree of accepted verification. I worked backward; I *know* the Stories and how they work in my own experience, and I started with that knowledge and verified them through Hobbes, Hegel, Rousseau, Dewey, Thorndike, Freire, hooks, Rancière, and others. The qualitative data and my own stories were analysed with these Stories in mind. The epistemic limitation is that I am working with stories which inevitably have variations in interpretation; also, I cannot possibly *know* for certain the feelings of the student observed or why the teacher reacted in the way they did. The interpretations of the data are partially based on inferences or unknowable (and unmeasurable) facets of these moments. But there are also conclusions drawn from qualitative observations and extrapolations from the data. When the Stories of

progressivism are considered and analysed, the goals for progressivist educators are made clear. The surveys quantitatively qualified both myself and the teacher-participants as progressivist educators; data from the literature suggests that the large majority of teachers in Canadian mainstream public schools would identify as progressivist in philosophical orientation. The conjecture was that teachers I encountered who practiced CM were also 'progressivist,' but subverting their own goals with an approach understood to be necessary (to avoid chaos) and effective (at controlling others, but this is not often discussed). These teachers articulated these beliefs and demonstrated these practices. My own experience (or story) of being an 'effective teacher' who practiced CM, along with the above experiences with other teachers in the field, gave me reasons to extrapolate the theory that a lack of praxis is common *and* often problematic. I expected this trend to continue in SR classrooms; I surmised that those who practiced SR would *not* engage in praxis and this tool would be undermined by a CMN and CM techniques. Instead, I observed two teachers who engaged in praxis; they articulated their beliefs and goals (in line with progressivist and SR theory), reflected on the connections and disconnections between their beliefs and classroom practice, and made commitments to action and change, reconciliation and resistance, with SR methods as a central focus. I observed expressions of resistance to CM and the implementation of SR as an alternative. The teacher-participation spoke of an awareness and struggle against the call for dominance and the active effort to choose humanization over dehumanization. They also discussed and demonstrated the consistent acknowledgement of potential barriers to praxis and a demonstration of vulnerability and discomfort as part of transformation. The assumption that SR requires praxis, and that progressivist education isn't progressivist without praxis, became my conclusion. I

witnessed teachers without praxis, who clung to certainty and the narrative that effective and efficient classrooms are managed without consideration for how those approaches counteract progressivist goals, and I did not see SR or pluralistic democracy being taught or upheld. I observed teachers with praxis, who leaned into vulnerability and could see and speak to the narrative of CM and their resistance to it, and I saw teachers and students regulating and a community that demonstrated thriving pluralistic democracy.

I arrived at the conclusion that the relationship between the data and the claim that praxis supports connections between progressivist theory and practice was connected to the assertion that SR with praxis is a progressivist tool but that without praxis it is limited in a similar fashion to classroom management strategies. I also found that progressivist goals of pluralistic democracy (and teaching self-governance) are supported when SR *with praxis* is part of classroom teaching. These findings may be epistemically limited. Maybe not. It depends on how much credit is given to the method of storytelling and the value of using dominant narratives to address critical issues in education. The teacher-participants articulate that there is truth to these claims. There are also demonstrated moments that I discuss, but perhaps these are just opinions (just as Rancière and I share an *opinion* of equality) (1991).

Another essential feature within standard academic research involves considering what, if any, contribution to knowledge (or to the field of education) this dissertation provides. Initially, I saw the benefits from this project to the field of education as simply furthering the dialogue surrounding SR and classroom practice. But as I dove more deeply into the literature, I found a lack of research surrounding SR from a philosophical perspective as well as research being done on SR that is not from the perspectives of either Stuart Shanker, the MERHIT centre,

or related organizations. This work seeks to bring philosophical perspectives into the conversation and the main text. It is important for other educational research to face philosophical scrutiny as it helps to tie phenomena to our foundations and our current social and cultural moment. There have been calls to reconsider the goals of progressivist education and many critics have pointed to its inadequacy. Progressivist education is not *progressing*—at least not toward the purported goals—rather its rhetoric is being used to mask non-progressive structures. Also, another critical claim that has gone unaddressed surrounds the CMN; the narrative is unacknowledged, while CM tools are employed daily with disregard for the ways in which they undermine progressivist goals. This research shines a light on these issues in a contemporary and accessible way. Finally, praxis is something that is rarely discussed among teachers, teacher-candidates, and other invested parties. Outside of the fields of philosophy of education, praxis is presented as unattainable and problematic; teachers should just “tactfully cope” with the day-to-day events of the classroom as they are *not capable* of connecting their beliefs and practices (Garcia & Lewis, 2014, p.157). This myth needs to be broken down and this dissertation does much to unmask the relative simplicity of praxis: reflect, identify Stories, notice uncertainty or vulnerability, let go or lean in, resist and question, take action toward connection of theory and practice. This approach was evidenced throughout the data, analysis, results, and method (of writing and data analysis) of this text. I believe that this is the most essential contribution and I hope to build on it.

Thank you for taking this journey with me. I hope that you continue to follow your path with heart.

Appendix A—A Survey to Determine Eligibility for a Study on Self-Regulation Teaching Practice

Contact Information

Name:

School:

Grade(s) currently teaching:

Email Address:

Self-Regulation in Teaching Practice

You have volunteered to participate in a survey because you use self-regulation in your classroom practice.

How often do you use self-regulation in your classroom?

Always      Often      Sometimes      Rarely      Never

What is a 'self-regulation classroom' to you?

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Would you consider your classroom a 'self-regulation classroom'?

Yes      No      Sometimes

What's My Philosophical Orientation: Teacher

What do you accept as true in teaching and education?

Facts: Every one of us has a philosophy of teaching and education. This philosophy is a position which emerges when we discuss issues related to our deep-seated beliefs concerning the operation of schools.

The results of the following survey will indicate your philosophical orientation. The study is interested in teachers with a specific philosophical orientation.

Instructions

Read and respond to each statement that follows. Decide on your position by assigning a number to communicate your reaction.

(5= Agree strongly) (4= Agree) (3= Neutral) (2= Disagree) (1= Disagree Strongly)

	1. The curriculum should be subject centered. Student learning should be centred on basic subjects such as reading, writing, history, math, and science.
	2. The curriculum should focus on the great thinkers of the past.
	3. Students learn best by engaging in real-world activities rather than reading.
	4. Students should be permitted to determine their own curriculum.
	5. Material is taught effectively when it is broken down into small parts.
	6. Students learn how to learn in the most effective way through adult role-modeling.
	7. The curriculum of a school should be determined by information that is essential for all students to know.
	8. Schools, above all, should develop students' abilities to think deeply, analytically, and creatively; this is more important than developing their social skills or providing them with a useful body of knowledge about our ever-changing world.
	9. Schools should prepare students for analyzing and solving the types of problems they will face outside the classroom.
	10. Reality is determined by each individual's perceptions. There is no objective

	and universal reality.
	11. People are shaped much more by their environment than by their genetic dispositions or the exercise of their free will.
	12. Learning happens through reinforcing ideas and repetition.
	13. Students should not be promoted from one grade to the next until they have read and mastered certain key material.
	14. An effective education is not aimed at the immediate needs of the students or society.
	15. The curriculum of a school should be built around the personal experiences and needs of the students.
	16. Students who do not want to study much should not be required to do so.
	17. Programmed learning is an effective method of teaching information.
	18. Learning to be socially conscious should be taught through the use of external motivation.
	19. Academic rigor is an essential component of education.
	20. All students, regardless of ability, should study more or less the same curriculum.
	21. Art classes should focus primarily on individual expression and creativity.
	22. Effective learning is unstructured and informal.
	23. Students learn best through reinforcement.

	24. Student behavior needs to be focused by the teacher for productive learning to occur.
	25. Effective schools assign a substantial amount of homework.
	26. Education should focus on the discussion of questions such as "What is beauty?" or "What is truth?"
	27. Since students learn effectively through social interaction, schools should plan for substantial social interaction in their curricula.
	28. The purpose of school is to help students understand and find the meaning of their existence.
	29. Frequent objective testing is the best way to determine what students know.
	30. Grades are a motivating factor in learning.
	31. Canada must become more competitive economically with countries such as Japan, and schools have an affirmative obligation to bolster their academic requirements in order to facilitate such competition.
	32. Students must be taught to appreciate learning primarily for its own sake, rather than because it will help them in their careers.
	33. Schools must place more emphasis on teaching about the concerns of minorities and women.
	34. Each person has free will to develop as he or she sees fit.
	35. Reward students well for learning and they will remember and be able to apply what they learned, even if they were not led to understand why the information is worth knowing.
	36. Students who are struggling require more concentrated praise and

	encouragement.
	37. Canadian schools should attempt to instill traditional Canadian values in students.
	38. Teacher-guided discovery of profound truths is a key method of teaching students.
	39. Students should be active participants in the learning process.
	40. There are no external standards of beauty. Beauty is what an individual decides it to be.
	41. We can place a lot of faith in our schools and teachers to determine which student behaviors are acceptable and which are not.
	42. Games and competition in the classroom increase content retention.
	43. Schools must provide students with a firm grasp of basic facts regarding the books, people, and events that have shaped Canadian heritage.
	44. Philosophy is ultimately at least as practical a subject to study as is computer science.
	45. Teachers must stress for students the relevance of what they are learning to their lives outside, as well as inside, the classroom.
	46. It is more important for a student to develop a positive self-concept than to learn specific subject matter.
	47. Learning is more effective when students are given frequent tests to determine what they have learned.
	48. Learning is primarily developed by observing and imitating others.

Thank you for completing this survey. Only those with the specific philosophical orientation for which this study is developed will be contacted for interviews and teaching observations.

## Appendix B—Initial Teacher Interview Questions

Questions
1) What makes you a ' <i>progressive</i> ' teacher? What does being a ' <i>progressive</i> ' teacher mean to you?
2) You indicated in your survey that you use self-regulation in your classroom practice. Tell me about that: what's your <i>self-regulation</i> story? How did you come to <i>self-regulation</i> ?
3) What does self-regulation look/sound/feel like in your classroom?
4) What informs your approach to Self-Regulation (education or training either self-designed or institutional, resources, materials, professional development, experiences, personal beliefs, etc.)?
5) Tell me about a time when you used <i>self-regulation</i> in your classroom.

## Appendix C—Post-Observation Teacher Interview Questions

Questions
<p>1) We will begin the interview with your response to a story:</p> <p>You are a grade one teacher and Julian, a student in the other grade one class, is someone you have gotten to know because he is often in trouble and paying for it with consequences. You have noticed that he is a perpetual motion machine with a large vocabulary and he loves to talk. You have also noticed that he understands why he is often in trouble and seems to have good intentions; but, he doesn't seem to think he can turn things around.</p> <p>One day, the other grade one class is quietly passing your classroom on the way to the library in a straight and silent line. As they walk, you hear a loud 'thwack' and when you look up you see one little boy on the ground and Julian is out of line and asking the fallen child if he is alright. Julian's teacher steps in and reprimands him for being out of line and for talking. Julian is again in trouble and facing repercussions for his actions.</p> <p>What do you think is the goal or purpose behind the response of Julian's teacher?</p> <p>What motivates or influences the teacher's tactics?</p> <p>What do you think Julian has learned from this situation?</p>
<p>2) What characteristics do you want to pass on to your students? After being in your class, what qualities or habits do you hope they have learned?</p>
<p>3) Why? For what purpose?</p>
<p>4) Considering your list of characteristics, qualities, and habits from the previous question, which of the following statements most aligns with your answer? Which of the following statements is in contrast with your answer? Explain.</p> <p>In my classroom, I want my students to learn these characteristics, qualities, and habits so that they can...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) be supportive of their own needs and freedoms as well as the needs and freedoms of others as members of their communities.</li> <li>b) clearly define them and know when it is necessary to embody them and do so appropriately as members of their communities.</li> <li>c) be unassertive, non-participatory, and pliable members of their communities.</li> <li>d) use them for their own benefit as members of their communities.</li> </ol>

5) What is 'classroom management'?
6) How does self-regulation sustain/support or undermine/transform 'classroom management'?
7) Describe your classroom management style <i>before</i> you started using self-regulation in your teaching practice.
8) Was there an 'ah-ha' moment? Were there barriers to this transformation? What stood in your way?
9) Have you encountered other teachers, EAs, or parents that misinterpret SR? How so? And, have you encountered your own misunderstandings of SR? What were they?
10) What currently stands in your way or interrupts your practice of self-regulation?

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