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# A Qualitative Study on Educational Authority, Shared Authority and the Practice of Philosophy in a Kindergarten Classroom : A Study of the Multiple Dimensions and Complexities of a Democratic Classroom

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A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON EDUCATIONAL AUTHORITY, SHARED

AUTHORITY AND THE PRACTICE OF PHILOSOPHY IN A KINDERGARTEN

CLASSROOM: A STUDY OF THE MULITPLE DIMENSIONS AND

COMPLEXITIES OF A DEMOCRATIC CLASSROOM

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of

Montclair State University in partial fulfillment

of the requirements

for the degree of Doctor of Education

by

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Upper Montclair, NJ

2013

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Kathryn Herr

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

We hereby approve the Dissertation

A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON EDUCATIONAL AUTHORITY, SHARED

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CLASSROOM: A STUDY OF THE MULITPLE DIMENSIONS AND

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of

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ABSTRACT

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by Olivier Michaud

Authority has been theorized as an essential element of education, but one that we know very little about, although it has become increasingly problematic. One approach to educational authority, the approach that this dissertation studied, is based on the idea that authority should be shared between a teacher and her students. In this qualitative study, I was able to immerse myself in a kindergarten classroom in which the teacher was not only committed to democratic education, but who also integrated the practice of Philosophy for Children, one of the most radical forms of sharing authority with students, into her classroom. The goal of this dissertation has been to document the life of classroom culture structured on the idea of shared authority and to see how the practice of philosophy affected the overall functioning of authority in it.

In the first chapter of the data analysis (Chapter 4), I give a general overview of the classroom culture in its relationship to authority: I first present how the practice of shared authority shaped the classroom culture in different ways. In the following chapter (Chapter 5), I examine a particular group of boys that was highly disruptive in the classroom. As I make sense of this group of boys by showing its relationship to authority,

I also look to the problematic it posed for the practice of shared authority in the classroom studied. Finally, the two initial chapters provide the background necessary to analyze in Chapter 6 the special role of the practice of philosophy and its relationship to authority in the classroom.

I conclude the dissertation with its contributions to the theories of shared authority, educational authority and democratic education. If the classroom studied presented an extraordinary example of what learning can be in a public school, it also came with certain difficulties that are usually not acknowledged in the literature on shared authority. Based on several elements of my data analysis, I propose a redefinition of the nature of shared authority to better accommodate the inherent tensions and contradictions that are created in a democratic classroom. Finally, I stress the importance for theorists and educational researchers to focus on the difficulties that teachers, such as Annie, encounter as they try to implement democratic education in their classroom.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I first want to thank Annie, the teacher of the classroom I studied in this dissertation. Her passion for teaching and the classroom life she created in Kindergarten Room 7 have nourished the entire process of this study. This dissertation would simply not have been possible without her and I feel extremely privileged to have been invited into her classroom. I'm grateful for her generosity in sharing her time and thoughts in her busy life as a teacher. Hence, for more than two years I have lived a little bit everyday with her and her classroom.

Secondly, I want to thank Kathryn Herr, my advisor for this dissertation. When I entered her class on qualitative methodology four years ago I didn't know anything about this approach. She has shown a lot of skill and talent in coaching a beginner through the complicated steps of this research to this final product. It's been a sincere pleasure to work with her. I'm deeply thankful for her availability, her on-going remarks on my work, and her support and encouragement when I was unsure of where I was going.

I also express here my thanks to the members of the committee. Tyson Lewis has been engaging with me on the issue of educational authority for five years now. We first read together Rousseau's *Emile,* which led to a presentation at AERA on the issue of authority based on this book. I then published a revised version of this paper in *Educational Theory*. I'm very grateful for these opportunities. The many discussions we had over the last five years have been, for me, stimulating in many ways. His

also want to underline the excellent work of the interlibrary loan services, which were extremely efficient in obtaining documents I requested.

I passed an incredible number of hours in the Starbucks of Glen Ridge New Jersey. I'm thankful for this place in which I felt comfortable to work for such a long period of time. I particularly want to thank all the employees of this store, past and present, who were so kind to me.

I want to thank Teke. This process was accompanied with many doubts and stresses, but Teke was always encouraging and comforting during these recurrent moments. She showed a lot of patience for someone who spent too much time working in front of his computer or reading books and articles.

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**Chapter 1: Introduction**

Authority is one of the most important elements of education. Its presence is required for learning and for classroom order, yet we know little about it and little research has been dedicated to it (Brubaker, 2012; Metz, 2006; Pace & Hemmings, 2007). Beyond the theoretical discussion about the correct definition of educational authority is the reality of teachers who struggle to create a positive authoritative relationship with their students (McNeil, 1986; Metz, 1978; Pace, 2003c). One trend in modern education regarding educational authority has been based on the idea that authority should be "shared" between the teacher and the students—that authority should be openly co-constructed between all the individuals involved in the classroom (Amit & Fried, 2005; Dewey, 1916; Engel & Martin, 2005). If shared authority is valued for different reasons, however, there has been little empirical research reporting on how it could actually be realized in a particular classroom. The integration of the practice of philosophy in K-12 classrooms as theorized and practiced in the program of Philosophy for Children (henceforth P4C) is naturally linked to this practice of shared authority, although in a specific and even radical manner (Lipman & Sharp, 1980; Nussbaum, 2010). However, it remains to be seen how P4C would affect the negotiation of authority between a specific teacher and her group of students.

This dissertation situates itself in relation to these three problematics: the general issue of educational authority, the particular model of authority, and the actual practice of P4C. It examines individually each of these problematics as well as their fundamental

interrelationship: the practice of philosophy in the classroom is related to the idea of shared authority, which in turn is necessarily connected to the larger issues surrounding educational authority. In addition, the goal of this dissertation is not to study these problematics and their interrelationship simply theoretically, but to study them as they were enacted in one kindergarten classroom. Hence, this dissertation is based on an opportunity I had to study a kindergarten teacher who was extremely committed to the practice of both shared authority and philosophy with her young students.

Thus, this qualitative research of a unique site aims to increase our knowledge of the possibility of sharing authority with students, on the role of the practice of philosophy in that regard and, finally, on their effect on the general culture of the classroom.

**A Complex Problematic**

**The problematic of educational authority.** Authority has often been theorized as a fundamental element of education (Brüggen, 2009; Hansen, 2006; Pace & Hemmings, 2006a). Hence, if we agree that any educational relationship happens between at least two individuals, and is a relationship in which one is in a superior position to the other—as the teacher is in an unequal position in regard to her students in some way, possessing the power to arrange the classroom life and direct the learning activities—then authority appears indeed to be an essential element of a good education.[1]

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[1] In this text, educational relationship and educational authority refer to schooling. Likewise, teachers and students are generally understood as teachers and students in school.

Authority has usually been defined as a power relationship that is recognized as legitimate by its participants (Bilheran, 2009; Derycke & Dutrait, 2009; Mullooly & Varenne, 2006). Consequently, if an educational relationship is fundamentally a relationship of power—one that should not (ideally, at least) be based on violence, coercion, or manipulation, but should rather be established on a mutual consent on the sense of the relationship—then authority should be its structuring element.

Yet, if authority is an essential element in education, it is an element that has become fundamentally problematic. First, there is an uncertainty about the right form of authority in schools. This debate is rooted in the following paradox: how can we rationalize an unequal relationship, such as the relationship between a teacher and a student, in a society that is democratic and that therefore is based on the idea of the equality and autonomy of individuals (Blais, Gauchet, & Ottavi, 2008; Foray & Reichenbach, 2009; Hurn, 1985)? Second, researchers have reported on the problems related to authority in schools. There is not as such one model of authority that works for every situation, as a particular model may be appropriate for one group of students but not for another, or a perspective on authority may have some benefits but also some negative issues attached to it (Ballenger, 1992a; Hemmings, 2006; Metz, 1978). Third, although authority is an essential element of education and this element has been identified as fundamentally problematic, it has received relatively little attention from

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That said, if it is possible to imagine an educational relationship in schools or outside of schools in which there is no inequality between two individuals, this relationship is of a different nature than the one that is the object of this text.

educational theorists and researchers. Mary Haywood Metz (2006), one of the first researchers interested in the issues of authority in American schools, noticed that not only is there little research dedicated to authority, but also the word "authority" itself has disappeared from educational vocabulary.

Thus, if we agree that authority is a fundamental element of any educational relationship, that authority is a theoretical as well as a practical problem in American schooling, and that authority has received little attention by educational theorists and researchers, then it is a subject that requires our attention. Judith L. Pace and Annette Hemmings (2007), in the most comprehensive review that we have on educational authority in American schools, stressed the need of more research on that essential subject:

> But having a good conceptual and realistic grasp of classroom authority continues to elude most educational policy makers and researchers. The problems that plague public education will never be resolved until theorists, ideologues, and researchers acknowledge the fact that a good education is simply not possible without classroom authority relations that promote learning. (p. 22)

Indeed, the absence of an adequate form of authority would inherently lead to at least two major issues in a classroom that are fundamentally interrelated: issues of order and learning. Hence, without students accepting their teacher's authority, meaning her right to direct activities and order classroom life—in other words, without students sharing with their teacher a moral order that gives sense to their relationship—students would have no

reason, or at best very weak reasons, to be committed to the order of the classroom and to engage in their learning. As a result, the teacher would be left with resorting to threats, bargaining, or punishments to keep decorum in the classroom and make students do the work required. Such a situation may lead to a certain modus vivendi in the classroom, but may also be at the cost of students' engagement in their education and teacher's passion to teach (Metz, 1978; Pace, 2003c; Pace, 2006).

Ultimately, the natural tension in school between keeping order and fostering learning would not be attenuated without the presence of an operative and definite authority in the classroom (McNeil, 1986; Metz, 1978). Hence, authority is to some extent the focal point in a classroom through which order and learning are reunited, because through it they both become two dimensions of the same educational endeavor: learning requires order, and order is in the service of learning, which means that they are not two separate elements.

**The problematic of shared authority.** The first goal of this study is to participate in academic research on educational authority. Its second objective is to study a particular model of authority that we can label as "shared authority." On one hand, this second objective is intimately related to the first, as it is through the study of a particular perspective on authority that I aim to bring some light on the larger problematic of educational authority.

On the other hand, the problematic of shared authority is in itself a subject of academic and educational interest. The essential idea of shared authority is, as its name

indicates, that the teacher should share her authority with her students. If authority is always shared in one way or another between a teacher and her students, as it is essentially mutually produced (Manke, 1997), in a shared authority pedagogy the teacher purposefully invites students to participate in the co-construction of the authority of the classroom by giving them a say in its functioning, in creating space for them to produce knowledge and to interact with each other (Amit & Fried, 2005; Brubaker, 2012; Schultz & Oyler, 2006).

This model is founded on two main ideas, which may not be ultimately separable. It is first based on a theory of learning: students of any age will be more interested in their learning if they are given the chances to make choices about their education, to participate in its direction, to voice their opinion in their classroom, and to create their own knowledge rather than only receiving information from their teacher (Ballenger, 1992b; Oyler, 1996; Thornberg & Elvstrand, 2012). It is secondly based on a belief about democratic education: a valuable education can only be the experience of democracy, which means a classroom that is formally and openly structured to give students the possibility to shape their education (Brubaker, 2007; Parker, 2003; Shor, 1996). Ultimately, these two foundational ideas of shared authority cannot be separated by its advocates: the best learning happens in a democratic education, or, said differently, democratic education offers the best environment for students' learning (Dewey, 1938).

However, we still know little about how authority can be shared between a teacher and her students. This idea appears to be more of a problem regarding the issue of

authority in school rather than a solution to it: how is it possible for a teacher to impose

authority on her students at the same time that she creates a space for them to be free of

her authority? How can such sharing be realized concretely in a specific situation, and

what are the consequences for a classroom culture based on this idea?  Therefore, this

research aims to improve our understanding of how students can be significantly involved

in their education and how they can be given the experience of a democratic education.

The site used for this study offered me a special opportunity to study this problematic for

different reasons. First, the teacher was deeply committed to giving her students a

democratic education. Second, the classroom environment she created was of such a high

quality for student learning that she was awarded an important honor from the state for it.

Third, the age group of her students is of interest, as she worked with kindergarteners,

newcomers to the public school system. And fourth, this teacher viewed the practice of

philosophy as an essential element of the curriculum, which is also the third and last

domain of the problematic that is the focus of this study.

**P4C and authority.**  P4C is a general approach to K-12 philosophy that was

created in the late 1960s by Matthew Lipman in collaboration with Ann Sharp at

Montclair State University. Since then, it has been the major approach to K-12

philosophy, both in the United States and worldwide. P4C is of a double interest in this

study.

First, P4C appears to be naturally linked to the idea of shared authority, as it is

also linked to progressive education (Daniel, 1998; Nussbaum, 2010). In P4C, children

are seen as human beings in their full right, which means that they have the capacity of doing philosophy and that they would benefit from such practice. Furthermore, the P4C vision of philosophy is not about transmitting philosophical knowledge of the great Western philosophers to children, but rather to create a space in which they will be able to philosophize: to think by themselves about a philosophical subject that is related to their personal experience. Finally, this activity is fundamentally communal; the philosophical interrogation and inquiry is an inter-subjective enterprise. P4C is therefore naturally connected to democratic education, as an experience that is co-constructed between the students as well as with the teacher (Gregory, 2008; Lipman, 2003; Sasseville, 2005).

Thus, the practice of P4C is educationally linked to the idea of shared authority: they are both part of the same worldview on education. However, my contention is that P4C is not a usual practice of shared authority, but rather a special form of it. Basing myself on Cornelius Castoriadis (1991), I want to advance that philosophy is the democratic activity par excellence in which authority is shared—or at least has the potential to be shared—in a very distinct way. Castoriadis (1991) noted that it is not an accident that philosophy and democracy appeared at the same time in Athens 2,500 years ago, because they are both the expression of the same phenomenon: "Thus, the birth of philosophy is not just a coincident, but equisignificant with the birth of democracy. Both are expressions, and central embodiments, of the project of autonomy" (p. 21). Democracy presupposes philosophy, because the opening to question and inquiry of the principles of a society *can only be led* by and through philosophical discussions:

The project of collective autonomy means that the collectivity, which can only exist as instituted, recognizes and recovers its instituting character explicitly, and questions itself its own activities. In other words, democracy is the regime of (political) self-reflectiveness. What laws ought we to have, and for what reasons? But the same is true about philosophy. Philosophy is not about the question: What is Being, or what is the meaning of Being, or why is there something rather than nothing, etc. All these questions are secondary, in the sense that they are all conditioned upon the emergence of a more radical question (radically impossible in a heteronomous society): what is it that I ought to think (about being, about physis, about the polis, about justice, etc.—and about my own thinking)? (Castoriadis, 1991, pp. 20-21)

Philosophy and democracy are connected because they both have a special relationship to authority. In the radical experience of democracy, as in the radical experience of philosophy, authorities are suspended, and it is this suspension that permits the complete autonomy of individuals and of collectives; in such experiences they do not receive their meaning, their laws, or their goals from outside —they have to create them. Furthermore, philosophy and democracy appear in the public realm, as questions are answered through communal inquiry establishing the soundness of arguments.

Therefore, following Castoriadis, philosophy brings something that no other discipline can bring to education: the radical experience of questioning and inquiring into the fundamental concepts on which an individual as well as a community are founded.

For this reason, we have to underline the special relationship between philosophy, democracy, and authority. In philosophy, and specifically in the radical experience of philosophy, authority or the authorities are put on hold, as philosophy can only happen in their absence. However, more important is the object (actual or potential) of the philosophical interrogation. According to Castoriadis, philosophy is particularly interested in certain kinds of concepts and questions, the ones that structure individual thought and social organization. Thus, because of its process and its objects, philosophy is a radical experience of autonomy and, therefore, a radical individual and collective experience with authority.

The goal of P4C is not radical autonomy and the undermining of social beliefs; however, as a philosophical activity, particularly as one in which philosophy is understood as personal and social inquiry, it is plausible that P4C carries with it part of what Castoriadis theorized as the intimate and fundamental connection between philosophy and democracy and, consequently, a peculiar experience with authority. Therefore, because of its particular relationship to authority and shared authority, P4C may offer us an interesting vantage point to study both of these subjects.

**Conclusion and Structure of the Dissertation**

These three problematics—educational authority, shared authority, and the practice of philosophy—are valuable in themselves, and this dissertation aims to participate in the study of all three of them. However, its primary purpose is to study all three as an interconnected phenomenon. Furthermore, although we can understand how

each one of these problematics is related to the other two in theory, the interest and the

originality of this dissertation came from the possibility I had to study all three naturally

united in a specific context. Hence, this qualitative study is based on the opportunity to

observe a kindergarten classroom—referred to hereafter as "Kindergarten Room 7"—in

which Annie,[2] the teacher, was committed to giving her students both the experience of

democracy and the opportunity to engage in philosophy. It is by immersing myself in this

site that I was able to observe the complex effect of their interconnection in the classroom

culture.

In the next two chapters[3], I give the larger theoretical and methodological

frameworks of this dissertation, which I have started to outline in this introduction. The

literature review (Chapter 2) includes theoretical reflections in which this study is rooted,

the empirical research that has been made on similar topics, and the bodies of literature to

which this study aims to contribute. In the methodology chapter (Chapter 3), I explain my

reasoning for using qualitative methodology, as well as the characteristics of the research

design.

The data analysis (Chapters 4, 5, and 6) makes up the bulk of this dissertation. In

Chapter 4, I give the general picture of how authority was shared in Kindergarten Room

7: how the teacher expressed her philosophy of education in relationship to shared

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[2] All names used in this dissertation are pseudonyms, and all the names of places
have been changed.

[3] The first division of the text is called "chapter", the second "part" and the third one
"section".

authority, and how she carried out her philosophy in her classroom and in her relationship

with her students. I first look to the way that sharing authority overtly took place in the

classroom before taking up how it affected in a more subtle way the general culture of the

classroom.

In Chapter 4, I mainly analyze the functioning of shared authority in Kindergarten

Room 7 through the actions of its teacher. In Chapter 5, I take a different perspective as I

looked at a group of boys in the classroom that were especially disruptive. Hence,

through their actions, these boys were sharing authority with their teacher in a way that

she didn't intend. As I make sense of the nature of their actions in their relationship to

their teacher's authority, we will see that they posed a strong problem to the practice and

theory of a shared authority pedagogy.

Chapters 4 and 5, by giving us the general portrayal of how authority was shared

in Annie's classroom, give us the background necessary to analyze the role of philosophy

in her classroom and how it affected its authoritative structure. This is the subject of

Chapter 6. The perspective gained in the two previous chapters permits us to grasp the

specificity of the practice of philosophy in its relationship to authority in Kindergarten

Room 7.

I conclude the dissertation by underlining its contributions to the theories of

shared authority, educational authority and democratic education. If the classroom

studied presented an extraordinary example of what learning can be in a public school, it

also came with certain difficulties that are usually not acknowledged in the literature of

shared authority. Based on several elements of my data analysis, I propose to redefine the nature of shared authority to better cope with the inherent tensions and contradictions that are created in a democratic classroom. Finally, I stress the importance for theorists and educational researchers of paying attention to the difficulties that teachers, as Annie, experience as they try to implement democratic education in their classroom.

**Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This research makes meaning from and hopes to contribute to different bodies of literature in philosophy of education and educational research. In the first part, I present the larger problem of educational authority. I situate it in the problem of authority in the development of democratic society and then by presenting its history in American education before concluding with the definitions of authority and educational authority. In the second part, I present three models of educational authority that I have found in the philosophical literature, which I have named the traditional model, the anarchist model, and the progressive model. Because research on educational authority has particularly come from sociological and qualitative research, this body of literature will be the subject of the third part. And in the final part, I have included three bodies of literature to which this dissertation is particularly connected: literature on morality in school, on democratic education, and finally on P4C.

**The Larger Problematic of Authority and Educational Authority**

      **The problematic of authority in modern and democratic societies.** The writing of Alexis de Tocqueville (1840/2004, 1856/1988, 2003) in the nineteenth century described to us the passage between two worlds and two different forms of society: the passage from the Old World to the New World, from the aristocratic world to the democratic world, from a kind of society organized on the principle of inequality to one based on the principle of equality. Through his works, Tocqueville analyzed this social transformation in the place of authorities in individual lives and societies (Michaud,

2007). Others have also argued that the problematic of authority in education should be situated more broadly in relation to the issue of authority in Western democracies (Kambouchner, 2009; Krieger, 1977; Revault d'Allonnes, 2009). Modernity, as a specific historical period, can be defined by the crisis of traditional authorities which used to structure past societies: religion, traditions, and a strong aristocratic order in which knowledge, power, and wealth were concentrated but which are no longer structuring individuals as well as collectivities (Arendt, 1961b; Legros, 1999; Monjo, 2009). An essential element of the modern revolution was the destruction of that world in which authority was a central and structuring element to a world in which authority is essentially problematic. Hence, modernity can be defined as the passage of a heteronomous society, a society ordered from without, to an autonomous society, a society ordered from within (Blais et al., 2008; Michaud, 2007; Tocqueville, 1840/2003).

Authority requires inequality and submission, whereas a democratic society is based on the principles of equality and autonomy. Autonomy does not always contradict authority per se—as we will see, it is one of its prerequisites—but it is easy to see that a society or an individual driven by the principle of autonomy will undermine authorities, as authorities at some point must be received from an external source to the individual. Thus, the issue of educational authority is one facet of the larger issue of authority in a democratic society, a society not founded on authority, but rather on equality and freedom (Jacquard, Manent, & Renaut, 2003).

Education has been one of the primary institutions affected by this social transformation and one in which the debate has been the most vigorous.[4] Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762/1995), in the mid-18th century, imagined an education in which the child never had to submit to authority. In the early 20th century, John Dewey (1916) claimed that education should be democratic, not as a preparation for democracy but as the experience of democracy. Arendt (1961a) stated in the '50s that the mistake of modern education has been to misunderstand the fundamental role of authority in it.

**The problematic of authority in American education.** The issue of authority in American schools became a subject of interest for researchers in the '60s, as if it were at this moment that the old traditional foundation of authority was truly crumbling and that authority was no longer a problem only for educational philosophers but also for educational researchers. Christopher Hurn, (1985) in his article "Changes in authority relationships in schools: 1960-1980" claimed that during this period of time authoritative relationships in schools had been profoundly transformed: that the traditional authority of the teacher had been challenged by new educational approaches, which, in turn, made teachers' authority fundamentally problematic.

Gerald Grant (1988) presents the story of a desegregated high school that passed from a golden age in which the school and teachers' authority were clear and well

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[4]Hence, it seems that other authoritative relationships have not raised as much passion and controversy as the ones found in educational relationships, as the relationship between a religious leader with her followers, a doctor with her patients, a mother with her son, or a police officer with the residents of her neighborhood.

established to a period of turbulence where their authority was more ambiguous and unsettled. Similarly, at the end of the '70s, Metz (1978) studied two desegregated high schools in which she observed different forms of authority that at some point were in conflict with each other: that there was disagreement in these schools about what authority should be. Swidler (1979), for her part, situated her research in the beginning of the '70s in two free schools, which were radical experiments with the traditional structure of schooling and authority. In sum, they all present the '60s and what follows as a time period of transformation and experimentation regarding educational authority in American schools. As authority became unclear and uncertain, it became worthwhile and necessary to study.

Recent studies on authority have continued to report on the problematic nature of authority in American schools. Judith L. Pace (2003b) argues that teachers face the paradoxical obligation to impose authority in their classrooms while liberating students: they have the double duty of keeping order in their classroom while at the same time being asked to help their students express their opinions and interests. Janet Bixby (2006), points out that the teachers in the schools she studied had to cultivate a caring climate for all students while enforcing a competitive and individualistic environment— goals that were difficult to reconcile. Thus, if the problematic nature of authority in schools changes its terms with time, it doesn't disappear.

**A definition of authority.** Authority has been an important subject in philosophy (Arendt, 1961b; Bilheran, 2009; Kojève, 2004). This may hint to us the philosophical

dimension of authority and, therefore, the openness of that concept to inquiry and disagreement. Hence, as we try to define authority, we automatically enter in certain philosophical debates: how can we differentiate a relationship based on authority from one that is not? Is there a difference between an authoritative relationship and an authoritarian relationship? How can we differentiate authority from power? These are just a few of the questions that one has to tackle in trying to delineate the concept of authority.

It is much easier to say what authority is *not* as opposed to what it is. It is not, for example, a power relationship based on violence, coercion, or manipulation. Nevertheless, a certain agreement on a positive definition of authority underpins much of the discussion on the subject: an authoritative relationship is a special form of power relationship that is based on legitimacy (Arendt, 1961b; Brubaker, 2012; Harjunen, 2011). Authority has therefore been described as the "over power" ("sur-pouvoir", Monjo, 2009): the power that has something in addition from which it receives its legitimacy. Furthermore, authority cannot be dissociated from the idea of freedom: the subordinate must be free to acknowledge the legitimacy of the individual in a superior position. If the latter were forced to consent to the former, the former couldn't claim to occupy her position legitimately. In other words, in an authoritative relationship, the subordinates always have the possibility to reject or resist the persons in authority, but they do not do it because they recognize their legitimacy (Kojève, 2004).

The following definition from Mary Haywood Metz (1978) serves as a basis for this dissertation because it encompasses the idea behind most of the definitions of authority:

> Authority is distinguished from other relationships of command and obedience by the superordinate's *right* to command and the subordinate's *duty* to obey. This right and duty stem from the crucial fact that the interacting persons share a relationship which exists for the service of a *moral order to which both owe allegiance.* This moral order may be as diffuse as the way of life of a traditional society or as specific as the pragmatic goals of a manufacturing organization. (p. 26, italics original)

Thus, with the right of one to command comes the duty for someone else to obey. Both right and duty derive from the fact that the persons involved in a particular relationship share a common moral order—something that gives sense to their relationship—which makes it appear as right, good and legitimate.

This is a fairly straightforward definition of authority: there is authority whenever an inferior and a superior share a moral order, which can mean a common goal, a certain worldview, or a contractual agreement, for example. However, this is much more complex than it appears, particularly for teachers' authority. The first conflict comes from the moral order that informs the authority of the teacher. The fact that we agree that education aims to foster learning hides different understandings about what is "good" learning. The presence of an authority in a specific situation does not mean that this

authority is necessarily right and good—history is full of authorities that were immoral with terrible consequences (Adorno, 2007). Furthermore, it is not clear who should be responsible for determining what "good" learning is. Should educational authority be a matter controlled only by adults, or should it also include children? If students should be participants in the process of defining authority in their education, how should this integration happen, on which matters, and to what extent? These disagreements are not only matters of empirical research; they are also philosophical topics, as they involve general ideas about the qualities of a good education, the importance of democratizing schooling and the nature of adult-children relationships.

I propose that the philosophical discussion around educational authority is structured around three different models, which I have categorized as traditional, anarchist, and progressive. Each model will now be examined in sequence, which will provide an overview of the philosophical debate on the subject.

**Three Philosophical Models of Educational Authority**

**The traditional model.** The traditional model set the tone of the discussion on educational authority. Indeed, the two other models (anarchist and progressive) were constructed in reaction to the traditional model. However, interestingly, we mainly know of this model from the perspective of its detractors (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970).[5]

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[5] Hence, what Dewey depicted as the traditional model of education is very close to what Freire meant by the banking model of education.

The traditional model is based on a simple idea: the teacher should be "*in* authority" in her classroom because she is "*an* authority." It is because she is an expert in her subject matter and in pedagogy that she should be in authority (Neiman, 1986; Peters, 1959; Steutel & Spiecker, 2000). Thus, teachers' authority comes first from their professional expertise and pedagogical knowledge, but part of their legitimacy also comes from a political procedure: teachers are part of schools, which are parts of districts, which are part of states, which are part of a federal government. Authority is in that sense transmitted from a legitimate government to the teachers. In any case, teachers' authority is granted by something superior to them.

This model deserves the name "traditional" for a few reasons. First, it is the classical model of what educational authority is and should be. In this view, the teacher "possesses" authority—and *should* possess authority—and students are expected to obey her. It is the intuitive way that we understand authority in school: the image of a classroom with a teacher at the front of the room, leading children and educating them. Second, it is traditional in the sense of being the first that appeared historically, as the one that others would eventually want to overcome (Dewey, 1916, 1938). Finally, this model is traditional because it functions on the mode of transmission: teachers are in charge of transmitting to the students what is considered as valuable in a particular society, and they are responsible for introducing students to a world that necessarily and always precedes them. In this perspective education is necessarily conservative; its goal is to conserve the world which newcomers are entering (Arendt, 1961a).

In the traditional model, the students are fundamentally of a different nature than the teacher. Students' opinions on their education are of little value; what they should learn, how they should learn it, and why they should learn it have already been settled. If teachers have to reach to their students regarding authority, it should be to explain to them why they are an authority and to give them reasons for their position and decisions (Siegel, 1988; Steutel & Spiecker, 2000). Thus, the issue of authority is divided among adults, citizens, and other competent persons. Education is a subject open to discussion for persons who are already educated. Thus, citizenship in its full sense is not given with birth but has to be acquired. More precisely, it has to be acquired through education and should be received at the end of that educational process (Arendt, 1961a).

This model is usually linked to conservatism (Giroux, 1986; Lakoff, 2002; Pace & Hemmings, 2007). For conservatives, the crisis of authority in school is related to the crisis of Western culture. They claim that schools are in decline because liberals have undermined teacher authority (Bloom, 1987; Hurn, 1985). Therefore, their solution to the issue of educational authority is in the past, when teachers had a strong hold on their students. Conservatism is not about a neutral position on the good life, but the affirmation that the good life inherited from the Western tradition is *the* good life. For conservatives, the role of the good education is to transmit the good life and the good society to the newcomers (Dworkin, 1985; Spring, 2008).

It would be a mistake to think that the traditional model is the model of the past. Many theorists argue that schooling is still structured on this idea of authority: that

schools are based on principle and naturally constructed to give adults in schools power and to make children obey and submit to them (Giroux, 2005; Thornberg & Elvstrand, 2012; Thorne, 1993) or that schools and teachers, through classroom management and behavioral techniques, can and should control and shape students (Butchart, 1998; Raby, 2012).

It is unclear how the idea of traditional authority fits with the recent trend and intensification of standardization in American schooling (Lather, 2010; Michaud, 2010; Ravitch, 2011). On one hand, it could be argued that U.S. national policy since No Child Left Behind has strengthened traditional authority by inscribing teachers as well as students in a top-down relationship with something that is bigger and more important than themselves. However, on the other hand, it could also be argued that such policy undermines teachers' authority by limiting their scope of action and not treating them as professionals who are in charge of their classrooms.

**The anarchist model.** As a reaction to the traditional model, the anarchist model is based on the idea that authority has no place in education and children should learn in freedom; for this reason, authority, *any* form of authority, is the downfall of education (Neill & Lamb, 1996). In opposition to the two other models, the anarchist model is based on the idea that education and authority cannot be reconciled: to educate is necessarily to educate without authority and, in the reverse, where there is authority there cannot be education (Giroux, 1986). The role of the teacher is then to create an environment in which her authority is, as much as possible, nonexistent. This dissertation

is based on the distinction between authority and authoritarianism, as the first one is legitimate while the second one is not. The anarchist model states that this is a false dichotomy, that any form of authority is in essence authoritarian: there is no such thing in that perspective as a liberating or empowering authority, and if there is one, it cannot be found in the schooling system (Illich, 1970).

Interestingly, Foucault has been used in theoretical discussions on authority as a foundation for a positive theory of authority (Amit & Fried, 2005; Brubaker, 2009; Manke, 1997; Oyler, 1996). I personally believe that Foucault, if he had to be situated anywhere, should be situated in the anarchist position, because one of his goals is to show how modern authority is the climax of a disciplinary society, as it hides power under the veil of legitimacy. In other words, authority is only a more refined and more effective form of power to control and discipline individuals. However, to situate Foucault in this category would be as misleading as situating him in a positive theory of educational authority, because Foucault never advocates for a state beyond the disciplinary society, but rather follows and unveils how power recreates itself in liberal societies that pretend to have gotten rid of it (Foucault, 1975, 2000; Thompson, 2010; Walkerdine, 1992).

I want to propose that the classical philosopher of the anarchist model of authority is Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762/1979). Although Rousseau's position on authority in *Emile* is very complex (Michaud, 2012), it is easy to see how the text, particularly the three first books, could be read as proposing an education without authority. Hence, in *Emile*, authority is the pitfall of education and of modern man. The goal of education is to

educate a man who would not be subjected to authorities, which cannot be accomplished in a situation in which the pupil would be subjected constantly to authorities. Authority in education just teaches children to be obedient and submissive, and to become double and hide their thoughts to their teachers. A student can only learn if she is freed to learn what she wants to learn.

**The progressive model.** I have decided to include critical pedagogy under the umbrella of progressive education because I believe both offer similar perspectives on authority: they both reject the traditional model as well as the anarchist model and offer a different one in their place. Contrary to the anarchist model, in progressive education the teacher has a positive role to play in students' education, but, contrary to the traditional model, the teacher cannot have *all* of the authority, as this one must be created in collaboration with students. In other words, authority must be co-constructed between the teacher and her students (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 2001; Shor, 1992). Consequently, I believe that both models offer a problematic vision of authority: they both present the idea of an authority that is imposed on students at the same time that they are constructing it or, maybe more precisely, that authority should be realized in interactions between students and their teacher.

The point of departure of such education is the interest of the children, but it is up to the adult to direct this interest toward growth through planning activities and structuring the environment. Whereas activities and the environment in traditional education are conceived completely under the direction of the teacher and aim to foster

her authority, in progressive education the aim is to give students a say in their education. The teacher's authority should not be imposed from the outside and should be rather required by the projects that the children are engaged in, but it is the role of the teacher to create the possibility of such projects and to supervise them to support positive educational outcomes. Progressive authority is realized depending on which matter and to what degree students are invited to shape their education. The greater the importance of the subjects that students are invited to participate in, the more progressive authority is realized (Brubaker, 2009; Oyler, 1996; Shor, 1996).

We can therefore see that the progressive model is a paradoxical model of authority: it simultaneously states the rights of children to direct their educations and the duty of adults to direct it. The tension between these two aspects cannot simply be resolved, as if there were a formula that permitted reconciling them in any given situation. This tension rather has to be acknowledged. Consequently, this position is one of complexity, and it requires the acceptance that there is not one simple solution to educational authority, as it has to be constantly co-created by students and teachers. Authority becomes a thin crest where the adult and the children meet, one that has to be continuously reassessed, re-established and renegotiated.

Authority is no longer understood in the language and perspective of traditional education. It can no longer be said that the teacher is the only "possessor" of authority. Progressive education blurred the classical distinction between those who have power and those who have to obey, those who are active and those who are passive, those who

are knowledgeable and those who are not (Amit & Fried, 2005; Freire, 2001; Palmer, 1993). It is this shift in our understanding of education that makes the "sharing" of authority between teacher and students possible or required. Authority is not something static, but instead something that is "dynamic and fluid" (Amit & Fried, 2005, p. 164) between the individuals of the classroom: between the teacher and the students, but also between the students themselves.

The analogy of Kenneth Benne of the doctors community has been used to think about this new form of authority (Amit & Fried, 2005; Brubaker, 2009). According to Benne (1986), the highest form of educational authority is in the community of peers, like the community of medical doctors, because the authority of the field then appears more clearly. The teacher should in that analogy tend as much as possible to treat her students as peers. This is the model of authority for which education should be striving for. In such a relationship, the distance between the teacher and the students fade progressively to the point where they become colleagues. Authority is then no longer imposed but is shared among the members of the community as well as it is coming from their field of expertise.

The model of shared authority is the model in which this research is mainly interested. Because of its complex and paradoxical nature, this model invites the following for research: what does it means to share authority in a classroom? When and how can we see that a teacher and her students shared authority? How is classroom

culture affected when a teacher aims to share authority with her students? These are the problems that this research has intended to study.

**Sociological and Educational Research on Authority**

    **The first sociologists on authority.** Max Weber has been a major influence on educational research on authority. Hence, many scholars have used his framework to structure their research on authority in education (Metz, 1978; Pace, 2003b; Swidler, 1979). Weber offered a typology of authority divided in three category: traditional authority, charismatic authority, and bureaucratic authority (Weber, 1997). By traditional authority, Weber meant the authority in which a group is structured by the past. The person in charge is then representing the values or the beliefs that were passed on from her or his predecessors. In a group structured around traditional authority, the Ancients have an important role, for the simple reason that they are closer to the past (Arendt, 1961b; Gauchet, 1985).

    In contrast, people follow a charismatic individual, not because she is the representative of the past, but because she has a special connection with a higher good, something that is seen as valuable. For example, individuals would follow a religious or a political leader because they believe that they are representing a higher power or because they believe in the leader's special capacity to achieve a certain goal. Archetypes of this form of authority may be found in Joan of Arc, Napoleon, Martin Luther King Jr., and similar individuals.

The bureaucratic authority, or legal rational authority, is characteristic of modern society and is the best realized in a bureaucratic institution: a large hierarchical organization in which everyone's role, function, and position in the hierarchy are clearly defined. In such an institution there is an impersonal body of rules that establishes what can and should be done. The person in authority is usually appointed to and occupies an office—individuals owe obedience to the office and not to a particular person. Individuals are submitted to the bureaucratic authority inside the institution and are free outside of it. The position of each office in relationship to each other in the hierarchy is clearly established. Weber presents the bureaucracy as the most efficient and rational form of organization for large institutions. If, in traditional authority, the legitimacy is in the past and for the charismatic leader it is in her personal powers, for the bureaucratic authority the institution itself is the source of legitimacy.

We should remember that although Weber proposed these different types of authority to make sense of reality, he also warned that they could not by themselves give a complete account of reality and are often confused in someway. "But the idea that the whole of concrete historical reality can be exhausted in the conceptual scheme about to be developed is as far from the author's thought as anything could be." (Weber, 1997, p. 329)

According to Pace and Hemming (2007), researchers have used a fourth type of authority to think about the authority of the teacher: the authority of expertise. Students would follow teachers not because they are charismatic, not because they are special

representatives of the past and not because they work in a bureaucratic institution, but because they are experts in their domain.

For his part, Emile Durkheim (Durkheim, 1925) at the beginning of the 20th century placed at the center of education the problematic of morality and authority. As society has been passing from a religious foundation to a secular foundation, Durkheim states that it should now be the role of the teacher to create in children the sense of authority and morality. However, Durkheim left the reader in a certain impasse because teachers cannot only impose authority; it has to come at some point from the students as well. Thus Durkheim pinpoints the quandary of educational authority in modern times: if there is a need for a new authority in education, which in turn is required for the moral order of a society, there is an uncertainty about how this new authority can be created.

**The two founding sociological studies on the issue of authority in American education.** There are two seminal sociological works on authority in American education: those by Mary Haywood Metz (1978)  and Ann Swidler (1979). They are up to this point the two most comprehensive studies that we have on the issue of authority in American schools. Interestingly, there are a lot of similarities between these two studies: they were both written at the same time; they both specifically targeted the subject of authority in American high schools; they both have a clear descriptive goal rather than a prescriptive one; and, to some extent, they both have a similar subject, as they both study high schools that were emerging after the social transformation of the '60s: Metz studied desegregated high schools whereas Swidler studied free schools.

Metz points out that the first problem with authority in schools is that we are unclear about the moral order it should serve, because the goals of school are complex and vague. In addition, students are not necessarily willing participants in their education. They are obliged to be in school, whether that they want to be or not. Metz created and used a typology of teachers' practices of authority for her study. The two main types that she used were the ones she labels "incorporative" and "developmental" (p. 36), which I respectively referred to as the traditional and progressive model of educational authority. Metz analyzed how these different approaches may work or not work with students of lower and higher tracks and with different subject matters, such as mathematics and social studies. However, when a teacher and her students did not share a common moral order, the classroom life posed problems without any easy solution. Metz concludes that, "Until students become committed to learning, encouraging that commitment is the overriding pedagogical task." (p. 252)

Swidler was interested in a completely different setting than Metz, as she studied two free schools. For Swidler, free schools could be considered *Organization Without Authority* because they were based on the principle that teachers could not or should not make any claim for authority because of their position as teachers. In a free school, authority was, if not always a problem, always something that could and should be questioned and even overcome. This goal, impossible to achieve, had to be replayed everyday. Swidler noticed that the free schools she studied had a different educational objective than traditional schooling: education in them was about giving the opportunity for children to explore and to create their better selves. As teachers could not base their

status on their bureaucratic position, they were left to rely on their charisma to order the

classroom and activities and, also, to create deep personal relationships with their

students.

If compulsory schooling had some issues in the schools that Metz studied,

Swidler reported on the fact that the absence of authority, understood in traditional sense,

led to another set of issues: teachers' lower expectations, students' lack of motivation,

difficulty to teach academic subjects, and teachers' exhaustion.

In sum, Swidler and Metz both reported on the problem of authority in modern

schooling: if a form of authority may be convenient in a certain context, it does not mean

that it would be appropriate in another context. My research inscribes itself in this trend

of American research that Metz and Swidler opened. Although I did not study large high

schools as they did, my goal has been to see how a specific view of authority, that I have

come to see as shared authority, works in a particular setting and interplays with the

classroom culture.

**Contemporary studies on educational authority.** There have been few studies

dedicated to authority in the past decade, but taken together, they give a complex and

broad picture of the issue of authority in American education, as they examine the subject

from different perspectives, educational levels, and subject matters. An interesting group

of studies were gathered in an edited book by Judith L. Pace and Annette Hemmings:

*Classroom Authority: Theory, Research and Practice* (2006b). If some studies in this text

reported on more positive situations regarding authority in school (Mullooly & Varenne,

2006), most of them were adding to Metz's (1978) and Swidler's (1979) assessment of the problematic of authority in American schools. Bixby (2006), in her contribution, noted that in the detracked schools that she studied, schools had to simultaneously promote the contradictory ideals of creating a caring climate for everyone and of fostering a competitive and individualistic culture. Hemmings (2006), similarly, stated in her study that the moral order of two high schools led to different kind of problems: the communitarian moral order as well as the competitive and individualistic moral order. Wills (2006) reported on the case of elementary schools that were structured on a positive moral order and authority that foster students' learning, but that the climate of state standardized tests were weakening them.

Judith L. Pace stands out in recent research on educational authority (2003a, 2003b, 2003c; 2006). Throughout her publications, Pace comes back to the problematic of authority in the various sites she studied and more specifically to the confusion of claims to legitimacy that teachers make. If Metz could observe clear distinctions between teacher approaches to authority, for Pace these distinctions did not fit her study as teachers picked various approaches, which in turn made their claims to legitimacy even more confusing. Interestingly, Pace arrived at a similar conclusion in high tracks and lower tracks, although the problems in the latter were more pressing. The teachers and the students usually got to a modus vivendi, which is different than an agreement about a moral order that would give sense to the classroom community. Ultimately, Pace contends the idea that teachers should mainly base their authority on their

professionalism, which is undermined when they make different and ambiguous claims to legitimacy.

**Studies on authority in early elementary classroom.** There were two research studies that were similar in their intent and in the age group of their population: one from Celia Oyler (1996) and one from Karen Gallas (1998). Oyler studied a first-grade classroom in which the teacher purposefully decided to share authority with her students mainly through the integration of the "New literacy" method. Oyler, in her research, paid attention to how authority was shared in the literacy activities. She gave a general positive picture of the classroom culture. Oyler claimed that authority was really shared when students not only directed the activities but could also bring their own agenda into the classroom life. She presented sharing activity as a dance between the teacher and the students.

Gallas' study (1998) although similar to Oyler's is clearly different. First, Gallas studied her own students in first and second grade. Similar to Oyler, Gallas was interested in a shared authority pedagogy. She presented her pedagogy as aiming to create a classroom culture that was co-constructed between her and her students. However, Gallas' interest was quite different than the one of Oyler. She was interested in analyzing what she called the "*subtextual*" (p. 12, italics original) of her classroom. In sum, Gallas contended that her students who came to school were bringing with them their own agenda, which often entered in opposition to the official agenda of the classroom. One important element of students' personal agendas was to investigate and engage with the

power dimension of the classroom. Because of this, she studied, for example, a group of boys that she called the "bad boys" who were particularly disruptive and, according to her, were very powerful inside the classroom; she also studied a silent girl and a beautiful girl who used, respectively, their silence and beauty as tools of power.

The work of Cynthia Ballenger (1992a, 1992b) on her students in a preschool serving mainly a Haitian community is also useful. Ballenger argues in *Because you like us: The language of control* (1992b) that some techniques of control may be useful for some cultures but not for others. In this article, she described how she was unsuccessful in creating order in her classroom until she learned a new language adapted to the community she was working with which allowed her to gain some authority with her students. In *Learning the* ABC *in a Haitian preschool: A teacher's story* (1992a), Ballenger emphasized how she had to put her own authority as a teacher in question to understand that her students from a different culture learn differently than how she first expected, which in turn led her to create space in her pedagogy for their way of learning language.

**Morality in School, Democratic Education and Practice of Philosophy**

**Morality, authority and schools.** The relationship between morality and education is a vast and complex topic. First, let's try to delineate the concept of morality. A moral idea "is not a description of what the world is like. Instead, it tells us what we ought to do" (Strike & Soltis, 2004, p. 5). Moral ideas do not describe the world; rather, they are prescriptions and, for this reason, they are not invalidated because they are not

respected. For example, hypothetically, the idea you should not lie does not cease to be true just because one person lied. Consequently, we can use the definition by Cari Buzzelli and Bill Johnston as a reference to define morality: it "constitutes that set of a person's beliefs and understandings which are evaluative in nature: that is, which distinguish, whether consciously or unconsciously, between what is right and wrong, good and bad'' (quoted in Buzzelli & Johnston, 2001, p. 876).

Buzzelli and Johnston added that ''moral beliefs, values, and understandings are played out at the critical point of contact between the private, individual sphere and the social realm" that is "moral beliefs are both 'personal' and 'cultural'' (quoted in Buzzelli & Johnston, 2001, p. 876). As a social phenomenon, morality is as much about defining how we want to relate to others than about how we integrate the rules of a particular culture. As an individual phenomenon, morality is part of how an individual constructs herself as a moral being, how she respects moral rules and how she makes sense of what is good or right.

There have been different theories about what should be a moral education. Rousseau (1762/1995) advanced the idea that education had to be amoral until the pupil gets to be old enough to understand morality. However, Rousseau's amoral education was certainly a moral education: not only was it a good education, but the moral life of Emile could only have happened because he had been prepared for it.

Durkheim (1925), in a different perspective, stated that because of the social transformation of society in his time, it was then the special and new role of the school

and of the teacher to inculcate morality in students: that the morality of a society has to

be transmitted to the newcomers and future citizens through formal education. This

inculcation of values can be done openly and directly like in character education, which

aims to educate children in the virtues to possess and in the vices to despise (Westheimer

& Kahne, 2004).

However, many authors advanced that schooling does not have to be an overt

education of values, attitudes and behaviors to be moral, that schooling and teaching in

essence are a moral endeavor (Goodlad, 1990). Parker Palmer (1993) and Kenneth Strike

(2008) point out that learning academic disciplines in school is in itself a moral learning,

as students learn the criteria of excellence in a particular subject matter as well as the

behaviors and attitudes related to their field of study. Noddings (2007), for her part, states

that the main focus of schooling should be the creation of a caring climate inside a

school; that this moral quality of schooling is the first requirement for students' learning

and to educate them to become caring individuals.

Qualitative researchers have also been interested in the issue of morality in

education, but from a descriptive perspective rather than a prescriptive one: their goal has

been to study how morality is part of classroom and school life and not how morality

should be theoretically in classrooms and schools. They also support the idea that

morality permeates schooling and teaching, although in a much more detailed way than

theoretical accounts. David T. Hansen (1993) showed the different layers of morality of

events that appear at first sight as amoral. For example, Hansen unfolded the multiple

layers of morality related to the practice and obligation for students of raising their hands in class. Philip W. Jackson, Robert E. Boostrom, and David T. Hansen, in their book *The Moral Life of Schools* (1993), also took this perspective on how morality does not only appear overtly, such as in moral education per se, but that it infused the whole life of the schools and classrooms and can also be seen in the curriculum, the physical appearance of schools and classrooms as well as rules, rituals and ceremonies in them. Buzzelli and Johnston (2001) showed how a simple story told by a child raised many issues that were eminently moral. Through it, they sought to demonstrate how the instruction of skills and knowledge, often presented as value neutral, is in fact always driven by moral imperative, but, also by the teacher's own moral puzzlements in the face of moral dilemmas.

Moral education and morality in education are an important topic of this dissertation. I am indeed interested in the wide range of topics presented in this section: moral education as the study of overt or hidden ways to teach morality in children, morality as it is unveiled in the daily life of a school and a classroom, education as inherently a moral endeavor composed of various and complex layers. However, my interest in morality in this research is also different: how does morality interplay with authority? The relationship between authority and morality is not trivial and is certainly one of the most fundamental aspects of educational authority. Hence, in the definition of authority that I have used in this text and I have borrowed from Metz (1978) a person is in authority when another person acknowledges her right to be superior, which can only happen when both "interacting persons share a relationship which exists for the service of a *moral order to which both owe allegiance*" (Metz, 1978, p. 26, italics original).

Here is how Annette Hemmings (2006) defines a school moral order: "Broadly defined, *school moral order* is the socially constructed set of understandings (i.e., values, norms, mores, and rules) and practices that are meant to fulfill institutional goals" (p. 137, italics original). The school moral order is then a higher set of concepts and values that structures the moral life inside the schools and in the classrooms, which is why Hemmings, when discussing it, emphasized "moral overtone through the use of adjectives such as *worthwhile, proper,* and *good* and auxiliary verbs such as *should* and *ought*." (p. 157)

It is this idea of a moral order that is bigger than the individuals in a particular school and that informs the sense of individual meaning-making of their own actions inside the institution that is behind its use in the literature (Bixby, 2006; Hemmings, 2006; Wills, 2006). "Sometimes these orders are intentionally built […] More often than not they are constructed in unplanned ways during the course of day-to-day social interactions in classrooms and corridors." (Hemmings, 2006, p. 137) School moral order can be clear, but it can also be filled with contradictions.

Consequently, a study of educational authority in a particular context implies that attention must be paid to the moral order that gives sense to it or, on the contrary, to the effect of the absence of a clear moral order. Although moral order is certainly a theme in the morality and educational literature presented above, it also appears to be of a different nature. Its key component is that there is a moral order when students and teachers shared

an understanding of the sense of the educational project they are engaged in together (Goodman, 2010).

There seems to be a logical relationship between morality and authority. On one hand, the moral order of a school or of a particular classroom would help establish the authority of the teacher, which in turn will enforce rules, norms, moral codes, beliefs, and behaviors on the students. On the other hand, it is also plausible that the moral order of a school requires an authoritative endorsement of some sort to be seen as legitimate. The problematic here is not as much to know which comes first, but to know what to do when both moral order and authority are missing and when students, for any reason, do not find meaning in their education (Goodman, 2010; Metz, 1978). The logical relationship between morality and authority becomes at that point extremely problematic, as it is unclear and uncertain how both can be produced and, furthermore, both appear to require the other to be produced.

**Democratic education.** The interest in shared authority cannot be dissociated from a larger interest in democratic education. Hence, these two concepts appear to be naturally linked. Researchers interested in shared authority valued this idea, and with reason, because they see it as a fundamental element to foster a democratic education and a democratic society (Brubaker, 2012; Oyler, 1996; Shor, 1996). Therefore, a research on shared authority is naturally linked to the literature on democratic education.

However, democratic education has to be understood in a specific way. Hence, it has become common to differentiate two larger types of democratic education. The first

one is considered a preparation to democratic life. In that approach, students may learn

values considered important in a democracy (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) or learning

what is considered as the essential knowledge of a citizen, as in American history or the

fundamental elements of the American political system (Lopez & Kirby, 2007). Yet, to

be fair, for some this approach is the only valuable approach to democratic education,

that democratic education can only be a preparation to democracy. Hannah Arendt

(1961a), for instance, claimed that children are not citizens but on the way of becoming

citizens, which implies that they have to be introduced into the world before participating

in it and being able to transform it. Similarly for Richard Rorty (2000), children have to

be socialized in K-12 education before being invited to freedom, critical thinking, and

individuality in colleges.

The second approach to democratic education is the opposite of the first approach

on that particular point: real democratic education has to be students' experiences of

democracy and should not be merely a preparation for democracy (Papastephanou, 2008;

Parker, 2003; Winton, 2008). It is to this second trend that this research is related,

because the idea of making education the experience of democracy appears to imply a

transformation of the authoritative relationship in classrooms and in schools, a

transformation in which students are invited to shape their own education and in which

the teacher creates opportunities for them to do so.

The distinct feature of this research is to study the particular aspect of how

authority is constructed in a democratic education and the consequences of that

transformation, not in a specific moment in the classroom, but rather for the general culture of that classroom. Hence, if democratic education implied a certain transformation of authority, it remains unclear how this transformation would be realized in a specific classroom.

Practice of democratic education in this sense, as the children's experience of democracy in schools, remains more an exception in American schooling system than a norm. At the same time, schools are often presented as the most important means for a society to strengthen and to foster democratic habits in students (Apple & Beane, 2007; Parker, 2003; Schultz & Oyler, 2006).

Democratic education does not only imply a transformation of authority in the classroom, as authority becomes shared between the teacher and the students; it is also advanced that sharing authority between teacher and student in a classroom would be favorable to building a moral order in that particular context, because students would find that moral order meaningful as they would have participated in its construction (Schultz & Oyler, 2006; Thornberg, 2008; Thornberg & Elvstrand, 2012).

**Practice of philosophy, democracy and educational authority.** P4C is made up of a curriculum of philosophical novels written for children of different ages in which philosophical issues are raised and that are also examples of philosophical dialogues. The novels are also accompanied by manuals for teachers in which philosophical ideas are developed, exercises proposed, and plans of discussion laid out. In addition to this curriculum, P4C also has a specific methodology: the community of inquiry, which is

comprised of steps to help a community to advance from a question to a probable

hypothesis or solution. The community of inquiry is a methodology that is used in

different fields of knowledge, and there are communities of inquiry in science, biology,

mathematic, politics, etc. The uniqueness of P4C is that the subject of inquiry is

philosophical. The role of the teacher, or, in P4C the facilitator, is to ensure that the

appropriate procedure is applied to construct and advance the inquiry. The facilitator is in

sum the guardian of the procedure, not the advocate of a specific position in the content

of the discussion (Gregory, 2008; Sasseville, 2000).

Beyond its curriculum and its pedagogy, P4C is constituted of certain

fundamental ideas regarding philosophy and education, which I have summarized in the

three following points. First, philosophy should not be understood as a corpus of

knowledge to be learned, but rather as an activity; not as learning the systems of past

philosophers, but instead to actually engage in philosophical inquiry (Lipman, 2003;

Lipman & Sharp, 1980; Sasseville, 2005). The definition of philosophy as more of an

activity than a product is not new, but it has become in some way hidden in its

contemporary practice. Philosophy has been increasingly and almost completely defined

through the academic institution; a philosopher is someone who possesses a position at a

university, publishes scholarly texts in peer-reviewed journals, and transmits her

knowledge to students in her classes. It is not that this way of doing philosophy is false or

illegitimate, but it has never defined and should not define completely what practicing

philosophy has meant. Pierre Hadot (2002a, 2002b; Hadot, Carlier, & Davidson, 2003)

argues similarly that something in the meaning of philosophy has been lost in recent time.

Hadot points out that the foundational hero of philosophy, Socrates, the figure from which the word philosopher was crafted, cannot be defined only as someone who produced theory and taught it to his disciples, but as someone who is engaged in a certain way of living. I want to propose that P4C participates in this reclamation of philosophy as an activity or an experience, not as a product to be shared from a person to another.

The second fundamental idea of P4C revolves around who is allowed to do philosophy. Following the previous point, philosophy has become an activity reserved to a group of persons who have been accredited inside the academic institution. Philosophy for children blurs the distinction between those who know and those who do not know, those who are allowed to do philosophy and those who are not. Thus, inside of a philosophical community of inquiry, everyone is entitled to think and propose ideas—in other words, to philosophize. P4C takes this a step further by including the children in the persons who are able and entitled to do philosophy (Sasseville & Gagnon, 2011; Sharp, 1993). In our Western culture, philosophy as a discipline in the educational system is indeed reserved for the higher grades, usually after high school. The reason for this choice is perhaps entrenched in deep beliefs about education and childhood. Opponents to P4C would argue that children cannot perform philosophy, that philosophy requires a certain maturity and the acquisition of what is considered as the fundamental philosophical knowledge prior to being practiced; even if children could do philosophy, critics would continue, they *should* not do it because philosophy is a dangerous activity, one that is fundamentally anarchic and leads to questioning what should be received without discussion—only the persons prepared can enter this realm of inquiry. Paulo

Freire, in the beginning of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), referred to this as the fear of freedom and the desire to keep the status quo.

Thirdly, in P4C the practice of philosophy should be done with others. You cannot establish a community of inquiry alone; you need others with whom you can philosophize. Furthermore, this social endeavor requires a certain process and structure to bear fruit. At the end, this commitment to the philosophical community of inquiry cannot be dissociated from a commitment to democracy; both ideas sustain and inform each other, as a commitment to democracy leads to a commitment in the community philosophical inquiry and vice versa (Bleazby, 2006; Gregory, 2004; Lipman, 1998)

P4C is historically and pedagogically linked to the development of progressive education and democratic education (Daniel, 1998). First, in a philosophical community of inquiry, children are considered as active participants; they engage with the teacher in a dialogue on a subject that is connected to their lives. The philosophical inquiry is fundamentally a communal endeavor in which all individuals are, ideally, interested and find meaning: "The primary source of social control [in progressive education] resides in the very nature of the work done as a social enterprise in which all individuals have an opportunity to contribute and to which all feel a responsibility" (Dewey, 1938, p. 56.).

Furthermore, the philosophical dialogue is structured by rational and reasonable considerations. The qualities that are required for such dialogue are, among others, the capacity to listen to others, to put one's own assumptions in question, to clarify one's own and others' ideas, to give reasons for claims, and to evaluate others' reasons. Being

moved by reasons and being able to engage in rational dialogue with others are hallmarks of democratic citizenry (Johnson & Blair, 2006; Siegel, 1988; Weinstein, 1991). The role of the facilitator of a community of philosophical inquiry is not to transfer her beliefs to children, but to help them to experience such rational inquiry, of being an authority in procedure and not in content.

But P4C is not only about a process; it is also about content, namely the fundamental categories of our experiences: the ethical, aesthetic, metaphysical, and epistemological dimensions of our lives. It is also about giving meaning to concepts such as freedom, fairness, and, obviously, democracy. That said, in a philosophical community of inquiry, these abstract dimensions are treated as they appear in children's lives and as they appear communal problems. It is by inquiring about such concepts as equality, morality and education that they become meaningful for students.

P4C as a democratic practice is related to the progressive educational vision of shared authority. Hence, the dialogue of a philosophical community of inquiry is essentially made possible through the encounter between the students, but an encounter that is made possible by the role of the facilitator who supervises the procedures of the discussion. Yet, the practice of philosophy appears at first sight to be different from other democratic practices. Not only is philosophy presented as inviting persons to be critical of ideas received, but, in addition, the subject of philosophical inquiry is radical as it is constituted of the most fundamental concepts of individuals and collectivities (Castoriadis, 1991; Plato, 1979; Reboul, 2010). It is for these reasons that the study of a

classroom in which there is philosophy may give us an interesting vantage point on the practice of shared authority and on democratic education.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have first situated the issue of educational authority in its larger context by addressing how this issue was related to the larger problematic of authority in democratic societies, its history in American education, and, lastly, I offered a definition of authority as a form of power in which the subordinate recognizes the right of her superior to be superior and, therefore, as a power relationship in which all participants shared a common moral order.

I then proposed three philosophical models of educational authority, which I have labeled traditional, anarchist, and progressive. This research is chiefly interested in increasing our knowledge on the third model: on how authority can be shared between a teacher and her students.

In the third section, I gave an overview of sociological research on educational authority, which stressed the need for more research on the issue of authority in American schools and classrooms, as they indicate how that notion is in different ways problematic in various contexts and settings. Studies on early childhood and authority presented to us a complex task in studying authority: to look to overtly shared activities, to consider how children explore the power dimensions of their classroom, and to pay attention to the relationship between authority and learning versus authority and order.

In the last section, I presented the literature on three different domains on which this research is particularly connected: morality in school, democratic education, and the practice of philosophy. These three literatures are reunited through a study on shared authority. Hence, the idea of shared authority has implications on how morality is constructed in a specific group. It is a democratic approach to education as an invitation for children to experience democracy. Finally, P4C is a practice that is related to the idea of shared authority in education, maybe one of its most complete and radical manifestations, as it encourages students to inquire in the most fundamental concepts of their life and of their community.

These different bodies of literature intersect theoretically. The primary interest of this dissertation is to see how they intersect in a particular context where they are intertwined. The opportunity to study this particular context would give us a new perspective on the issues addressed in this chapter.

**Chapter 3: Methodology**

The goal of this research is to contribute to the effort to understand educational authority by studying the particular model of shared authority since these two subjects are fundamentally connected. My intent was to study the practice of shared authority through the practice of philosophy as they were united in a specific context. Therefore, the research question on which this research has been structured is "What is the role of philosophy, as a progressive and democratic educational practice, in the negotiation of authority in an elementary classroom?" Negotiation here means two things. First, I have used "negotiation" as it is used in the literature on educational authority, as an ongoing process of co-construction of authority between the individuals of a particular group (Manke, 1997; Middendorf & McNary, 2011; Pace & Hemmings, 2007). According to this first sense, authority, by its nature, is always negotiated, whether the individuals of a group want it or not. Second, I by "negotiation" I mean how it is used in shared authority literature, as the overt and intended creation by the teacher and her students of a classroom culture that is democratic (Brubaker, 2012; Schultz & Oyler, 2006; Shor, 1996). Although these two meanings of negotiation are different, I did not approach them as essentially separate, nor did I think they would naturally merge in a single idea. I saw them as fundamentally interrelated: since the beginning of the study, I have been interested in seeing how the practice of shared authority would influence the larger construction of authority in the classroom culture. But on the other hand, I was not sure that a democratic approach to authority would define the overall authoritative structure of

the culture of the classroom I would study; it might explain some of its dimensions, but not all of them.

In this chapter, I will present the methodology used for this research: its design, the site and the participants of the study, the data collection, the data analysis, and finally its limitations.

**Design of the Study**

For many reasons, this research question and problematic dictated the qualitative methodology for this research. It is indeed not a coincidence that all of the empirical research on authority or similar subjects have used qualitative methods (e.g. Calendreau, 2009; Metz, 1978; Thornberg & Elvstrand, 2012). The complex relationship between educational authority, democratic education, and the practice of philosophy could only be analyzed qualitatively rather than quantitatively. Therefore, my goal has not been to test a theory on that interrelationship but rather to produce inductively an in-depth understanding of it through the close study of a context in which they were assembled.

This research is part of the trend of research on educational authority, which has been persistently conceptualized by researchers and theorists as a "social construction" (Pace & Hemmings, 2006a, p. 1; Pace & Hemmings, 2007, p. 5). It is produced in particular social contexts, and the researcher has to approach it as a social phenomenon that unveils and transforms itself through time, that is negotiated in multiple and nuanced ways between different actors, that is influenced by a wide variety of factors, and that is

constituted by individuals' meaning-making as shown by their statements as well as

through nonverbal methods, such as actions, behaviors, and attitudes.

For these reasons, the subject of this dissertation has to be studied in a natural

setting and not in a laboratory or in a setting shaped on the perspective of a laboratory,

wherein a control group is separated from another group receiving treatment and results

are assessed through tests before and after the experiment. In quantitative methodology,

the researcher tries to limit the effect of her own subjectivity on the research process. On

the contrary, in qualitative methodology, the researcher is the most important tool to

collect data. She is not trying to separate herself from the research subject, but rather is

sensitive to the participants' meaning-making of their actions and culture. My goal was

therefore neither to assess authority in numbers, nor to produce a causal relationship, but

rather through my prolonged engagement in the site to render with thick descriptions the

complexity of my research subject. Therefore, the process that this research documented

is just as important as the conclusions it advances. As I was interested fundamentally in a

cultural phenomenon, an ethnographic lens was also indicated (Blommaert & Jie, 2010;

Merriam, 2009; Oyler, 1996).

I was interested in studying authority in an elementary classroom, which

differentiates it from most studies on authority, as they focused on high schools (e.g.

Bixby, 2006; Hemmings, 2006; Pace, 2006). I saw an elementary classroom as a

microcosm culture and as a special site to study the issue of educational authority because

individuals create it together for the vast majority of the school week, which is different

from subsequent school levels where a teacher meets her students fewer times a week. Therefore, authority in an elementary classroom is defined throughout the communal work of a specific group of individuals for a long period of time and the major part of the school week and, for these reasons, the stakes are high for students and their teacher regarding the need for the presence of a "good" authority.

**The Site and its Participants**

While I originally planned to study two classrooms and actually began observations and interviews in both, access to the second classroom grew increasingly limited and finally was not available to me. As the second classroom became unavailable, I concentrated on the first classroom and its fascinating complexities. When the time came to complete the data analysis, my adviser and I found that that I had collected a reasonable amount of data from the first site and it would be suitable and preferable to focus on the one class alone. Although this situation may appear problematic at first (and was initially disappointing to me), a constant reality for researchers working in natural settings is that they have, so to speak, no control over the environment in which they are working. It was also understood beforehand that, as a rule, qualitative research design would change during the research project (Merriam, 2009, p. 16).

Therefore, for the purposes of this dissertation, I am focusing on the one classroom that I was able to study in depth: Annie's kindergarten classroom. I will consequently not refer to the second classroom in this dissertation, although my observations in it gave me a certain point of reference to understand and to see Annie's

classroom. Indeed, the classroom not mentioned in this research is inherently present in the background, as it provided me with a comparison point to reconsider the primary site of this study.

Before beginning the research, I was already acquainted with Annie, who taught kindergarten at Mountain View School. Prior to this research I had conducted a pilot study in her classroom in the spring of 2010. Annie had a different teaching history than the typical trajectory of professional teachers: she had a career and raised her family before going back to school and obtaining her degree in early education. Her special history may help explain the following: Annie was deeply committed to democratic education and P4C. Her commitment to these practices went beyond what one would expect in a public classroom; I was struck by her passion when she talked about these topics and how she integrated them in her classroom. During the initial pilot study, I started to inquire into the subject that would later become the focus of this dissertation. Some topics appeared then that have been further developed in this text, such as the tension between Annie's philosophy of education and teaching experience in the classroom and the difficulty of implementing democratic practices in a hierarchical structure.

The year before my research, Annie received an award from a state organization for the quality of her teaching, acknowledging her democratic practice and her practice of philosophy in the classroom. All of these elements made me view her classroom as a

unique and exceptional site and brought me to this research. The chances of finding an award-winning teacher dedicated to democratic practices and P4C are quite small.

Annie was teaching at Mountain View School, a school located in a suburban area of a major city in the Northeastern region of the United States. The school appeared to me as beautiful and stood out from the surrounding architecture of its residential neighborhood. There was a certain kind of dignity that exuded from it, significantly different from the kind of elementary school I was used to seeing in my home province in Canada. The architecture of the building itself was not the only indication of how much the community valued the school; the entire school district was often praised publicly for its quality. Mountain View School was also involved in a partnership with a nearby state university; a distinctive element, as Mountain View was one of the magnet elementary schools in the district.

The population of the school was generally representative of the demographic makeup of the general community: mainly Caucasian and upper-middle class, although there were representations of different ethnicities and family incomes. The community at large often appeared to me as segregated, but I observed that the student community was to some point desegregated through its elementary schools—an opinion that the principal indicated in the first interview of my pilot study. These trends were seen in the kindergarten classroom, which was mainly composed of white children coming from upper-middle class families but also included children from different economic and ethnic backgrounds. In the classroom that was the primary site of research, there were

fifteen boys and eleven girls. I had the consent of twenty-three parents and the assent of their twenty-three respective children.

In addition to the teacher, I also had the consent of the two other adults who worked daily in the classroom: the assistant teacher and another adult in charge of assisting one specific student in the classroom, although the latter would most of the time act as a general classroom aide. I had the consent of all the other adults working with the students, such as the principal, substitute teachers, and the teachers teaching special subject matters: art, physical education, technology, and music.

**Data Collection**

Data were gathered from April 1, 2012, to the last day of school, June 24, 2012. I originally planned to conduct my study for a longer period of time at the site, but my research was held up by delays in the IRB process. Fortunately, I had gained a lot of perspective from the pilot study. There were mainly two kinds of data that I collected: the field notes I gathered during my observations and my transcriptions of them into narratives, and my interviews and informal discussions with the teacher.

I observed the classroom in weekly intervals for one full day of instruction and one half-day of instruction per week. The half-day was always Thursday morning, as it was the designated time for P4C instruction during the week—I spent the remainder of the day at that secondary research site as P4C instruction was also taking place at that time. For the full day of observation, I was able to observe each day of the week at least

once during data collection. I followed the students through all of their activities: recess, lunch, any other class outside of the main classroom such as music or physical education, other activities at the school, and field trips. I participated in two trips, one to the zoo and one to the beach. I followed the children as they went to sing at a school concert and when they went to a school assembly. I took as many notes as I could during my observations, which I copied down immediately after and expanded into narratives.

My observations were always caught in some tensions with which I constantly struggled. The first one was about shared authority, which appeared to be best observed during moments in which students were put in charge and given the opportunity to bring their own agenda into the classroom agenda—Oyler (1996), for instance, structured her research on these moments. Although these moments were clearly observable in the classroom and were certainly important[6] they started to appear to me as one dimension of how shared authority was realized in the classroom culture, as the former affected the latter in a more subtle and general way. Therefore, as my research subject was the entire classroom culture, I had to make a constant effort to narrow my observations to the topic of this dissertation.

The second tension came from when and how to observe teacher authority. Teacher authority is the most visible when it is reacting to a problem: when there is an order that is not followed, when a rule is broken, or when the teacher has to intervene to

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[6] See part *How Annie Directly and Overtly Included her Students in the Authority of the Classroom* in Chapter 4.

bring decorum back to the classroom. However, at times, these moments are not the best ones to observe a teacher's authority; they are, in fact, data points that sometimes point to authority's failure. Put another way, teacher authority works best when it does not have to discipline students, when everything is running smoothly. Therefore, the difficulty of observing teacher authority came from not only observing the moment when authority unveils itself and directly orders the students and the classroom, but also in the moments where it was hidden and ordering the classroom in the shadows.

Thirdly, as I was interested in the classroom culture, I also starting to pay more attention to particular subsets of students. I started gathering an increasing amount of data on a group of boys that appeared to me, as well as to the teacher, as the most disruptive students in the classroom (they are the topic of Chapter 5). As I paid more attention to them, however, I paid less general attention to the rest of the classroom.

If philosophy was easier to observe during the Thursday morning class session, as there was a specific period of time designated for P4C, this specific structure brought its own set of complications. I was indeed interested in seeing how the practice of philosophy affected the general culture of the classroom; although I was able to capture some moments that were definitely related to the practice of philosophy outside of the Thursday morning sessions, it remained something difficult to observe and grasp. This is why in my specific chapter examining philosophy (Chapter 6), I mainly base my analysis on what I could observe during the philosophy sessions.

After conducting my observations, I made sense of them as I wrote my narratives soon afterward, where I further developed my notes, explored what they could mean for my subject, and related them to previous and potential future observations and other pieces of data, such as teacher interviews. Therefore, as most qualitative researchers do, I analyzed the data concomitantly to its collection, although the analysis intensified after the end of the data collection.

I had many informal discussions with the teacher every day. When I was not observing the students, we would usually have lunch together, during which we talked about the classroom activities, the students and philosophy of education. I did not record all of these informal discussions in my notebook as they took place because I have found that the notebook, as an essential tool of the researcher, was also a tool that made some participants uncomfortable. I put my notebook away during these conversations and tried to recall and record as much as I could remember afterward, preferring to lose some of the data to make the teacher more comfortable and willing to share her observations.

In addition to these informal discussions, I had four formal interviews of a length between forty minutes and one hour, which were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. These interviews were semi-structured. I prepared topics to discuss beforehand, such as questions and pieces of observation related to my subject. However, once the interview started, I would follow and adapt my questions and comments to Annie's answers.

**Data Analysis**

As mentioned above, the data analysis was concomitant to its collection, but continued and intensified after the fact. According to Merriam (2009), "all qualitative data analysis is *inductive* and *comparative*" with the goal of "making sense out of the data" (p. 175, italics original). Thus, my analysis was inductive, as I started from my notes to create more complex categories, as well as comparative, as I compared each note with the other one to create categories and subcategories and to relate categories with each other with the aim "*to answer [my] research question.*" (Merriam, 2009, p. 176, italics original)

Although the process was definitely inductive, it was more accurately a combination of induction and deduction, which seems to me the natural process of qualitative research. As you move laterally between pieces of data by comparing them to each other to create categories, you also move vertically between ideas that you formed in your analysis and ideas you brought with you from prior readings into the site, which in turn help you to see and categorize data more effectively. Furthermore, it would be impossible to capture any data if the researcher didn't bring to the site an idea of what to observe. In the case of this research, I definitely had an idea of what shared authority should look like before going into the field, but, at the same time, my collection of data informed my initial understanding of the subject.

Therefore, although the process was certainly rooted in my data and therefore inductive, it was also an ongoing process of oscillating between induction and deduction,

as well as between facts and interpretations. Merriam (2009) expresses data analysis as "a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation" (p. 176). Thus, the analysis encompassed two ongoing movements: one lateral, between notes and categories, and one vertical, between ideas, theories, hypotheses, and particular pieces of data.

The analysis process was slow. I first met with my adviser every week where I brought some pieces of my data analysis that we would discuss together. I also presented some of my finding in her doctoral class on qualitative research. Furthermore, I used conferences to present my findings to different aspects of the public. I presented in my department's colloquium, a talk titled *The Moral Life of a Kindergarten Classroom in Which Shared Authority is Practiced* (Michaud, 2013b). At the Philosophy of Education Society annual conference I presented the session *Educational Philosophy and Empirical Research: A Case Study* (Michaud, 2013a). These presentations allowed me to try out my analysis with a public presentation and receive further feedback..

For the analysis, I used the software Scrivener that is not specifically labeled as an analysis tool in qualitative research literature but served my needs well. I first used this software to create my basic categories from all of my data. From these first categories, I created a new set of categories. I repeated the process a third time, and it is from this third set of notes that I wrote the first draft of my dissertation. In each set of categories, I worked to become more theoretical as I made sense of my data in relationship to my

research question. One advantage of Scrivener is that you can use the search tool to look for specific words and phrases in the entire set of data, which I used when I wanted to have a deeper look into a specific category or a theme. For example, if I was looking for all the references of a particular student, I could enter his name and see every instance in my notes or texts in which he or she was mentioned.

**Trustworthiness of the Study**

Why should this study be considered as valid or, in the language of qualitative methodology, trustworthy? The first method I used to ensure the validity of the study was what is known as triangulation in qualitative research, where multiple different pieces of data are used to sustain a singular point or an idea (Merriam, 2009). For this dissertation, I triangulated various pieces of data as they were captured in different contexts over time, and I triangulated from different sources of data: field notes inside and outside of the classroom, narratives written from the field notes, informal and formal discussions with the teacher, and other data gathered in smaller quantities, such as informal discussions with the aides of the classroom or an interview with the principal. I always tried to use as many pieces of data as I could to sustain or illustrate a point. However, my adviser and I decided to shorten the final version of this dissertation to avoid repetition and to condense and clarify my findings and overall argument. Secondly, my adviser has been reading drafts of my analysis since its inception, and through her ongoing suggestions and comments, she acted as a check on my interpretations. Thirdly, I continually discussed in

an ongoing manner my findings and ideas regarding my data collection with the main

actor in this text, Annie, who consequently provided a primary actor's check of the data.

Another method of increasing the trustworthiness of this study for the reader is to

acknowledge my biases and issues related to my own position. If the qualitative

researcher is the first tool for the collection and analysis of the data, it is nevertheless her

duty to reflect on her own perspective (Merriam, 2009). First, I have to disclose that I

believe in democratic education and the practice of shared authority in schools. It is a

subject that I teach in length in my undergraduate courses on philosophy of education and

that I also tried to implement in my pedagogy with my students. Second, I have been

practicing P4C for more than ten years, and my interest in this program led me to study at

Montclair State University. I therefore value the practice of philosophy and believe in its

value for young students. Third, as I passed an important amount of time with Annie,

someone I already knew from my pilot study, I did develop a personal connection with

her that may have influenced my perspective of her practice and my rendering of it.

However, I believe that it is evident that I was able to put in question my beliefs as I

collected data that problematized them.

My own subjectivity appeared in the dissertation in a way that I didn't expect. As

I was analyzing the group of boys that is the topic of the fifth chapter, I started to reflect

in the process on how I had been a disruptive child like them, but at some point, I also

became aware that I was still like them in my own relationship to authority. That finding

forced me to change my first interpretation of their disruptions (refer to Chapter 5, Section 5).

Ultimately, this study should be trustworthy because I give not only the conclusions to which I arrived but also the process by which I arrived at them. Through my prolonged engagement in the site and the thick descriptions I offer in this text, the reader should be able to see and to hear the individuals of the site I study. In sum, this study is trustworthy if it "rings true to readers, practitioners, and other researchers" and if it "makes sense [to them]" (Merriam, 2009, p. 210).

**Conclusion and Limitations of the Research**

One of the important limitations of this study is inherent to all qualitative research, as the finding of this research cannot be generalized. Other limitations are more peculiar to the present study. First, although I lived in the United States for more than three years prior to the data collection and had been learning English for some time before that, English was and still is my second language, which certainly hindered to an extent my data collection. Although I'm not an American, the classroom and the participants had a certain feeling of familiarity. Second, a kindergarten is a special world by the fact that it is constructed and inhabited by young individuals, which may be difficult for an adult to enter and document—a difficulty that may be compounded for an adult like myself, for whom English is his second language. Furthermore, there are some flaws in the research design. First, I was only able to visit the site for three months. It would have been preferable to be immersed in the site for a longer period of time. In

addition, for a large portion of these three months, my attention and energy were divided between two classrooms, but I ended up using only findings from one classroom for this dissertation.

That said, these problems are to an extent an inherent part of working in natural settings and qualitative research, as researchers are required to adapt and to do their best in the situation they find themselves in. Furthermore, although the findings of this research may not have immediate general application, they aim to increase our knowledge on educational authority, shared authority, and the practice of philosophy— not only as issues taken individually, but also in their relationship, as this study was based on the opportunity to study them as they were united in a specific context. In addition, the knowledge that emerged from this research may prove transferrable and usable by educational theorists, researchers, and practitioners to other contexts.

**Chapter 4: Theory and Practice of Shared Authority in Kindergarten Room 7**

My first impression of Annie's classroom was that it had little to do with what I expected from a public school classroom. One of the reasons was that it was a kindergarten classroom, which is by definition the official entrance door to the schooling system. But that couldn't explain the specialness of this classroom, which was full of animals, where students would go on a field trip every month, where the children voted on the curriculum at the beginning of the year, and so on.  This was not only my impression, as the quality of Annie's teaching had been acknowledged the previous year by a state institution that awarded her the title of "Teacher of the Year". The assistant teacher even told me without my asking that, "You know, it's not like this in all kindergarten classrooms. They do more stuff here…" (informal discussion, May 3). The specialness of Annie's classroom was better expressed by the principal: "There is something about that classroom; you happen to be in one of these classrooms that you won't see very often, that you don't come across very often…" (interview with the principal,  June 15).

At the heart of the specialness of Annie's classroom was a certain perspective and practice of authority, which I have come to see as and call "shared authority". In this chapter I will present an overview of how the practice of shared authority influenced the general culture of Kindergarten Room 7—the symbolic way in which Annie referred to her classroom. In the first part, I will start to delineate how Annie's pedagogy was evident in the category of shared authority. In the second part, I will analyze how the

practice of shared authority shaped in the curriculum for the school year in a certain way. In the third part, I will investigate the diverse sharing activities that Annie built into the structure of the classroom. In the fourth and last part, I will study how the classroom was structured on a special relationship between morality and authority in comparison to some school-wide events.

The goal of this chapter is to give a general, broad portrait of how the practice of shared authority was realized in the studied classroom, which appeared in my study as a multifaceted phenomenon that affected almost all aspects of the classroom culture and that deserved a long and careful analysis to be understood. Only by taking all the sections together can we get a good idea of how pedagogy of shared authority was carried out in Annie's classroom.

This chapter, and the one that follows, will allow us to have the perspective necessary to undertake the subject of how the practice of philosophy affected the authoritative functioning of the classroom.

**Preliminaries on Shared Authority in Kindergarten Room 7**

**A gigantic circular rug.** I believe that there was one physical element of the classroom that stood out as an authoritative symbol: a gigantic round rug. The specialness of the rug could first be seen in how it came to existence. Annie had paid for it herself and had it custom-made:

I bought that rug myself because there was no such thing as a gigantic circle rug. I had it custom-made because, even in a responsive classroom—which you don't know I used, but I do—it's all about giving [students] a circle so everybody looks, everybody can see each other's faces when they talk, you know what I mean? And everybody is in equal position. I can say exactly what works all the time [inaudible], so when I saw the whole community of inquiry, oh, I'm so glad I have this rug. I wanted them to be like this perfect [inaudible] where we were all equals. (Interview May 7)[7]

The round rug carried a certain educational ideal that is opposed to traditional education, where students are put in rows and columns with the teacher at the front of the room. In the traditional classroom, the teacher is in fact not only at the head of the classroom, she is also above the classroom with her authority, knowledge, and political position. The gigantic rug in Annie's classroom represented another kind of ideal: only in the circular position may all students in a classroom face each other at the same time and occupy an equal position in regard to each other, as no one is on the edge or in the back.

In addition, in the circle the teacher moved from being ahead and above to being with the group. Thus, the round rug materially represented a certain kind of ideal

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[7] I will but in brackets, "[ x ]", words that I added to quote of an interview when they were not in the audio but I felt they were necessary. I will also put inaudible between brackets, "[inaudible]", when I was not able to understand what the interviewee was saying because of noise in the background. I also used brackets when I wanted to indicate a special quality in the voice of the interviewee. Three periods between brackets, "[…]", means that I cut a part of the original quote.

regarding educational authority that underlined Annie's pedagogy. It was a physical representation of the DNA of the classroom, of the conception of authority that structured it.

A point that came across in my conversations with Annie was her continual experience of the separation between her ideal of authority and the reality of her teaching. Interestingly, the rug that perfectly represented her ideal of authority in the classroom also physically symbolized how this ideal was implemented with difficulty in the classroom:

> In the perfect world I would be sitting there, but, when I bought that rug, I thought I would only have 20 students, and I ended up with 26. And I can never fit. Originally, when they told me, when they built this wing, they said that they were lowering class size to 20. This room was built for 20. And I believed them because I was really naïve, and I never had 20. I had 27, 26, my smallest class was 24. So usually, the reason I'm not in the circle is because I can't fit in the circle. It is not because I'm trying to be the teacher; I just can't fit. (Interview May 7)

So Annie was often not in the circle because she couldn't physically fit with the students on the rug; thus her theory of being one among the students could never be realized. She wanted to sit with the students, but she had to be outside the circle. It was actually difficult to fit all the students on the rug. Most of the time, some of the students had to sit outside of the rug and squeeze together. Thus, the rug represented at the same time the

ideal of Annie's perspective on authority and how this ideal was limited as it encountered reality.

**Annie's educational philosophy in its relationship to authority.** The goal of this section is not only to see how Annie's educational philosophy corresponds to what we have established as a pedagogy of "shared authority," but also to see how she understood shared authority and expressed it. First, I am the one who labels her educational philosophy as "shared authority." I'm not sure that Annie would have agreed with this label, but I do think it corresponds well to what she described and practiced. In fact, the label may not be as important as other ones that could have been used, such as progressive education, child-centered pedagogy, or democratic education (for a similar grouping of names, see Oyler, 1996). All these labels point toward the same idea: a perspective on education that aims to give a place to students in the decision-making process regarding their education.

Our starting point is that Annie didn't like to envision herself as the ultimate authority in the classroom. "I never wanted it to be where I was the boss. […] I never wanted to be the ultimate authority…" (Interview May 7). As I try to understand the reasons that sustained her belief, I found myself in a complex web of relationships between ideas that could not easily be separated and could not be presented in a deductive, logical way. They were more like a cluster of ideas that sustained each other. Together they formed a worldview on education—a lens that gave a particular

perspective on educational questions. As we will see, each idea related to the other ones and should not be taken up unless in relationship to each other.

As we have to begin somewhere in understanding Annie's educational worldview, let's begin with her vision of children. For Annie, children were not a certain kind of being inferior to adults. This idea is not obvious, because formal schooling implies at first sight a clear separation between adults and children, between the ones who are educated and the ones who educate, between those who are "in authority" and those who submit to them. The structure of schools is created to remind us constantly that adults and children are different, that some rules apply to the latter and some to the former (Thorne, 1993). Annie didn't start with this idea, but rather with the idea that children should be treated just as adults should be treated. So, as we see, her idea of childhood was not disconnected from her vision of adulthood: children, as adults, should be invited to participate in the direction of the groups in which they participate. Thus, her ideas of childhood and adulthood were intimately connected to the value of democracy: that democratic organization was the best organization for everyone.

An example of her perspective on children could be seen in how she understood and practiced discipline in her classroom:

Whatever [the other teachers do to make children] stop and listen with me is okay as long as they are not saying, like, disrespectful things—as long as they are not saying like, "who told you to talk", or you know, [whispering] she says across the hall, she says, "zip it". I feel that is disrespectful. […] She tells them, [in a harsh

tone], "zip it". As long they are not using a disrespectful way to be quiet, I don't,

whatever, that's alright."(Interview May 7)

I don't personally see the usage of "Who told you to talk?" or "Zip it!" as disrespectful,

even if they were said with some harshness, because I assume that they must have been

said in a context where students were not supposed to talk and as legitimate tools to bring

back order in the classroom. However, it also points toward my assumption about

children and school, my belief that children are a different kind of being than adults,

because I would naturally think that such language is disrespectful and unacceptable with

adults. Annie had a different belief regarding children: that what was disrespectful for an

adult would be disrespectful for children too.

Annie's moral position about children went much further than the choice of words

used to talk to them. Children were not only like adults—"Any rule you apply to adults,

you apply to kids" (Interview, June 26)—they had to be defended against an adult's

world: a world that seeks to produce things, knowledge, and skills in a specific amount of

time and where the playfulness of children is considered a loss of time:

So, I guess if you ask me why I'm not tougher, because, sometimes I'm not sure

that's fair what we are asking in the first place. You know, kids want play, that's

normal; they want play all day long. Everything that we do is just an interruption.

There are a few, a handful, that just want to learn—like, they come, and they want

to learn to read, and they are there. I have kids that, I don't know if you notice,

that walk to the carpet, and […] they just want to do whatever you want to do, but

they are a minority. The majority of them are like, "How long do I have to do this before I can just play?" When you think about it, part of me just thinks it is not so unreasonable what they want to do, that all day long we tell them that they have to wait for the one thing that they just want to do. […] One time I walked up to MSU, and all I could think was how many times I said "Don't do that" to the things they want to do the most. Like, you know, at MSU they have the walkway and there are the raised blocks to hold the garden park, like little tiny walls, are on either side of the walkways. They want to walk on those walls, but, somebody always falls off and hurts themselves. So the minute they get up and start walking on the wall, I said, "Get down, you have to stay on the path. Get down, you have to stay on the path." Sometimes I feel like they are thinking, "Why do they always have to stop every single thing we think is interesting and fun to do?" Or if we walk after a big rain, and there is a gigantic puddle, they want to step in the puddle so bad, that's all they want, they want to walk into that puddle, make the biggest splash and, you know, the first thing: "Don't walk in that puddle, because," and there is a logical reason, "your socks are gonna be all wet. It is miserable to have your socks wet all day long; you can't go change them because you are not home. You can't go in the house and put on warm socks. You're gonna be back in the classroom and be cold all day, so don't step in the puddle." But, at the same time, you just feel that you are pulling back every natural thing for a 5-year-old to want to do. (Interview April 11)

Annie expressed her doubts about disciplining children because she could entertain the idea that perhaps the enterprise of schooling that she participated in was not actually in their best interests. In other words, she was able to question the bureaucratic authority of the schooling system and to consider her authority from another source: what she believed were the real interests and rights of children. Annie believed that education should start from the children and not from what the schooling system wanted them to be.

Annie's strong commitment to children had, as the previous paragraphs exhibited, certain consequences for her authority. First, this commitment had an effect on the language and the tone used to discipline children. Second, Annie exerted authority, as in the last quote, but she questioned the correctness of her own authoritative position. Therefore, her authority was infiltrated and undermined by her own beliefs about what was in the best interests of children; Annie decided to live in this tension between imposing her authority and questioning it rather than resolving it.

"Ownership" is the second concept that I have come to see as fundamental to understand Annie's educational philosophy. Annie strongly believed that her students had ownership of their education: "they have ownership, they have ownership right? They're vested in their learning because they chose things, and it is what they wanted to do" (Interview April 11). The certainty of Annie's language demonstrates that she clearly saw ownership as an essential principle, not only a theoretical one but a practical part of the classroom life she created in Kindergarten Room 7. Ownership is naturally connected with the idea of democracy, but it underlines one of its aspects: that the individuals have

the right and the possibility to organize and direct the group they are part of. Following the last quote, Annie's students had ownership of a central element of their education, of the content of what they were learning.[8]

I showed how the previous fundamental idea shaped Annie's vision of her own authority, as this one was constituted from an inner questioning of her right to be an authority. The connection between Annie's principle of ownership and her authority is quite different: students had with it a central, direct, and overt effect on the construction of the authoritative structure of their classroom life.

The third central idea of Annie's educational philosophy I captured was her belief that she always should justify her authority, that she always had to give a reason for her decisions:

> I still keep certain things, like, I always give a reason […]: "I have to do this because," or "I won't do it this way, I have to do it because," so that I feel I can still retain some sort of… Because I wanted to be inside of them, not outside of them. […] I wanted to be inside of them, like, "Oh, she got to this because things didn't go very well." I would like to go inside their head and think, do they know they are doing the wrong thing? Maybe they don't even know. (Interview April 11)

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[8] This aspect in developed in the first section of the following part.

The fact that Annie here said "I still keep certain things" and "I can still retain some sort of" indicates that Annie was telling us here one of her central beliefs. Indeed, these expressions mean that *despite* the fact the conditions were difficult and *despite* the fact that it was hard to apply her ideals, she wanted to hold this one principle—thus pointing out its importance in her pedagogical philosophy, something that had to be kept where other things could or had to be abandoned.

Reasoning and authority can easily be opposed to each other: at the moment we start to reason together authority is suspended, because rational dialogue can only happen between equals (Arendt, 1961b). However, we see here that reasoning and authority are not absolutely opposed. Indeed, in the quote above, Annie imposed her authoritative decision *with* a reason. The key here is to notice that the reasons are imposed, not open to discussion. In them, Annie at the same time imposed her authoritative decisions *and* their justifications. We must therefore distinguish rational discussions to an authoritative act that is imposed with a reason, as only the former is in complete opposition with authority.

As in the two previous points, I want to analyze here how this principle had a special effect on Annie's understanding of her own authority. Authority with reason is of a different nature than authority without reason. Indeed, only in the former is the justification of an authoritative act made visible. The latter can simply be stated as "We will do X" with no more words, and if it includes an explanation, then this explanation must be self-sufficient, as in the statements "You should do this because I say so" or "You should believe me because I'm the teacher." Authority without reason gets its

justification from the fact that it is coming from an authority and nothing else. In comparison, authority with reason is not only valid because its source is a legitimate authority, but also because it also points out its rationale.

In her previous statement, Annie explained that the interconnection between authority and rationality aimed to shape her relationship with her students in a specific way: "I wanted to be inside of them, not outside of them." Annie, by giving her reasoning, was not questioning her own authority or inviting students in its creation, she was rather trying to move her authority to the inside of her students.

Shared authority is built on two contradictory ideas: an authority that imposes itself on students at the same that it starts from them. I believe that the three ideas of Annie's educational philosophy that I have developed in this section—that were fundamentally interconnected— showed us how Annie made sense of that contradiction. She wanted to be an authority who questioned her own legitimacy to be an authority, who sought to give children ownership of their education, and who through the use of reasons aimed to be inside them. Annie expresses here to us the language of shared authority and of its nature: a commitment to enter into a sincere and genuine relationship with the students, not a relationship in which she would have to constantly create and recreate a separation from them by always establishing her fundamental superiority over them.

I would say that what gave sense to Annie's educational authority was bringing her students into a world where they would be respected as individuals, where they would be consulted about the decisions that regard them, and where reasoning would matter.

Her role as an authority was to give the children the experience of such a world—which is, we should admit, a rare event in human existence.

These larger goals were for Annie more than a superficial concern: she was deeply committed to them, engaged intellectually with them as she tried to make sense of her own authority for her students and sought to implement them in her classroom—as the following parts will show. Her passion and ideals about education were defining who she was: "I think I always can get them to listen by being somebody I don't want to be, if that makes sense. Which is like: 'If you don't listen, you got', you know, really mean, mean, keep it stern, and, like, I have to become who I don't want be" (Interview April 11). In the end, the problem of authority has to be brought back to the individual who exerted it—in this case, to Annie's existential choice of who she wanted to be, what she thought was good education, and the kind of relationships she wished to have with her students.

**Conclusion.** This part started to delineate how the site of this study was constructed on the idea of shared authority. We first found in the center of the classroom a gigantic round rug, a rug that the teacher had custom-made and that was a symbolic material representation of a certain ideal in regard to authority: that the teacher was not above the students, but rather, was among them. Shared authority, of which the rug was an incarnated symbol in the heart of the classroom, was also at the core of Annie's educational philosophy, a philosophy that I have summarized in three central ideas: that the students had to be considered as adults, but also as individuals who had to be

protected from adults; that students should have ownership of their education; and that authority should be exerted with reasons. These three ideas all problematize the belief that the teacher is an absolute authority: that the teacher has to question her own role as an authority, that she has to include children in the construction of her authority, and that she should try to connect with her students by explaining her decisions.

In the rest of this chapter, I will analyze how this idea of shared authority shaped the classroom culture.

## The Curriculum

In this part, I will look at how the idea of shared authority affected the construction and development of the curriculum. I will first analyze the foundation of the curriculum where Annie asked her students what they would like to learn that school year. Second, I will present the curriculum as being an "an integrated curriculum," which I considered one of the fundamental aspects of the curriculum that I witnessed in Kindergarten Room 7. I will then discuss one project of the curriculum that the class was conducting during my visit there: the animal project.

**A foundational event: the choice of the curriculum.** There is one event that Annie constantly referred to, to show how her pedagogical ideal to give ownership to her students was carried out in her classroom: the children chose the curriculum at the beginning of the year.

Annie: I think that they get a sense that their input matters, you know, that if they talk I would listen, or if they had an idea, it would be honored or listened to. Yeah, I think so… Whether they make a good use of it, that is another story, but I think they had it…

Me: Could you give me an example, do you have an example coming to your mind, maybe last week, or…

Annie: The fact the whole year was based on what they asked to learn about, it's a good an example. […] And, that even if it was a small thing, like Patrick came late, and his idea was president [meaning presidents of the United States], we didn't go, "ah, you know…", I made sure to fit everybody's ideas. (Interview June 26)

This excerpt came from our last interview on June 26, when the school year was over, but as I asked her to help me see how her students had ownership, the first thing that came to her mind was the co-creation of the curriculum at the beginning of the year—hence showing the value and symbol of this event in her pedagogy.  For Annie, and I believe with reason, the choice of the curriculum at the beginning of the year was a foundational event: it was not only the creation of the agenda of the next months, but it also set the tone of the classroom. It was a signal to the students that their opinions mattered. Moreover, it integrated the children into the co-construction of the larger enterprise that structured their school year and, therefore, of the moral order that would give sense to the educational relationship between the teacher and the students.

The curriculum for the school year was built around what the children wanted to learn about and not, as it is done traditionally, from a priori standards that have to be covered during the school year. Annie covered the traditional curriculum from the projects that were elected at the beginning of the year. She thoughtfully organized classroom activities to connect them with what she was expected to cover.

In other empirical research on shared authority, with early childhood or with older students, very few classrooms studied went as far as inviting students to choose their curriculum—an example may be found in Shor (1996) with college students. In Oyler (1996) and Gallas' (1998) study of shared authority in an early elementary classroom, the sharing didn't go so far as to invite the students to choose the curriculum. Thus, by offering her students choices regarding the curriculum at the beginning of the year, Annie was significantly involving her students in the creation of authority in her classroom in comparison to other studies.

We can be doubtful about the value of such an exercise. Indeed, how enlightened were the choices of 5-year-olds about what they wanted to learn? Were they aware of the consequences of their choices? Did a decision made at the beginning of the year keep its value a few months later? I don't think that these criticisms are merely the projection of some oppressive assumptions about childhood. Annie herself agreed partially with such criticism; for example, she found the idea absurd that children sign contracts, implying

that children wouldn't be able to understand the meaning of what they would be signing.[9] Nevertheless, there is a value in asking children what they would like to learn in the school and this offer certainly shaped the construction of authority in this classroom.

It is true that some topics were chosen every year and were part in some way of the regular curriculum of the classroom—at the end, there are certain subjects that usually interest children. However, every year there were also new topics that Annie was not familiar with and that she had to prepare herself to teach. Examples of that year were the "train project" and the "sport project," as they were new topics for her. Therefore, there was a real commitment on her part to engage with a subject and to honor children's choices, even if she didn't know much about them.

Annie's commitment to honor students' decisions was connected to her own understanding of being an authority:

> Yeah, but I want them to see that … I do not know everything. It is okay. I can learn with them. Because, I don't even mean that as something I just say, like a cute thing to say. They have wanted to learn things that have forced me … to learn myself [and] to teach them. That's the best possible thing. You know what I mean. The best possible thing is if they posed a question that I really don't know, and because I don't know, I really have to learn it myself. And then, then that's

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[9] "I don't like to do contracts, I don't make them sign anything, I can't stand that, because what is a child's signature, what the hell does that mean? [I laugh]. You know what I mean, can you imagine, they can't even read, and you know you get them up here and they sign a contract" (pilot study, 2nd interview).

the best possible scenario for me, is that if I really have to learn myself like, the

year, they ask to learn about the Wild West. I mean, the more uncomfortable I am,

the better the experience will end up being. (Interview May 7)

Annie valued her personal engagement in the classroom project. Thus, the right authority

was not for Annie, the authority who was always sure of herself and who knew

everything, but the one who was able to accept her own limits, doubts and the discomfort

of such a position. Annie was a peculiar chief, a chief who was able to accept her

ignorance and to show it to her students and, therefore, to position herself as co-learner

with them.

In the end, whether or not Annie taught a subject that was new or that had been

treated in previous years, there was on her part a genuine desire to start with children's

interests and not from what was mandated by the school district or the state.

**The integrated curriculum.** Following the last section, the curriculum was in its

creation related to the students' interests. Annie was nevertheless working in a public

school and, even in kindergarten, she had to attain certain academic goals set by

educational authorities to which she was accountable for each student. For this purpose,

each child was evaluated throughout the school year, although the schooling culture of

testing was then not installed yet.[10] The most important subjects that had to be taught

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[10] Children that were part of this study were tested, mostly one on one with the
teacher or the assistant teacher, and they had report cards that were sent home, but they didn't

were math and literacy—the same subjects that matter the most for standardized testing in higher grades and, according to Ken Robinson (2006), around the world.

For Annie, the problem was then how to attain these goals without teaching each subject matter in a traditional way. I think that Annie answered this problem with what I call the "integrated curriculum," a curriculum that was integrated on different levels. First, the school standards were integrated—as much as possible—in the students' projects chosen at the beginning of the year. Second, subject-related matters, such as math or English, were not treated separately but as part of the project that the students were engaging. Learning was coming from the projects, not from the school disciplines.

Here is a clear example of the learning that happened as part of the integrated curriculum: On April 24, the children were learning how to write the word "amphibian." However, the children were not only learning how to write the word, they were also first learning what it means. At this point, it is nothing very special, but the next points will explain why I see this as representative of the integrated curriculum. First, the word amphibian came up in a specific learning experience as the students were in the "animal project"—which I will discuss at length in the next part. The word "amphibian" was therefore not a disconnected word, but a word that was full of *meaning* for the children because they were in some way experiencing it. Children may have been talking about

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have yet the culture of tests and the pressure that goes with it. They didn't have to study for tests, their consequences were nonexistent for them, and they happened without the heavy decorum that accompanied in higher grades. In sum, the ritual of testing with its seriousness and stress was not yet installed.

amphibians that day, about what kind of animal they were. The spelling of a complex word was part of the educational project of that period. Literacy and science were fundamentally related.

But Annie's classroom was even more special. Not only could children talk about amphibians as a theoretical subject, but they could also experience it directly. As Annie talked about amphibians, she took out the salamander, which is an amphibian, from its aquarium. This event gave to me the impression that Annie was a magician, that she could pull things out of her hat following the opportunities. The curriculum was integrated into the subject-related matters, integrated into the educational project of that period and, as I just pointed out, integrated into the environment of the classroom.

Annie then transitioned to the scientific significance of the amphibian, an animal that is between two animal categories, because it is born in the water but lives mostly on the land. She used that opportunity to also work a math skill, as an animal that participates in two categories is a very good example of what a Venn diagram is, which was a topic that kindergarteners were expected to learn.

To practice this skill, Annie made an activity in which she chose a few students and asked the class what they have in common. After she did that, it was the children's turn to make categories and ask the other students to discover the link that united the different elements. At the end of the exercise, the students asked, "What about math?" because they knew they were supposed to have math in the afternoon. To which Annie answered, "What you just did is math." This activity represented the ideal of a

progressive learning environment, because the standardized curriculum was so buried in the classroom project that it was invisible.

Now, the question is: how was this related to shared authority? My claim is that shared authority was here, more than anything else, a perspective on learning. The whole learning experience was about having the child as the starting point. Thus, the children were having an effect on their educational process, although they were not expressing their opinion explicitly. An example of this was how Annie arrived at the idea of math stations, in which each group of students moved from one table and activity to another table and activity each 15 or 20 minutes:

> Math station [came] from me watching them, and I will tell you how math station came along. We have certain concepts, we have certain things that have to learn in math, right? But, they need to move, so I thought, I invented this math station because then they can always be moving. … So I thought of this, even when I have a not really active group, I thought, "If I do math stations, then they can go from one thing to another, they can get a lot more movement in." Some of them stand up when they do instead of [just] sit; I feel that some of them don't like to sit down. If something doesn't interest them for a very long time, at least they know that another one is there that might. Even though … they never heard of [math stations], it still emerged from me thinking of how can I get them to do this and still let them move. So, that's kind of like a silent input. They don't know they have an input, but they did. Because that was just me watching. But *I* did that; the school didn't say "you have to do math stations." (Interview May 7)

Shared authority meant here to adapt mandatory curriculum to the children, to make it the most accessible for them. What I called the "integrated curriculum," was all based on this effort to connect a learning environment in the closest way possible to children's experiences and interests.

**The animal project.** When I got in the classroom for my research, the students were moving from the train project to the animal project. The animal project was a striking example of the integrated curriculum. The entire classroom life was then structured around the animal project, and the room itself gave an astonishing spectacle to any visitor who entered in it at that time. During this project, the students were literally immersed in the subject of the animals. By this, I do not mean that they were only immersed in books or videos on animals, but that they were actually living with animals in their classroom. Indeed, the classroom was transformed into a miniature zoo. There were, at one point in the classroom (and this list is not exhaustive), guineas pigs, baby guinea pigs that were born in the classroom, a rabbit, quail eggs that hatched in the classroom, various kinds of insects such as ladybugs, worms, and butterflies, different kinds of reptiles, a chameleon, turtles, ducks, and chicks. The animals were not just displayed in the classroom; children could also play with some of them during center time.[11]

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[11] The activity of center time is presented later in this chapter.

This environment was reinforced with other elements. I saw one student's parent bring caterpillars that were in the process of transforming into cocoons that she discovered in her plants.  The teacher hired an individual who came with a beehive to talk to children about bees and the work of being a beekeeper. She also organized a day where a "travelling farm" came to the school. During this day, all the classrooms of the school that were interested could come see the animals of the travelling farm, which included, among other animals, a llama and a sheep. On our way back from an activity at the university nearby, Annie made us stop at a house and guided us in the backyard to see chickens because she knew the person who lived there. The students went to a field trip at the zoo. In sum, Annie used a range of techniques, methods, and sites to diversify children's experiences during the animal project. The animal project, with all its different aspects, shaped the whole organization of the classroom during that period.

Some children were playing every day with the animals. They could observe how the quail eggs hatched after twenty eight days. I personally witnessed students from the higher grades who had been her students many years ago just come back to see the animals. I saw myself and other adults become mesmerized by the teacher as we saw her walking around the classroom with a chameleon and explaining its different characteristics and understanding why it was a great hunter. This kind of learning can hardly be assessed through a traditional assessment; it appears better in a description of the learning process rather than through a specific test.

The key here was what "experience" means: it was defined as a lived experience or direct experience by the children, not as a disconnected subject matter, that had to be studied in books for exams or for success in future grades.

How can we relate the quality of learning in Annie's classroom to her pedagogy of shared authority? I think that this relationship is at first sight quite tenuous. It is true that the students have voted on the curriculum at the beginning of the year, but we can question the value of a vote that was made several months before. This presentation also does not show that decisions were negotiated between the teacher and the students—even if they were certainly decisions that were made collectively during this period of time. However, I want to stress how the learning environment that I just described, one of the most striking elements of Kindergarten Room 7, was connected to Annie's philosophy of education. As I claimed in the previous section, a central element of her philosophy of education was her commitment to start the educational process from the child's experience rather than from the standardized curriculum mandated by the State. The environment and the projects that she created were not that much the result of a democratic process than her sincere engagement to give an education that is intimately connected to her students' life.

**Conclusion.** The curriculum in Kindergarten Room 7 was clearly connected to the idea of shared authority, but it also appeared as fundamentally problematic. On one hand, the students were included in the creation of the curriculum, which was an essential part of the classroom life; one of the fundamental elements that would constitute the

moral order of the classroom for the rest of the year. Through it, the teacher abandoned her role of absolute authority, as the one who decided everything and the one who knew everything. It was in some way the foundational act of shared authority in the classroom: the authority for the rest of the year would be based, in part at least, on that choice, and it also gave a certain tone to the classroom culture.

On the other hand, the integrated curriculum and the example of the animal project didn't exactly fit this idea. There was at least no direct link between involving students in the creation of the curriculum and the integrated curriculum or the powerful learning environment of the animal project. This problematic was at the center of the classroom culture because the integrated curriculum and the animal project were two of its essential features, as was the practice of shared authority. However, this problem was not peculiar to the classroom but can also be seen at the heart of progressive education, in which democratic practices and a curriculum based on students experiences are fundamentally interrelated (Dewey, 1916, 1938; Engel & Martin, 2005), but never really developed and explained.

It is my belief that there is clearly a connection between the practice of shared authority and the creation of a peculiar form of learning environment in Kindergarten Room 7. Although this connection appeared at first sight to be tenuous, a careful analysis has exhibited how these two elements were essentially related—that they were part of the multifaceted phenomenon of shared authority that we have begun to study. Indeed, Annie was the central actor behind the creation of such a rich and complex learning

environment that gave the energy to the educational process. It was her authority, an authority that we have defined as shared authority, that was the source of the curriculum in all its dimensions, from its creation to its daily development. If the students didn't come to see Annie to say what they wanted, she listened to their "silent input," as she put it in a previous statement: They were an essential part of the meaning-making of her own authority. Annie was the authority, defining what "good" education was, but she had put her own authority under a long and persistent interrogation over what her students' best interests were.

This is why Annie placed the child at the center of the construction of the curriculum: she started with the child, not from the curriculum or from a knowledge that had to be transmitted. Hands-on experiences, trips, special guests to make presentations, and animals in the classroom were all part of this effort to put the children at the center of their education. The best example of that is the animal project. Children were interested in the animal project, whether they voted for it or not, and whether they chose it for a project for the school year seven months ago or not. Hence, as far as we can tell, children are naturally interested and even passionate about animals—at least, that has been my personal experience. Children were therefore a direct source of legitimacy in Annie's understanding and vision of her own authority. If there was not a direct correlation between the vision of shared authority and the creation of a learning environment based on projects and hands-on experiences, there was certainly an affinity between these two elements; they tend naturally to be part of the same group of ideas, of a worldview on education.

Thus, this analysis brings us back, again, to Annie and to her authority. The learning environment was created through her reflection, action, and commitment. She was the demiurge who thought and created the classroom culture. We must not underestimate the passion and hard work necessary to make that education function, as Annie expressed it in the following quote:

> But it is really stressful to do it. Like it is really stressful to do it. Like, it is really stressful. So it is a big commitment on my part […] and it is really, really stressful. Because even if we are making a joke about [an odorous crab cage], believe me, I'll hear it, and I'm going to hear tomorrow about the cage and how it stunk. […] And then, every day I have to worry, you know; like these [quails] that are hatching, which ones are going to die? [And are] they are going to die in front of them [the students]? What are they going to see? You know, here, it's like […] it's very a stressful thing. (Interview May 7).

This is just one example of the kind of stress that Annie underwent through the animal project, and one can imagine all of the other kinds of stress linked to it. However, there was something in Annie that was stronger than these stresses and that carried her through the efforts necessary to make the animal project happen.

Reflections on educational authority are usually interested in the relationship between a teacher and students, but forget to look at how the teacher herself is creating her own authority, negotiating it with higher authorities and making sense of it.

However, as my analysis points out, the functioning of authority in the classroom I studied could not be disconnected from how the teacher engaged with her own authority.

This is most obvious in the fact that Annie was not just a cog in the bureaucracy; she thought about the sense of her role as an authority and created a space inside the institution in which what she considered good education was possible. In sum, Annie's authority was not founded on an act of submission to higher authorities, but through the exercise of her own reflection. It is this engagement with her own function in the educational system that made her role meaningful for her, meaning that was the prerequisite to the energy required to create the learning environment in Kindergarten Room 7.

It is clear that Annie was as an inferior in the schooling authoritative structure. She did not submit herself to a higher authority that would have defined for her what good education was and how to create a classroom life that fostered such education. The rich and powerful learning environment of Kindergarten Room 7 was created through Annie's challenge and questioning of the functioning of a public school. Her classroom and her pedagogy may be seen as a revolt of sorts against the traditional schooling system.

It was at the end her own sense of agency that created the animal unit, more so than the agency of the students. There was consequently a clear correlation between Annie's vision of the authority she was implementing with her students and her own vision as a subaltern in the educational institution she was part of.

To summarize, the curriculum was related to shared authority in a clear and obvious way through the choice of the projects by the students at the beginning of the year, but also through more subtle yet fundamental ways. Annie's authority was informed by her continual interrogation of what was in the best and real interests of her students. The integrated curriculum and the animal project were two important consequences in the classroom of her effort to situate the students at the center of their education. Finally, Annie's construction of her own authority in the classroom could not be dissociated from her questioning of superior authorities, the exercise of her autonomy and her efforts to give to her student what she believed what was a worthwhile education.

## How Annie Directly and Overtly Included her Students in the Authority of the Classroom

In the previous part, we have seen how the curriculum, which is a central element of any classroom, was related to the pedagogy of shared authority. However, although it significantly shaped the classroom culture, it didn't give us the impression that students were directly involved in the daily functioning of their classroom. In this part, I will look at different ways that Annie put in place the daily structure of the classroom to give opportunities to her students to shape their education. They were all direct, overt and significant ways through which Annie shared her authority with her students each day. I will first discuss three forms of sharing activities that were built in the daily structure of the classroom—the journal sharing, the rug sharing and the reading of the news—before

taking up how some decisions were shared and finishing with the central activity in the classroom of center time.

**The sharing activities.** There were two main forms of sharing activities that were happening every day and, for this reason, these sharing activities were built in the daily functioning of the classroom: the journal sharing, the rug sharing, and the reading of the news.

The journal sharing took place at the beginning of each day. The students would arrive in the classroom and slowly get to work on their journal. Their journals were made of a drawing with a sentence under it. At one point, Annie would pick someone to share. This person would stand up and show her drawing to everyone, then read the sentence written underneath it. The students then made comments on the drawing. These comments were often simple and referred to the quality of the drawing and to the sentence written underneath. "I like the color" or "I like that you have put a space between the words" were the kind of comments that were heard during this time. They were not as such engaging with the content of the drawing or the meaning of the sentence.

What picked up my attention more during this activity was its function rather than its content. This sharing always went very slowly, and it was very hard for the student who was sharing to have the attention of the class. Annie intervened sometimes, but she would let the students sharing deal with the problem herself. The student would then say

"Table One is not listening" or such similar comments. With some difficulty, the activity would go on, and after three sharers, the students would pass to the next activity.

This short account gives an understating of how the journal sharing implies different levels of shared authority between the teacher and the students. First, and the most obvious one, was that the teacher shared her power with a student who now was in charge of directing that activity. However, this authority of the students was never dissociated from the authority of the teacher. The teacher chose the student to share, but was also still present in the sharing process, for example by asking the students to pay attention to the sharer. Yet, the sharer or the teacher were not the only actors of that activity, as other students were also influencing its proceeding; for example, by giving their attention or not to the sharer and the kind of question they asked.

The second sharing, which I have called "the rug sharing" because it took place on the classroom's central round rug, happened after the journal sharing and was also held every day. For this sharing, the students had to sign in on a list at the beginning of the day, and there were only three students who could share each day. The sharer would sit on a chair in front of the rug. The chair was both special and not special; it was not special because it was the same chair that all students had, but it was at the same time special because the teacher or the assistant teacher would usually sit on it when they had to address the class, such as when reading a story.

It was common that after sitting down in the chair, the sharer would take a xylophone—a tool usually reserved for the teacher—and ring it to get the attention of the

students. Some students would ring it even if they had the attention of the students, as if they wanted to play with the tool of their teacher. The sharer would share a personal story, usually very quickly, and then ask for questions and comments from the students. After answering three questions or comments, the student would stand up and go back to sit with the others on the rug after saying, "Thank you. That was three questions." The rug sharing usually went more smoothly than the journal sharing: most of the students listened, and the sharer didn't have to stop the activity for discipline issues.

The rug sharing had something particular in comparison with the journal sharing, as the students sharing were both directing the activity *and* bringing their personal agenda into the classroom agenda. Here, students' agendas were mainly to share something of their personal life with the other students, and their stories would often include other students in the classroom. The next excerpt is very good example of the form and content of the rug sharing:

Katherine: I have a play date tomorrow with Daisy, questions and comments

First student: What are you going to do?

Katherine: I don't know. [Katherine is kind of amused by the question

Second student: Are you going to have a snack?

Katherine: I guess. [Also amused by this question]

Third student: Are you going to her place or is she coming to your place?

Katherine: I'm going to her place. Thank you. That was three questions. (April 26)

It should not be a surprise to anyone that the students were interested in bringing their own agenda into the classroom and that an important part of this agenda was to establish relationships with other students (Ballenger, 1992b; Gallas, 1998). Students' personal agenda is an important element of what Gallas (1998) called the "subtextual" (p. 4) of the classroom life and what Ballenger (1992) called "the shadow curriculum" (p. 318), which both referred to an underground or hidden dimension of the classroom. The specialness of the rug sharing was that through this activity, an important element of that covert reality, yet of the foremost importance for the students, was disclosed to everyone. Through it, the hidden was made public and the private agenda of students merged with the official agenda of the classroom.

The "reading of the news" was another activity built into the daily activities. In this activity, the "reader of the news" read the news for the day, which mostly consisted of that day's date and what the class would do during the day—a good way to practice reading words and numbers. It was also another activity in which a student was invited to lead the activity, but it also included something of the "rug sharing," as the reader of the news was invited to write a news line about herself. However, it differed from the two previous sharing activities as there was no exchange between the "reader" and the public. Here is an example of the news that was read one day.

1: Hello boys and girls

2: Today is Thursday, May 10, 2012 – 5-10-12

3: We have philosophy

We will go to the tech lab

4: Michele is going to France

5: Write a word that describes you [student writes a word and draws in this section—this was usually done that as student arrived in the classroom in the morning]

As we see, it was another occasion for a student to direct an activity and to share something of her personal life.

**Sharing decisions.** Annie gave opportunities to students to influence and make decisions about the classroom's activities. In this section, I will discuss three events in which students were involved in the decision-making process about the functioning of the classroom. The first one happened every day, while the other two events only happened once, but they all provide examples of how Annie invited students in the decision-making process of the classroom in an ongoing manner.

The first event, which happened every morning, was the greeting activity. Each morning, after the two sharing activities, the students would greet each other. For greeting, Annie would always ask the students what they would like to do for greeting that day, but they could not do the same greeting twice in one week. Students' decisions were not made through voting, but through a kind of informal agreement.

The second event happened on April 9, as Annie told the class she needed messengers—the two students who brought messages and mail to and from the central office. As the messengers who had to be replaced made the objection that they were only

messenger for two days, Annie replied, "They have a good point: We went on a trip and it was Good Friday," and gave them another day as messengers, hence acknowledging the students' point and changing her first decision.

The last event I want to point out was quite different from the first two, because what was at stake in that occasion was much more important and showed to what degree Annie was ready to include children in classroom decisions. On May 7, Annie decided to rearrange tables and to change students' assigned seats. What caught my attention was the way she did it, as I described in the following excerpt from my notes:

> There seems to be a constant problem with Table Two. This table is full of guys, and of disturbing ones: Patrick, Oliver, David, Sam, and Derek. Annie says that all these guys don't listen, except Derek sometimes. I don't know if this is the cause of it, but Annie decides to reorganize the tables. This reorganization is maybe one of the best examples of how Annie democratizes her practice: She asks which students want to move by raising their hand. She picks one student, and asks who will like to change with him. But she cannot only do that, as she also must change Table Three. Annie works a lot to change these tables—as there are no girls who want to move to Table Two, she asked one girl if she would accept to move if one of her friends moved with her; and the student would accept this bargain. As she does it, she seems to ask the approval of Miss D, who doesn't seem to agree with the method. My intuition is that she would prefer to reorganize the classroom unilaterally. Annie is negotiating with the students and the assistant

teacher, saying that this is a beginning and it is not complete. Oliver may change

if he has, not a good week, but an excellent week of listening. (May 3)

This process was incredible for me. As far back as I can remember, in elementary and

high school I was rarely authorized to choose where to sit; most of the time it was the

teachers who told me where to sit, i.e. whom I was allowed to sit next to and how close I

should be to the teacher. It was a given to me that I would not be allowed to sit with the

students of the classroom that could be my partners of crimes.[12] It was for me a sign of

getting older and maturity when I got to college and was allowed to sit where I wanted

and to change places in the next classes. Thus, Annie invited the students into

participating in a decision regarding an important element of the classroom life. On the

contrary, I was not surprised when I saw the tech teacher placed one girl between each

boy in the tech class. In sum, although it happened only once, this example shows to

which point Annie was ready to include children in decisions concerning the functioning

of the classroom.

These three sets of events taken together show how much and to what degree

Annie made a space for students to shape and inform her decisions. The teacher was the

authority, but an authority that could be influenced and created occasions to be

influenced.

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[12] My relationship with my teachers' authority will be developed in the following
chapter.

**Center time.** Although it happened every day, "center time" was a very different kind of activity than the ones presented in this part. Center time was not defined from subject matters as such, but rather integrated as part of the unit of the class they were in. For example, during the animal units, students would play would be allowed to play with the guinea pigs, the rabbit, or the ducks. However, what I think was the most particular of Annie's center time was that the students were not actually obliged to engage in activity related to the project. As such, center time seemed to be closer to recess than what we usually understood as a scholarly activity.

Yet center time was another expression of Annie's shared authority pedagogy, although a special one. First, Annie created a space and time for students to follow their interests and passions, not *outside* of the official curriculum of the school—such as what is usually understood as recess—*but inside* the official curriculum. Put another way: through center time, something structurally similar to recess was now acknowledged as educational in the same light as math or literacy.

This brings a new aspect to our understanding of shared authority or one of its manifestations, as center time was an activity in which the teacher suspended her authority as much as possible—not entirely, because she was still the person responsible for the classroom—and this suspension gave the students the opportunity to make decisions about what they wanted to do. Sharing here didn't aim to put children in charge of the classroom, nor did it aim to give them a chance to bring their personal agenda to the public agenda or engage in communal decision-making. Rather, it meant to let them

pursue their own interests and associate with whomever they wanted for that purpose. The group then dissolved into multiple subgroups with no clear allegiance, as one student could fluidly move from one group to another. During center time, the teacher was much less requested to intervene than in other activities during the day.

The relationship between authority and center time was therefore twofold: on one hand, the teacher retracted as much as possible from directing the students, and on the other hand, students organized themselves by following their interests. These two aspects appeared to work together: the students could engage in the activity they were interested in because the teacher was setting them free to do so, but, at the same time, the teacher could pull back from directing the classroom because the students were busy with the activity they were interested in. It was, in sum, one of the key ideas of Rousseau's governor in *Emile*: by doing less, the teacher gives the opportunity for students to do more, and therefore, the role of the teacher is not to make students do things but rather to limit her actions to organize the student's environment and let them organize themselves (Michaud, 2012; Rousseau, 1762/1995).

The effect of center time on the classroom culture was much larger than its designated moment during the day and carried effects over through the rest of the day. It was the favorite moment of the students, as Annie told me in an informal conversation,

"It is the only time they are happy" (April 9).[13]  It was why Annie could use center time

to discipline students by telling them that she would take part or all of their center time if

they did not listen. Center time was the major, if not the only, tool that Annie possessed

to negotiate with students and discipline them.

The general unspoken agreement in the classroom on the value and meaning of

center time was astoundingly brought to common consciousness through the collective

writing of a poem.

Center time

Finally!

We can draw

And play

And build

And run!

Finally!

Snack!

And armor

And magic

And quills!

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[13] As in the end yearbook we could read, " 'When is center time?' is a constant question in room 7. More than meets the eye, center time is a precious time when the children choose how to teach themselves and how to teach each other. The environment becomes the teacher, and the teacher watches and learns what motivates the students."

And have fun around the classroom!

Uh!-oh! Five minutes warning!

-- By Room 7 Kindergarten (April 24)

This poem was an astonishing example of how shared authority was practiced in Kindergarten Room 7. The communal meaning of center time was publicly acknowledged through a literacy activity and transformed into an artistic creation. The meaning of this artifact was of multiple levels: on one level, we see the different activities that students enjoyed during center time. On a second level, we feel their passion for this activity. On a third level, we also have the intuition that center time was in contrast with the rest of the school, which was not as enjoyable—hence, the word "finally" that is repeated twice in the poem gives the impression that center time is a liberation from the school day.

We can summarize the relationship between center time and shared authority in at least two ways. First, through center time, Annie created a space for the students to follow their interests and to engage in activities of their choice inside the official school curriculum. Second, as we can see in the poem, Annie showed through center time that she understood her students and tried to give them what they wanted.

**Conclusion.** In the previous part, we saw how Annie's pedagogy of shared authority gave a general form to the classroom curriculum. Except for the choice of the curriculum at the beginning of the year, the students appeared to be only indirectly involved in shaping the curriculum on a daily basis—although I did also show how this

indirect effect was intimately related to a pedagogy of shared authority. In this part I have looked to overt, obvious, and direct ways that students could influence and inform the daily life of their classroom. All the elements presented in this section happened on a daily basis and, therefore, taken all together they showed how shared authority, understood as chances that students could affect the functioning of their education, was built into the structure of the classroom life.

The elements presented in this part showed different methods of how Annie shared authority with her students. First, in the sharing activities—the journal sharing, the rug sharing and the reading of the news—the students were put into a position of authority to direct the proceedings. Second, in the rug sharing—and into a lesser extent in the journal sharing and in the reading of the news—the students would direct not only the form of the activity but also its content by bringing their personal agenda into the communal agenda and by deciding what counted as valid knowledge. Third, the students were invited to participate in classroom decisions such as how they would greet every day and how to rearrange students' seats at the tables. Fourth, in center time the teacher created a space and time in the highly organized school system in which she could retract her authority to some point and leave her students free to pursue their interests and to organize themselves as they wish. All of these different elements represent different ways in which the teacher shared her authority directly with her students and how she integrated the idea of shared authority into the structure of the classroom.

**The Moral Order of the Classroom in its Relationship with the Moral Order of the School**

In the first part of this chapter, we looked how the idea of shared authority was central in Kindergarten Room 7 by the gigantic round rug situated in the classroom and the teacher's educational philosophy. In the second part, I presented how the idea of shared authority influenced the construction and the daily application of the curriculum. In the third part, we analyzed different ways that the teacher used to overtly and directly give students opportunities to shape their education.

In this fourth and last part of this chapter, I will examine the culture of the classroom in its relationship to morality broadly construed. Behind the daily or periodic events described up until now, there was a moral order that surrounded and preceded these events, an order without which these events would not have taken place, but in turn, these events also worked to the ongoing construction of that moral order. By moral I mean an invisible or immaterial reality, a reality with no physical and observable limits, yet totally present and effective, that gave sense to the actions of the different individuals of the classroom, that situated them in their respective position and role regarding one another, and that defined what is good and bad, what is right and wrong. The moral order of a group is intimately related to the nature of authority in that group. This relationship is paradoxical: on one hand, authority creates morality, as it establishes what can be done and not done and how to evaluate actions, but on the other hand, morality generates authority. Hence, as we have defined authority in this text, a definition that is widely used

in the literature, authority is based on a moral order that establishes who has the right to command.[14] Thus, the moral order is the central subject of any study of authority, yet a subject so evanescent that it is very hard to study.

It is this difficult task that I will now undertake in this part. I will first offer a vision of the moral order of the school through a few events, which will permit us to have a point of comparison to study the moral order of the classroom. It is through this comparison that the specialness of the classroom in regard to the fundamental relationship between authority and morality will be unveiled.

**The relationship between authority and morality in the school.** The classroom studied was a public school, which was part of a district, which in turn was part of a state. Therefore, the teacher's authority was informed by the hierarchical institution she was part of. In this part, I will discuss one aspect of the relationship between authority and morality in the school, an aspect that cannot sum up the entire relationship (which would have required a differently designed study to be fully captured) but still appeared to me with some force and that I believed was fundamental to understand and theorize that relationship. I will analyze this aspect through a discussion of three significantly different sets of my notes: the role of standardization and testing, the emergency procedures of the lockdown drill and the fire alarm, and a school assembly.

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[14] Refer to the section *Morality, authority and schools* in Chapter 2 for a more detailed presentation of the relationship between morality and authority in education.

***Standardization and testing.*** One of the essential forms of authority in the educational system is the bureaucratic authority, which is the natural form of authority for larger institutions that aim for efficiency (Bixby, 2006; McNeil, 1986; Weber, 1997). If the bureaucratic authority of the educational system was to an extent an evanescent reality in the site I studied, it found its embodiment in the school through the role of the principal. Although the authority of the principal could not be summarized in her position in the institution, it is certain that without the latter, the former would not have existed. If the principal was the body of bureaucratic authority, her office was the space of it—it was, so to speak, the heart of the bureaucratic authority in the school.

If the body of bureaucratic authority was the principal, and its space the office, then its time was the testing period. Testing has become a fundamental aspect of American education, as the essential tool to evaluate if the educational standards established by political authorities—the goals of the educational systems—are achieved. (Jenlink & Austin, 2004; Michaud, 2010; Ravitch, 2011). In a large bureaucratic institution such as the educational system, the use of standards and of its twin—testing— are rational means to control the actions of a vast amount of individuals: teachers, students, principals, staff, etc. (Pace, 2003b; Weber, 1997).

I did said previously that Annie's students didn't have the culture of testing and therefore that they should have been unaffected by standardized testing. However, her students certainly had the experience of standardized testing, *even though these standardized tests were not being administered directly to them*. Hence, I could witness

the importance and value of testing in the school at the beginning of May, when the state standardized tests were given to the students in the district. As I got to the school that week, on May 3, the secretary told me that they were in testing period and I should be very quiet in the corridors. The classroom was then under enormous pressure to be less noisy. We heard a few times the intercoms shouted, "Miss Fredew, please call the office,"[15] which we all understood as bad news in regard to the noise level of the classroom. The principal came to visit the classroom and told the students that it was important they be quiet. Even as the classroom was about to go to a trip to a nearby park, Annie made herself very clear that she didn't want to hear anything from students until they were outside the school building, walked past the other side of the sidewalk, and reached the train station further away. Furthermore, on May 4, students heard, just as I did, the principal tell the third graders in her daily morning announcement that, for next week, they should go to bed early before the exam and have a good breakfast the morning of the test. However, the most important consequences of the standardized tests for Annie's students, in my perspective and in their perspective too I believe, was the last point: recess, at least on May 3, was canceled outside and would have to be taken inside because, as described above, quietness was required.

Therefore, even though the students didn't have to take the standardized tests, they knew there was some entity known as standardized tests that affected their

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[15] I'm here using Annie last name, because that was the way that the teachers, the staff and the principal referred to each other in the school.

classroom and the entire school and that it was very important. The experience of the students, just as my own experience, was that a school during testing period was entering into a special mode, as if the whole school was getting tense in front of a crucial event or challenge.

My claim is that during the testing period, something of the relationship between authority and morality of the educational system appeared and was unveiled to us. There was in the testing period an absolute authority: an authority that couldn't be questioned, that was behind individual judgment and to which everyone had to submit. What then had to be believed was who was in command as well as who they were expected to obey; it was clear, certain, and simple: the entire school was organized under a same mission. Students knew what they were supposed to do, mainly that they should be obedient and silent.

*The emergency events: the lockdown drill and the fire alarm.* The lockdown drill and the fire alarm shared the same nature: they both were emergency events in which the students had to respond in a certain way, and only in that certain way, to a hypothetical or real threat to their safety. Hence, the lockdown drill and the fire alarm were special moments, moments in which the structure of schooling became inoperative or, at least, was transformed. Thus, they were a rupture in the time of schooling, a fissure in the regular rhythm of activities; the entire school entered then into the time and space of emergency. In this particular moment, schooling stopped being about learning and became only about ensuring the safety of the students from an external threat; for the

lockdown drill, the eminent treat of violence, and for the fire alarm, obviously, fire. That said, any extraordinary and unusual danger could have been responded to through the fire alarm or the lockdown: by evacuating the school in an orderly fashion or, on the contrary, by barricading the students inside their classroom quickly. [16]

Both activities were aimed at the protection of children's lives. Safety was now the only criterion that ordered and legitimated school functioning, the first goal of the institution. Not that this goal was never present—it indeed permeated all schooling activities—but it never entirely regulated them, and there were always other goals at work in school. To achieve this goal, order and discipline were required from everyone and here no infringement was accepted. These emergencies required that everyone submit totally and without any protest possible to a diffused, yet entirely present authority. Again, discipline and order were natural goals of this school—and of any school, for that matter—but only during these moments did they become a complete reality. Indeed, during the lockdown and the fire alarm, full obedience, discipline, silence, and order were required from the entire school and nothing else. No individual was allowed to avoid them in any way; no one aspect of the individual life could escape the prescribed discipline.

They represented for me the realization of one aspect of schooling: an aspect in which the institution was taking entirely in its charge the life of its members, not in

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[16] Thus, the emergency was included into the regular functioning of the school; the outside of school, the non-school, is already included in the structure of schooling.

theory, but in practice. Indeed, during these events the classroom struck me as incredibly silent and obedient, as if they understood that the school was then in a special mode. My typically undisciplined classroom became during these events surprisingly disciplined. The authority of the institution was reestablished in its absolute power, and all personal lives had to bend in front of it.

*The school assembly.* I was struck by a similar feeling to the one I experienced in the emergency events when I attended a school assembly. Although the assembly was completely different from the two prior events, we will see that they all shared at the end a similar relationship between authority and morality.

On June 7, my class went to join other classes for an assembly in the gymnasium. The word "assembly" certainly pointed toward the political nature of the event. However, as we will see, this gathering in a common area was quite special. At first, I thought that this assembly was a simple show, because there was on the stage a young man who looked like a clown, talked like one, and performed clown-like tricks and actions. However, it quickly became clear to me that we were not in front of a traditional show for children, which aimed only to entertain children, but a show with a particular objective: to pass to the children a character education message. The entertainment had indeed obvious moral intentions. The clown that was playing skillfully with a yo-yo, doing magic tricks, changing his voices, and telling a funny story was there in fact primarily to educate children about moral values.

At the heart of the performer's message was what it takes to be a champion: "How many of you want to be a champion?" he asked. "This is what you have to do to be a champion in school *and* life" (emphasis added). This presents the essence of the show and of its multiple confusions. Indeed, he was speaking simultaneously about being a champion in something, a champion in school, and a champion in life. Was he telling the students that being a champion in something would lead them to be a champion at school and a champion in life? I believed he was intentionally keeping a certain doubt about what kind of champion he was really talking about.

My contention is that all this confusion, like other confusions in this show, were coming from the confusions of messages of the performer. First, this man didn't come to entertain but to transmit values; therefore, he was mixing artistic entertainment and moral education. Second, he didn't really come to educate children about how to become champion in something or champion in life, but mainly to tell children what they should do and believe to be good students and be good at school. Finally, I think his message was that you have first to be good at school if you want to be good in life and in what you want to be a champion in.

Indeed, I think it became evident as the presentation was advancing that his main topic was school, as the next excerpt of my notes shows:

> The guy has two ribbons, a white and a red ribbon, and says: "The white is you and the red is the teacher. The teacher wants to help you. This is why you listen to your teacher, you do your homework. You have to listen. Then, you have to love

learning, pay attention. And the teacher [point to the red ribbon], what the teacher has to give to help you, will become part of you."  At this point he mixes the white and red ribbons together. This is certainly something interesting, how skillful he is in using magic tricks to do his show; but the real trick is how he tricks the children.

As we see, one of its moral points was to explain why the students had to be obedient to their teacher. The ultimate moral was to make sense of the students' presence in school and their subordinate position to their teacher.

*Conclusion.* The testing period, the emergency events and the school assembly, appeared to be of completely different natures. However, they presented a similar relationship between authority and morality. I do not want to claim that these events exhausted the relationship between authority and morality in that school, but I do believe that they represented one of its fundamental aspects: they were rituals in which all the individuals of the school had to engage in, whether they wanted or not, and in which the absolute authority of the school was re-established.[17]

This absolute authority was the content of these rituals, but it was also its prerequisite at the same time, the condition necessary for these rituals to happen. If this authority was always present in the school, it was in these moments that it became more

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[17] Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen (1993) have also pointed out the moral nature of rituals.

apparent and possible for its members, as for myself, to feel its immense force. This authority was beyond individual reflection, and everyone had to submit passively to it. Any form of criticism, question, or transgression was entirely forbidden and almost impossible. The absolute authority of the educational institution was then ordering individuals what to do and what to believe. What was expected from everyone was made clear, simple, and unquestionable. Educational goals that are usually fuzzy and imprecise (Metz, 1978) were in these occasions frighteningly definite and limited. The good and truth of the educational system were now not obscured ideas, hard to define, but instead imposed themselves with clarity to its members.

The role of students and teachers in them were redefined, as was the nature of their relationship. The students were subordinates and were expected to have the essential qualities of subordinates: mainly to be silent, docile and obedient. The teachers were reinstituted in their authority. However, as the teachers were appointed as superiors in the schooling hierarchy, they were at the same time appointed as inferiors, as cogs in the institution required to do what had been decided above them.

It is in front of this relationship between authority and morality in school—which is, as I have insisted, one aspect of this relationship—that the originality and particularity of the classroom in regard of that relationship becomes visible.

**The relationship between morality and authority in the classroom.** The culture of the classroom was constructed on a different—or even opposite—idea of the relationship between morality and authority. The point of departure of the classroom life

was not that the authority of the teacher should aim to take charge of the entire life of the students, to minimize their judgment, and to teach them to be entirely submissive. Annie didn't conceive of herself as a transcendent authority that would establish an unquestionable, specific, and complete moral code. As we have seen up to this point, Annie's idea and practice of authority in Kindergarten Room 7 was founded on the principle that authority should include students in different ways in its functioning, and that such authority was not characterized by its omnipotence, but rather by its capacity to be put in question and shaped by students. It was in sum not an overwhelming authority that crushed students' judgment, but rather an authority of interrelationship with the students.

This authority gave a certain tone to the morality of the classroom. There was an official moral code in the classroom, a moral code composed of few rules and one principle consequence when these rules were broken. This moral code, which the teacher described me in an interview, used to be on a wall of the classroom, but had been taken down for some reason. However, I never saw this moral code as particularly influencing the classroom life; it was never really referred to during my stay there. In my perspective, the moral code was more difficult to seize and appeared in my ongoing observations in the classroom. I will in this section draw the general lines of how I came to make sense of the moral order in its relationship with authority in Kindergarten Room 7.

*What morality was not in Kindergarten Room 7.* The first thing that struck me about the way that Annie constructed morality in her classroom was what morality was

*not* in Kindergarten Room 7, how she *did not* construct morality. In this section I will discuss four elements that we didn't find in Annie's classroom: first, I didn't see the teacher use harsh language or long lectures to her students; second, Annie's language was not bureaucratic; third, Annie gave little punishment to her students for bad behavior and never gave rewards for good behavior; and fourth, she seldom created competition in her classroom.

First, Annie didn't often lecture her students about what they should know and what beliefs they should have, and when she did lecture, it was always quite short. Furthermore, she never used harsh language to tell her students how they should behave or why they should obey her. Here is how the day ended after one of the most difficult episodes regarding students' behaviors that I would observe during my stay there:

> End of the classroom day. Kids are cleaning. They then sit on the rug. Annie tells them that center time was short because of what happened before. But she doesn't insist on this point. She quickly passes to her second point: there is something new in the classroom. She explains them that they are preparing to receive the baby ducks. She tells them how it will work, what they should do with them.

This little excerpt followed the only time I observed Annie give the general punishment of taking away a part of center time to all students. It was something unusual that indicated the level of problems that happened in that activity. However, Annie didn't insist on it, talked in very calm voice, and transitioned to another subject. Even in that special occasion Annie kept a gentle and discrete moral language.

Second, Annie's moral language was not bureaucratic. By this, I mean that Annie almost never said to her students, "You have to start to behave this way because you will be first-graders next year" or "Next year, you will be in first grade, and that will be much different than here, so you better change!"[18] Hence, such phrases are highly bureaucratic: through them, schooling becomes a system that is auto-sufficient: you have to behave now, because you will be in first grade next year; in first grade, you will have to behave because you will be in second grade; and so on. The reason of schooling is then only to achieve more schooling. It is in this sense that Annie's moral language was not bureaucratic.

Third, Annie rejected punishment and reward. Annie rejected both of them as *immoral,* as being the wrong manner to educate children morally. She may have used them occasionally, but she was very critical of them and they were certainly not shaping the moral life of her classroom.

The two main punishments used by Annie was to put a student outside of an activity or to take away center time. If losing center time could be seen as a serious punishment, it should be noted that it was rarely used and a student would never lose the entirety of center time even if that student was supposed to. The day that a part of center time was taken away from everyone—an event to which I have just referred to—the assistant teacher made Annie leave the room because she was sure that Annie would not

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[18] Actually, I only observed Annie used this kind phrasing once and, interestingly, she used it the last day of class. I will come back on this occasion in the last part of Chapter 6.

keep the punishments long enough, therefore indicating us that she also thought that Annie was not too firmed on punishments.

In addition, punishments were by their nature negotiable in Kindergarten Room 7. If students lost center time, they would immediately start negotiating with the teacher to get it back. If a student was put out of the activities, he could ask to be reintegrated. To give a powerful example of this, on May 10, Patrick started yelling to come back for an activity to which Annie answered, in front of everyone, that she had just said something about yelling and whining, that if he wanted something he would have to ask it without yelling. Patrick asked if he could come back and Annie answered in a very cool way, "Sure." This public example gave a powerful message to everyone that punishments were negotiable, a message that Annie had certainly been giving in an ongoing manner.

If punishments were rare and weak, rewards for their part were nonexistent. Annie certainly made few times public praises for certain actions and certain people, but these ones were buried in the flow of the classroom life. For example, Annie didn't give rewards for good behaviors, whereas the assistant teachers were allowed to give rewards in the activity when they were in charge. She didn't choose a student every week to be celebrated by the classroom for "being good" during the week. Finally, she did not walk around the classroom praising certain people for what they were doing; she didn't emit phrases such as "I like how Emily is working," "I like how Brad is seriously reading his book," or "I like the way that Nicole and Mark are drawing silently." All these comments were completely absent from the moral language of Kindergarten Room 7.

Fourth, Annie rarely arranged instances of competition, and when she did, she always tried to minimize its significance. Hence she had a negative vision of competition in school, something that had to be used as little as possible and, if there was a competition, there was never a prize attached to it and its result had to be devalued.

I believe that for Annie competition gave the wrong moral education to students. In competition, students learn that some students are better than others, that the world is composed of winners and losers. But, more importantly, competition gives the wrong kind of moral education *regarding student's learning*: In an educational competition students don't learn something because they are interested in the subject of the competition, but because they want to win. For Annie, learning should come from the students, and competition wrongly influenced students. Competition is not only giving students a moral education about certain values; more importantly, I think, through competition we can see *how learning is always already a moral matter*. Annie's choice to reject this form of pedagogy was at the same time a moral choice regarding the learning of her students: that *good* learning was the one that had it source in them, not the one that would be created through an external pressure.

If we take all of the elements presented in this section together—Annie's moral language that was soft, discrete, and devoid of bureaucratic language; her rejection or at least her limitation of using punishment and reward; her limitation of competition to order the classroom—we arrive at one fundamental idea: in sum, that morality and authority should as much as possible eliminate in their functioning any kind of external

pressure on students to make them behave in a certain way. Indeed, by rejecting these techniques that would force or induce her students to act a certain way, Annie created a moral order that would establish a space for students to be as they were. Morality was not created by directly shaping students, but rather by trying to let them—as much as was possible—make their own moral decisions. As Annie told me in an interview: "But kids don't think critically if the teacher says, 'Now you are doing this, and now you are doing this, now you are doing this, now you are doing this' " (Interview April 11). Translating this to our subject: students don't learn to be moral beings when an authority tells them constantly what is good and bad, or what they should do and not do; they must have the opportunity to make their own moral judgments. Therefore, this kind position was not amoral, because it was certainly a moral position on the good way to teach students and to educate them morally.

*Explaining decisions, giving metaphors, and telling stories.* In the previous section, by saying what Annie did *not* do, we at the same time have talked about what she *did* do, because avoiding something is necessarily doing something else: if you don't use harsh language, you talk in soft language; if you don't use reward, you construct a classroom life based on other elements; if you don't make competitive activities, you do other kind of activities; and so on. However, it is still unclear how Annie could enforce decisions, not by *not* doing something, but by exerting her authority. The different methods I will discuss in this section were all efforts on her part to enforce decisions at the same that they were efforts to connect with children.

The first one of these tools is an element that I have discussed in a previous section of this chapter: Annie's belief that her authority had to be exerted with reasons. Annie's authoritative decisions were therefore never a pure imposition or, to be more precise, in their imposition they were always accompanied with a justification. Annie's decisions took their forces not only because they were enunciated by an authority, herself as the teacher, but also because they were justified.

Annie gave reasons for particular decisions: "I took you away from this activity because you did X" or similar kinds of statements. But for more general moral ideas, it appeared to me that Annie was not only using reasons and giving a rational explanation, but she also filled the moral idea with stories and metaphors. Here is how Annie explained to her students in which spirit they should do competition:

> At 9h25, Annie did one of her rare lectures. This time it is about competition; one of her favorite moral topics. But this time she does it through sport: It is important to learn to be good losers, like the way that the Rangers lost against the Devils; how the players of both teams behaved after the game. Although the Rangers lost, they congratulated the Devils who beat them; they were good losers; and the Devils were good winners, they congratulated the Rangers for the way they played during the playoff. That is the good way to see competition. The Rangers have been an important topic in the last weeks. A very important topic. Annie was completely into the playoffs… And she told stories of how her children react in front of the games—stories that are really appreciated by the students. Annie is a great storyteller. (May 31)

As we can see, the moral idea of this excerpt was quite complex: the good attitude to have in a competition. If Annie started to do a lecture, by saying to the students how they should see competition, this lecture led to a concrete example, not through reasons, but through a real story. The Rangers and the playoffs were not a new topic of the classroom; they were part of the daily life as Annie commented on the past games, the ones coming, and her personal stories about the Rangers. It is the story that Annie told that gave force to the moral idea she was expressing, a story that had a history in the classroom life and that was linked to her personal life.

One of Annie's favorite metaphors to express a moral idea was the movie theater, a metaphor she used in one of our interviews, but that she also used with her students.

> I try to hold on to logic. […] I tell them adults would be treated the exact same way. If you are making a lot of noise in a movie theater, they will make you leave the movie theater, you know. It is no different for us, and that is the way it is. But I'm much tougher; I'm like the guy who throws the kid out of the movie theater, you know? Sorry, the movie theater guy doesn't come down [and say]: "What do you think we should do by the fact you keep talking?" (giggles) It is like: "Shut up or you are out." So I feel like my tone is different. I'm not very pleased about it, but it is just maddening that they won't listen. (Interview April 11)

Annie started by saying that she tried to hold to logic, to give reasons to her students. However, the reason is an interesting metaphor, not through a dreary argument. Indeed, by using the metaphor of the movie theater, an experience almost everyone can relate to,

she made a complex moral idea more accessible to her students: that personal freedom has certain limits when it enters into relationship with others. Said differently, the idea that "one's personal freedom has a limit because it may affect other people" is not very convincing because it is too abstract; it was through the metaphor that this abstract moral idea became contextualized and connected to her students' experience—in essence, it acquired meaning.

In all of these three methods—giving reasons for particular decision, explaining abstract moral ideas through the use of metaphors or through the use of personal stories— we can see that they were an effort from Annie to make the morality of the classroom meaningful to them rather than only imposing the moral order from an authority beyond individual judgments.

*Making sense of teacher's authority.* The above metaphor of the movie theater brought a new aspect to the relationship between morality and authority in Kindergarten Room 7: it gave the students a rationale for the authority of the teacher. Hence, although not said explicitly, this metaphor explained to the students why the authority of the teacher in the classroom was required, similar to the authority of the employee of the movie theater. A few elements here deserve to be underlined.

First, it is that noted that the teacher explained to her students *why* her authority was needed in the classroom, where it is conceivable that other teachers would think that their authority doesn't require any justification: they are the authority and there is nothing else to add. Second, through Annie's explanation we understand that her authority was

not coming from a source above the classroom—from the bureaucratic institution, for example—but rather was required by the activities of the classroom, as the authority of the employee in the movie theater was required by the movies that the individuals were watching.

Annie used another metaphor to express the same idea: the referee. Here, Annie nominated herself as the referee when the students were playing the mice game, and an issue was raised about if a student had been caught outside of the circle or not:

The issue is that Chris walks faster to enter under the arms during the mice game. The students said that when they said "close" he was inside, but the children of the circle didn't have the time to close their arms. Personally, I'm always ready to punish Chris. In that sense, I'm now much more biased then Annie. Annie is much more balanced. She believes that Chris was outside, and therefore can continue to play. A debate follows. Annie decides to put a referee. This is one of her favorite techniques or metaphors: there is the need of a referee, like in sport. Thus, she is then becoming the *judge* … (May 29)

The referee, which is a natural figure of authority, has the particularity to be an authority that is needed for a game. The referee is someone inside the game and at the same time outside the game: a person in the game whose role is to ensure that the rules are applied

fairly to all the participants and to take action when these rules are broken. In that sense, the referee is similar to the authoritative figure of the judge.[19]

Therefore, Annie's authority had the particularity to give a justification for its existence and, in addition, she presented her authority as being necessary for the activity being undertaken. Furthermore, Annie used her authority in a certain manner. For instance, here is the following of the last excerpt of my notes:

> As the conversation continues, Chris complains that they are looking, this is cheating, and this is why they are catching everyone. The assumption is that the callers should not know when the mice are in or out when they call to close the traps. Annie agrees and makes a comment to the kids as the game follows, but not a very critical comment. "What they say is that you are looking and that's why you catch people, that's all…" So Chris had a point according to the teacher. The discussion continues and Annie puts an end to the activity. They are too slow; they have to learn to organize…

The point here is to notice that this followed the moment that Annie just nominated herself as an authority and stated that Chris was indeed inside the circle and could continue to play. She was, as we can see, limiting immediately her role as an authority; she indeed didn't say: "You have to stop what you are doing and do it this or that way." She rather acknowledged Chris's point and let the students in charge close the traps, free

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[19] An analysis of the judge as a fundamental authoritative figure can be found in Alexandre Kojève (2004).

to make their decision. Therefore, in this example, Annie limited her authority by herself; she didn't become a referee who organized the entire activity of the classroom, but rather ensured that students had the possibility to make a decision.

This effort by Annie to not become the absolute authority in the classroom could be seen in another way. Hence, Annie was not only using the metaphor of the referee for herself; she also used it to put students in position of power, as an excerpt of notes from another activity will show:

> They dance and they sing in a circle. The person in the middle of the circle turns herself around, and where her finger stops, this is the next person to go in the middle. A little interesting thing is that a child who is in the middle appears to move her finger after she finished turning to go to someone else. The debate follows about on whom the finger stopped— Annie finally asked the person who was moving to whom she was pointing (she explains this is like in sport, the referee cans be wrong, but there is a need of a referee). (May 18)

Therefore, Annie was not the only referee in the classroom; she was also nominating other students to become referees. By doing this, she was limiting in another way her own role as a referee in the classroom, as the one who has to resolve all the conflicts and dissensions among students.

*Behavioral problems: between learning and order.* In this chapter I have talked of the classroom life as if it were exempt from disciplinary problems. However, on the contrary, students' misbehavior affected most of classroom activities in one way or in

another, and they took a lot of Annie's energy and time. Indeed, the moral order and the practice of authority in the classroom found in students' behavioral problems their biggest challenge, as they could not deal with them.

In my first day in the field, the assistant teacher told me I should have brought Tylenol with me (field notes, April 2), letting me understand I would experience headaches during my visits, but more importantly she told me how she saw the classroom. The behavioral problems were a constant topic of my observations and of my conversations with Annie. In our first interview, she mentioned to me, "Well, this year, there is a behavioral issue no matter what we do," and that she had no hope that things would change before the end of the year: "I don't think that behavioral wise anything was going to change, no." (Interview April 11) And, therefore, that her goal was then to make it "alive" (interview April 11).

The behavioral problems were taking different forms. "No matter what … it takes me 10 minutes to start anything, because it's 10 minutes of 'Come on' … [or] "It is time to listen to somebody" (Interview April 11). Annie explained to me that teaching was like playing Whack-a-Mole:

> There is a game down at the boardwalk at the beach called Whack-a-Mole. Okay, it has all these holes, and you have a big hammer, and the moles just pop of the holes, and as they pop up, you have to hit them and hit them and hit them. […] So, after a while, they come out a little faster, a little faster, little faster, little faster, and you are supposed to, like, [hitting the table with her fist] hit them

down, and you get a score. Sometimes it is how I feel in front of the room. I feel like I'm playing Whack-a-Mole. Because it's like, "Today we're going to—stop, stop, stop, stop, stop—sit—get that out of your mouth—put that down—throw that in the garbage…" I feel, before I even get one inch into any lesson, […] I feel I'm playing that game at the beach: pow, pow, pow, pow… It's the end of the year, and it's still the same…" (Interview May 7)

The problem was not coming from big behavioral problems, but more from the multiplicity of small behaviors that required Annie's interventions and exhausted her. She lost in this constant struggle a lot of her enthusiasm and passion.

We could make blablabla for electronics, maybe we can strike this. But then I picture in my mind and then I go, it won't work, because they will be pulling this apart and… you can't do a lot of things you wish you could do […] Or, like, when I bring the ducks. I know the ducks are a big hit, because I have been doing this for years, and I have them sit in circles and I say I will take them out if you promise to follow—they promise, but they won't, so then I have to worry… The rules, I'll put them in the middle, just stay in your places, and I'll let you… But they crowd you and they grab them, so all of these things that should be cool are ruined by a group like this, and that's really depressing. (Interview May 29)

Annie was definitely affected by these problems and hadn't found a solution to it. This problem was so important and so insoluble that Annie thought at the time to leave the school.

They [her students] are part of the reason I want to get out of here, because I just don't want to do social work all the time. You know, you want teach, and you want to have those sessions, and you want to have discussions, and just don't want to be behavior all the time. And here it always seems… And that's not just me, that's like the biggest frustration I hear of all the teachers: that they want to teach, but they didn't want to be solving behavior problems all the time. … It is always [the students'] social skills and their listening skills and their respect. This was their parents' job before; it wasn't really what we thought what we would be doing. A little bit, but not to be the major source of social direction. We didn't think, I certainly didn't think it would be that way. (Interview May 7)

In all the previous quotes that span over the length of the research Annie expressed powerfully how she was affected by the behavioral issues in her classroom.

That said, disorder was not as such unwanted in Annie' classroom. On the contrary, disorder was a fundamental aspect of a pedagogy of shared authority, a pedagogy that did not start with the goal of ordering the classroom life through the action of an unquestionable and absolute authority, but that rather posited first the possibility for students to question authority, to shape their own education and create spaces for individual judgment. This is why one of the hallmarks of a progressive classroom has always been an active classroom, not a classroom in which everyone is seated quietly at their place. It is important to differentiate the classroom that looks good from the classroom that gives a good educational experience.

The central point of Annie during our discussion was the following: the whole chaos that is created in the classroom or that appears like that is in fact necessary to students' learning and their development. For example, all the time they lose in sharing in the morning is also when they learn to negotiate with each other. In sum, the lack of structure is productive… For her, the problem is between what look good teaching and what is good teaching. There are classrooms that look good, students are all peaceful and at their place. But what are the outcomes of such a classroom? Her classroom doesn't look that good, but they are learning… (Informal discussion, June 13)

For Annie, the behavioral problems had in fact positive effects on students' learning. Certainly, she gave her students a high-quality learning environment: Annie had received a Teacher of the Year award in the past from a state organization, and the principal told me in our interview that Annie' students were doing "very high academically," but I do believe that the quality of the learning she created could not be better seen than through ongoing observations in the classrooms as the ones I have reported in Part 3 of this chapter on the curriculum. Annie believed that the quality of her students' learning was coming in part from the disorder of the classroom.

Annie: They have a lot of conversation, they have a lot of dialogue, you know. … As much they need to be quiet, they have a lot of time to talk, and I don't know if that there is a correlation between their behavior, which seems a little looser and round [?] and the fact that they are way ahead than the other two classes. I don't know; it is not statistically provable. I don't know. […]

People will object to me saying it, but I think that one of the things—in terms of reading, for instance, the kids talk a lot, and they develop their language, they read quicker, because if you […] develop your vocabulary, that's one more word you will recognize in a book […] I really do feel like all the talking, talking, and talking may be the thing that help them to read, there is a catch-22 for you. Do you know catch 22?" (Interview April 11)

The catch 22 was here that the disorder that we see negatively was in fact, Annie believed, fostering the learning of her students.

Annie is here telling us that the larger moral order of the classroom was not to create disciplined students, but to educate individuals—not as the school wanted them to be, but as what she considered good education. In that sense, disorder was part of the DNA of the classroom, and in Annie's perspective, it had positive effects on students learning. That said, I think that if Annie was expecting a certain level of disciplinary issues from her pedagogy, she was not expecting so much. As we have seen in this section, she repeatedly talked about how these behavioral problems were affecting her and even leading her to consider leaving the school. They furthermore lead her to question her pedagogy:

You are doing this [research] at almost, for me, like, I don't know, psychologically, emotionally, at the worst time, because I'm getting really fed up with the way the kids are in general, you know, and you are actually doing it at a

time where I'm questioning whether I need more authority, instead of the way, you know, [that I teach]. (Interview April 11)

Annie therefore questioned herself about whether the behavioral problems she observed required her to enact a different practice of authority in the classroom. Annie's questioning about whether she should change her philosophy of education was "Huge! [I laugh] It is as huge as the smell of the crab cage! [We both laugh][20]. It is really a big deal, because sometimes I just [think] I will have this little lovely little classroom if I just made myself the boss instead of struggling for them […] to get this mutual respect thing going. I don't know…" (Interview May 7) Annie's conflict here was that she was doubtful that increasing order would create the good conditions for teaching, which brings us back to what we have said previously: Annie believed that her current teaching was good teaching and that disciplining her students would have been to betray what she believes in.

However, at the end, the behavioral problems were the biggest challenge to Annie's practice of shared authority and to the moral order of the classroom. It is impossible for us to know if a different pedagogy would have brought better results. But, we can say that the practice of authority and the moral order in Kindergarten Room 7 were unable to deal with these behaviors and to bring them to a more tolerable level for the teacher. The teacher herself, as we have seen, did connect her practice of authority

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[20] I already referred to the "crab cage smell" before, as that day we cleaned a crab cage that had a terrible smell.

with the disciplinary problems in the classroom and questioned herself if a different practice of authority would have improve her teaching conditions in that regard.

**Conclusion.** By putting side by side the relationship between morality and authority in certain school-wide events with this relationship as it was construed over time in the classroom, we obtain a contrasted and revealing picture, because these two sites were constructed on a different vision of that relationship.

In the school events discussed in this part, authority appeared to be transcendent to the students, to the teacher, to the classroom, to the principal, and even to the school. That authority descended, loaded with an immense force that crushed individual judgment and was unquestionable—the actual possibility of questioning was made impossible. The moral order that was transmitted through this authority was simple and clear, and it tended to organize the complete culture of school. In these events, it was well established who the persons in charge were and who had to obey them—which explains why the students' main qualities were, in these moments, to be quiet and submissive.

The classroom presented a completely different kind of relationship between morality and authority. The teacher didn't aim to entirely shape students' lives and the classroom activities through her overwhelming authority. Rather, Annie tried to strip her authority from all forms of force, like the use of long lecture, harsh language and punishment and reward. The goal of morality and authority in Kindergarten Room 7 was to create a space for students to make moral judgments.

The exercise of authority in Kindergarten Room 7 was not as such negative, as if Annie's objective was to not intervene in the classroom morality. As, I already pointed out, the rejection of certain techniques to obtain obedience and discipline students were in fact a positive choice toward the construction of a specific moral order and practice of authority in the classroom, which are summarized in Annie effort to them by including students. Annie did this by giving reasons for her decision, using metaphors and telling stories to explain more abstract moral ideas, and because they were all methods to help students to make sense of authority and morality through an appeal to their personal judgment. Whereas the school events emphasized students' submissions, the classroom culture emphasized students' understanding. Whereas the former gave the impression of simple and objective moral code, the latter left a certain uncertainty about the moral code, an uncertainty that was the condition to give the student the possibility to exert their judgment: when everything has been resolved, there is no need to think.

Annie's attempt to construct a morality and authority that created space for students' moral judgment and that would interconnect with them was also seen in the way she presented herself as an authority and exerted her authority in the classroom. It was first notable that she gave a rationale for her authority. Second, that she presented her authority as coming from the activities of the students and not from an external source to the classroom. Finally, the image of the referee and the way that Annie used it—by limiting her own scope of action and by nominating students as referees— also participated in her general effort to create a specific classroom culture in which morality and authority let room for students' judgments and actions.

In sum, all these elements exhibit how Annie intended to share her authority in the construction of the moral order in Kindergarten Room 7. However, the moral order and authority in the classroom had an essential limit: they were unable to cope with some behaviors of the students. Annie and I continually came back to this puzzlement on how a theory of shared authority could be more effective with disciplinary issues:

Like all the things that you talk about… this is ironic that you are in my room, because all the things that you talk about are not just things that I go, "Well, this is my way, and this is the way," is that I always think about those things, because, you know, like I said years after years, I have this way of teaching. I have these letters. I have these, these nominations. I have all these great things that says it is great to do it, and then I have the reality of it, that all the so-called ownership, and I have, and I get home at night, and I want cry and [die – the audio is hard to follow at that point] and I just feel like, is it worth it… you know to have this dynamic? And that has a lot to do with me going down there, this whole democracy thing, it is like a huge pressure, it is a huge pressure, because, when I'm outrageously firm, and find myself [saying], "Eh! You…" I'm not proud of that. I [shouted at them today?], I feel bad today, but the way I want be and the result is not what I wanted it to be, then I feel bad about that too. So, I just feel, this is a tough game to win. I could so easily do what they do, and I [?] and the kids might behave better [she giggles], you know, and I hate, I feel like that's not I wanted, that's not what I thought was right, but I think that it might be impossible, to do that here … (Interview June 26)

Annie faced a contradiction between keeping things as they were, which make her suffer, or applying a different of authority to discipline students, an authority that would be harsher and commanding, but that would also make her feel bad by making her betraying her educational principles. There is not an obvious solution for how to resolve this contradiction in a pedagogy of shared authority, but, as we have seen by following Annie, this contradiction needs to be addressed and to some point attenuated to permit such a pedagogy to function.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have analyzed a peculiar practice of authority: an authority that was not based on the idea that the teacher was an absolute authority to which students had to submit, but on the idea that the teacher had to share her authority with students: that they could question, influence, and transform teacher's authority.

Each section of this chapter addressed a different aspect of how shared authority was carried out in Kindergarten Room 7. Throughout the chapter we have seen how shared authority was a central principal that irradiated into various aspects of the classroom culture, as if each of these aspects was one of its specific manifestations. As I said at the beginning of the chapter, it would be a mistake to take any particular element in this chapter and to present it as a distinctive feature of a shared authority or as a criterion to claim that shared authority was indeed implemented in a classroom. However, if we take all the elements presented in this chapter together, they make a strong case that

shared authority was practiced in kindergarten 7 and help to understand what it means to implement a pedagogy based on that idea.

Throughout the chapter, we have seen how shared authority was a multifaceted phenomenon and how each section brought light on one of its peculiar manifestations. We first saw how even the furniture of the classroom represented this idea through a gigantic round rug and how it influenced the teacher's philosophy of education, which I have summarized in three ideas: a certain vision of childhood, the value of students' ownership, and the practice of authority with reason. We then looked at how the curriculum was related to the idea of shared authority: not only was the curriculum chosen at the beginning of the year by the students, but throughout the school year the curriculum was built on the idea of putting children at the center of their learning experience.

We then examined different kind of daily activities in which the students were invited to directly and overtly influenced the functioning of their classroom by leading activities, bringing their personal agenda in the public agenda, choosing their activity and group freely in center time, and participating in different kinds of communal decisions. Finally, I have shown how the classroom culture was constructed on a different relationship between authority and morality than the one I could observe in three school-wide events, as in the classroom the teacher's authority aimed to limit itself and to let space for students' actions and moral judgments. Where the school-wide events appeared to treat students as objects, Annie put first her students' agency and her own agency—she

was not a cog in the bureaucracy. In sum, shared authority appeared in a continual effort in the part of the teacher to question her own authority, to limit her authority on the students, to create spaces in which students could make decisions, and to connect her authority with the genuine self of her students. I ended the chapter with how the teacher's practice of shared authority was unable to cope with some behavioral issues and with her (as well as my own) puzzlement on how a theory of shared authority could have dealt better with such issues.

This chapter was a necessary step in our study on how the practice of philosophy affected the negotiation of authority in Kindergarten Room 7, as we had to understand first the general culture of the classroom in its relationship to shared authority before taking up the particular role of philosophy in it. However, before getting to that issue in Chapter 6, we will look in Chapter 5 at one group of students that were the most disruptive in the classroom and that took the idea of shared in a problematic direction.

## Chapter 5: Boys exploration of authority in Kindergarten Room 7

I have already mentioned the behavioral problems that Annie experienced with her classroom. Although these problems came from both genders of students, they were mainly coming from boys:

> I don't know, I have been thinking about that forever. I don't know what to do. This year I told the principal that I was going to have a meeting with all the parents of boys, because we have a boy issue right now. Sometimes we have very bad girl issues, because girls can be sinister, but, like, we have a boy issue, and that's that all the boys are vying for this macho attention through inappropriate things, as inappropriate as possible. So, the big ones are just big, so they don't have to prove anything—they go out, they are the hero, they organize the football games, you know—so everybody wants to be them because they are just big. (Interview April 11)

We can there say that Annie's disciplinary problems had a gender: male. It is true that Annie said the issue regarding boys was generalized, which is why she wanted to have a meeting with all of the boys' parents. However, I believe the behavioral issues were concentrated in a few select boys. Indeed, after a few days of observing Annie's class, it became clear to me that there was a group of boys that stood out from the rest of the class. If some students were only noticed after a few weeks and seemed most of the time to pass unnoticed, these students jumped to my attention after a few hours; it was impossible to miss them because their behaviors were disrupting the functioning of the

classroom in multiple ways. This group was composed mainly of four boys: Oliver, Chris, David, and Mark. Other students joined this group at times, but these four were always its central members.

These four boys were more often in the spotlight and for different reasons than other students: they were more often called out by the teacher or assistant teacher, excluded from activities, had their name written on the board as a threat of losing center time and effectively deprived of center time—the most enjoyable activity that the teacher could take away from them—and, sent to the principal's office, which is, as we know, a supreme punishment at that age. They were the ones who naturally came up in my interviews and informal discussions with Annie as we discussed challenges in her classroom. The assistant teacher told me that "Annie was running out of solutions with David, Chris, and Oliver" (field notes, May 3). In my interview with the principal, as I was naming the names of the students who required a lot of attention, the principal agreed with my list and completed it by naming the one boy I hadn't mentioned yet.

I naturally started, without even being conscious of it, to call this elite group of disruptors "the gang" in my field notes, an expression that I naturally learned to use in my French-speaking country. Here, like in many places, my study was highly influenced by the work of Karen Gallas (1998), who studied a group of students that she named "the bad boys," which appears to be of the same nature as the group of boys that captured my attention. By naming this group of students "the gang," I was, like Gallas, acknowledging a certain bias in my judgment of them by casting a negative moral judgment on them.

Here are the first elements to define the gang: first, as I just mentioned, they were all boys. Second, they did similar actions and behaved in a similar way. Third, they often worked together, showed a group spirit and shared a certain agenda. Fourth, they were very skillful in bringing their own agenda into the classroom and disrupting the teacher's agenda. This is why I started studying them without even being consciously aware, as they came up again and again in my field notes: they imposed themselves on *my* agenda by imposing themselves on the teacher's agenda. Finally, and because of the last point, their actions were usually seen as "bad" by the adults of the classroom, as something that negatively affected the classroom life. Their group was therefore cast in a moral category, which explained the different kinds of actions that were taken against them: being excluded from activities, having center time taken away, being sent to the principal's office, etc.

The gang was therefore an important element in the study of authority in Kindergarten Room 7. All the points I mentioned in the previous paragraph indicate how their actions were directed to their teacher's authority and how the teacher, in turn, reacted to their actions. If other students engaged in different ways with Annie's authority, none of them in my eyes—and, I believe, in the other adults' eyes—had such a disruptive effect on the classroom life as the gang.[21] With their constant disturbances, the members of the gang were the ones who engaged with the most force against the

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[21] Patrick was another student who may have a similar negative effect on the classroom life than the gang, but because he was classified as a student with special needs, it was my understanding that he was in a category apart.

teacher's authority. In sum, their domain of action—and even of being—was realized in exploring, challenging, and testing the teacher's authority.

In Chapter 4, the lens I took to understand the classroom life was, in sum, the lens of the teacher. We then saw how the teacher planed and enacted a practice of shared authority in the classroom. In this chapter, we now look at how authority was shaped by a particular group of students. It is therefore an analysis from the bottom up of the classroom authority: not as how the teacher intended to share authority with them, but how students took the right to shared authority in their own terms. It is for this reason that this chapter will give us a deeper understanding of the subject of this dissertation.

I propose to study the gang's relationship to authority at different times. First, I want to start to delineate the nature of the gang's actions through their relationship with physical boundaries. Second, I will present their daily performances as a continuation of their physical explorations. Third, we will see that the gang was interested not only in authority, but also in exploring the broad concept of power as such. Finally, I will develop my personal connection with the gang: how my own experience, as a boy who created disorder in school and now as a man, may help to understand these young boys. By focusing on this particular group of boys in their relationship to authority this chapter will give us a better understanding of the nature and the limits of a shared authority pedagogy in a classroom.

## The Exploration of Physical Boundaries

Educational authority is an abstract concept, and as such is difficult to delineate: indeed, how and where can we see authority? Even if we agree that authority establishes some moral limits in the classroom regarding what can be done and not done, these barriers are, by their nature, invisible. As Rousseau (1762/1979) pointed out, physical limits are by nature different than moral and authoritative limits, because only the former exist materially.[22]

Physical and authoritative limits, beyond their essential difference, are both about territoriality: they define a certain space. Therefore, they are not about impeding movement so much as creating the conditions by which movement is possible or authorized. Physical limits are often about differentiating an inside and an outside: the inside versus the outside of a closet, a room, a house, a street, a neighborhood, a town, a state. For their part, authoritative limits are often about differentiating what is permitted, or what is *inside* authoritative limits, and what is forbidden, or what is *outside* authoritative limits. Although it is possible that the physical territory and authoritative territory coincide—as in the case of the school territory delineated by a fence, but, also, through a moral interdiction that states who is authorized to enter that territory—these two territories are most of the time of different kinds.

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[22] Thus, one of the first educational principles in Emile's education: always put physical necessity in front of the child rather than authority or moral obligation.

Shared authority in education is one perspective on educational authority. As I have come to define it through this text, shared authority doesn't eliminate all forms of boundaries and limits—which would be the annihilation of the concept of authority itself—but it implies that limits, or certain limits at least, are by definition negotiable and opened to exploration. In this section, I will analyze different occasions and settings in which members of the gang *physically* engaged in the exploration of tangible boundaries. In other words, we will see how their challenges to authority were incarnated territorially.[23] I want therefore first to study the immateriality of authoritative limits through the gang's trespassing of physical limits in Kindergarten Room 7.

**Exploring the physical limits.** I will first discuss my observation of one of the cooking sessions that took place every Friday. Here are my notes of this event, which I have come to see as quintessential in my study of the gang, shared authority, and territoriality:

We have to switch to cooking. One mom and Annie are putting together in a Ziploc [bag] sugar, cream, and vanilla. Miss D is putting the ice in the other Ziplocs. The process is not going smoothly. It is a slow process to put all these things in the bags for 26 kids. Yep, to do that you have to want it! It requires a lot

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[23] I'm here again in debt to Gallas, who pointed to me the importance of territory to think about power inside a classroom. "I saw that the children experienced the classroom as 'la frontera,' territory to be mapped" (p. 5). However, where Gallas presents the classroom as the frontier, I'm more interested in the frontiers inside the classroom.

of energy and it will be pretty messy, mainly outside. But Annie likes it; she is in her element. Annie calls the name of the people who are behaving well to go get their Ziploc at one of the tables. "Mark, you are last. David, you are last." They don't care; they know they will be called at some point, and meanwhile, they are having a lot of fun. The group, like often, is divided in two groups: the "gang," and the others who are waiting to be called in front of the rug. At one point, again, Oliver switches from one group to another. The kids are now outside. Annie asked me to help to put the ice cream in the cones. It is not an easy task! But I'm happy to help them. And they are happy to receive help—well, I think. This activity is a wonderful scientific experience. How ice cream is made!!!!!! Like always, Annie has to take pictures… During the activity, Chris goes around in the playground. Limits are trespassed or limits have to be trespassed.

This event condensed a lot of the ideas I have treated about the integrated curriculum, but here I want to concentrate on its issues around territory and authority. This activity that appears to be so engaging was not engaging enough for a few individuals; or, maybe more precisely, these students were engaged in another form of activity. It is certainly not a coincidence that the four members of the gang were mentioned in this excerpt: David, Mark, Oliver, and Chris. As the teacher blurred the distinction between the inside and the outside of the classroom by carrying the activity from the former to the latter, the gang members engaged in their own de-territoriality. Under their action, the rug became separated into two sections: a group of students that was waiting to be called by Annie, and another group that was fooling around on the back of the rug. Oliver is the person

who changed allegiance in the process by passing from the illegal space of the gang to the legal one of the students waiting their turn to be called by the teacher.

Chris, for his part, also played with the issue of territoriality, but outside of the classroom. Annie told everyone that they were not allowed to go on the playground, because it was not their turn to go on it. However, Chris ventured into the playground, pushing the limits that had been settled by the teacher. Chris was aware of his trespassing:  He advanced slowly into the forbidden territory and was glancing back to see if someone would order him to stop and come back. I do believe that Chris was doing what the three other friends were doing inside the classroom, which was a constitutive characteristic of the gang: exploring, pushing, and transforming boundaries imposed on them.

**The bathroom: a place for experiment.** The bathroom was not a site I intended to study in the beginning of my research. However I found myself collecting several notes that took place in the bathrooms. My analysis of the gang and their exploration of physical boundaries brought me to understand the role of the bathrooms in the classroom.

The bathrooms were a central element of the kindergarten classroom. There were two bathrooms in the classroom—a feature that higher grades would most likely not have. In addition, only in kindergarten did I have the impression that going to the bathroom was a right and not a privilege given by someone more powerful.

The bathroom was a space with a special relationship. Hence, virtually everywhere in the classroom, in the school, or even in the courtyard, the students were under the vigilance of an adult, under the possibility to be seen. It was this possibility that was mostly suspended in the bathroom and that made it a distinctive space in the school.[24]

Because the bathroom was a special space in regard to authority, a space in which authority was suspended by physical limits, it had to be expected that the gang would use it for their experiments. I personally witnessed several of these experiments during my observations. I first saw some members of the gang use the bathroom to escape classroom activities. Mark and Chris would sometimes pass a considerable amount time in the bathroom during a classroom activity. But the next event, which Annie told me in an interview, is a more powerful example of how the members of gang could use the bathrooms:

> [Chris] did something crazy today. […] He came to the room. They all went to the bathroom, because we are going up in a trip and I can't wait for all of them to go to the bathroom one at the time. […] So they all went to the bathroom, but the boys, there was no male, […] so a woman waited outside the men's bathroom for them to come out.. [inaudible] So, Chris comes back and he says, "Patrick went under the stall where somebody else was, he went under the stall, opened the lock,

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[24] Foucault (1975) has theorized this possibility or threats for individuals to be seen without knowing if they were actually seen as a fundamental characteristic of modern institutions to control individuals, which he has called the panopticon.

and opened the bathroom door so everyone could see the kid." And I said, "Patrick, why would you do that?" and the other kids went: "Chris, Patrick didn't do that, that was you." And Chris, I swear, he went like this: "Oh yeah, oh yeah, it was me." […] I mean, not only do you do the wrong thing, but you come back and make a whole story about the kid? Unbelievable. Now I almost e-mailed his mother about that, but I have given up … because, when I do, she will do something, like have a talk with him, but nothing changes. That's the way it is: Nothing changes with him. (Interview April 11)

The bathroom became for Chris a space to experiment because the gaze of his teacher— a female teacher—couldn't get there.[25] Chris certainly knew that his act was wrong— otherwise, why would he consider it important to report to his teacher that another student did it? Surprisingly, Chris forgot that he was the actor of the trick and not the person who was tricked. This may hint to us the specialness of the bathroom for experimentation: the absence of the teacher's authority made Chris create a scenario in which everything became possible, even the possibility that it was not him who was leading the show.

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[25] Boys using the same bathroom can be a real puzzle for a female teacher. One day in the other school I observed but didn't use for this study, a teacher or an assistant teacher stopped me in the corridor and asked me to go see what the boys were doing in the boys' bathroom. I was not really warm about the idea of helping her, because I felt that I was not supposed to intervene in these situations. But as I saw the person was in some kind of distress and I heard the students in the bathroom yelling, I decided to intervene. It took me some time to bring back order in the bathroom. These boys understood that the school order was suspended in this place, that a boys' bathroom was safe place in regard to a female authority.

The last event I will mention in the section was only indirectly connected to the gang, because the gang members were never officially condemned for it. However, the importance of the event appeared to me to be worth reporting and, in addition, if the gang members were not responsible for it, this event was taking place in their field. Thus, at the end of the year the classroom was affected by a little drama regarding the bathroom. The main issue was that someone, perhaps a group of persons, was throwing wet toilet papers on the ceiling. The problem escalated to the point that one student urinated on the wall. Annie had limited means to resolve this issue. Her demands and orders to stop such behaviors did not stop the problems. Interestingly, the teachers and the two aides were not able to find the person or the group of persons responsible for such deeds. Whoever was responsible was skillful enough to escape the surveillance of three adults. I thought that the members of the gang or Patrick were responsible for the act—an intuition that was shared by the adults in charge of the classroom. Indeed, Annie commented to me in an interview that: "The two that came up a lot was Patrick and Mark."[26] These acts appeared to be playing in the territory of the gang. However, there was no way to catch the parties responsible. She resolved the issue by sending a letter to all the parents that asked their child if he or she was responsible and, if yes, to tell him or her to stop. The problem stopped after that, around May 30.

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[26] Patrick was someone who often played in the territory of the gang, but, because of a medical diagnosis, was considered as outside of it.

This act of vandalism brings us back to our topic of the problem of authority in Kindergarten Room 7. Indeed, vandalism before speaking *against* authority is directly speaking *to* authority. First, the incident happened in the public space but with no author. The insult to authority was made clear to everyone, but the person who made the insult remained hidden. Insults to authority were common in Kindergarten Room 7, but they were done publicly or, on the contrary, stayed hidden. This is why vandalism is the highest insult to authority, because it is realized in another dimension than other affronts; it is a defiance that cannot be responded to. Second, it appeared to have as its aim nothing other than to offend authority. Indeed, vandalism manifests itself through vulgarity, which was in this case first throwing wet paper to the ceiling and then escalated to urinating on the wall. Thus, it was the bathroom as the space where authority could not get to that made possible such an insult to the school or teacher's authority.

At the end, we will never know who was responsible for the vandalism in the bathroom. However, the members of the gang were the ones who showed the most interest and skills in challenging the teacher's authority and experimenting with the space of the bathroom:

> But today David and Mark were in there and they were washing their hands and splashing the mirror… The funny thing about that is that David specifically, when I sent a memo to all the parents, David specifically said to his parents that Mark was doing it because he would never do something like that. Then David is splashing the mirror with the water. Let's face it; my son used to lie to me stone-faced… (Interview May 30)

**They disappear!** I want now to analyze another piece of my data that puzzled me in my observations, but I think that my previous analysis permits me now to explain it. It happened several times in my observations that the members of the gang were allowed to disappear in the classroom. I already mentioned that Mark or Chris would often spend an important amount of time in the bathroom without being noticed. On May 17, I wrote in my notes: "During the whole session [on philosophy], David will be walking around. I don't think it is the first time that I see something like this. I will ask after Annie if she saw him, she answers 'No,' a kid can disappear in his own classroom…" One of the punishments most used in the classroom was to put a student aside from the activity that the group was engaged with. However, often the student was put aside with another student, and they could start playing with each other without being told to stop. Thus, the punishment became then quite entertaining, as if the students were escaping their punishment inside their classroom.

In sum, it appeared to me that in all these instances the students were permitted to disappear in their own classroom. This has to be underlined, because the classroom is not a space in which it is easy to disappear; besides the bathroom, there was no real physical place for children to hide. Furthermore, these disappearances were much more surprising considering that most of the time there were three adults supervising the classroom. It is true that the classroom was a crowded environment, which made it possible for some children to pass unnoticed. My claim is that this possibility for these students to disappear was connected with the subject of this section: the gang's explorations of the physical boundaries in its relationship to authority. Hence, in always looking for a breach in

teacher authority, they must have at one point found one. Also, they became very skillful in judging when and where such a breach would occur, as the next excerpt shows:

> We are in the music class and the students are watching *Mary Poppins*. As I'm talking with the music teacher, I see that Chris is very skillful, like the kids of the gang, in changing places. At this point, Chris moves slowly toward Oliver. Oliver gives space to Chris, or will in some way engage physically to be able to talk with him. And they are able to find a way to chat and have fun together without being caught. (May 29)

It really seems that these young boys have developed a knowledge of how authority works in different settings and occasions; a knowledge that could only have been acquired through many experiments with authority. In addition, as we see in the last excerpt, this knowledge was not as such individual, but rather collective: Chris was moving because Oliver was there and was responsive to his approach. It was not only Chris who was moving toward Oliver: it was instead an interactive movement between both of them. The transgression against authority is often without interest if it is not shared with someone, but it is also possible that transgressions are easier to be done if there are multiple actors involved in the process. It is this communal intelligence and experience that permitted the gang to trespass boundaries in their own classroom and to disappear in front of everyone; thus, situating themselves in some way outside of the classroom, yet being physically present in it.

**Conclusion.** The members of the gangs showed an obvious interest to engage

with physical boundaries of their classroom. Not with any kind of boundaries, but boundaries that were related to authority. As Chris ventured into the playground, he not only pushed a material limit, he also challenged an authoritative limit, which had forbidden him to go there. The bathroom then appeared to be a special space for experimentation for the members of the gang, not only because it was a space separated from the rest of the classroom, but because it was a space protected from adult's authority. Finally, even inside the classroom, in front of everyone, members of the gang were able to find limits that delineated who was inside the activity and who was outside of the activity, to trespass these limits and to disappear. In all these instances, by engaging with a physical territory the gang showed us a different territory, which was usually more indefinite and hard to observe, the authoritative territory of the classroom, which was revealed to us through their exploration.

**The Performances**

The gang stood out from the other students because its members were always engaging in new performances. The idea of performance, which I have borrowed from Gallas (1998), is related to theatricality, thus related to the ideas of actors, characters, audience, creation, aesthetics, and play. Gallas connects the idea of performances with the concept of "La Frontera" (p. 5), the frontier between two territories, a space in which the structure of ordinary life is no longer operative and, thus, that opens possibilities for being and actions. In sum, Gallas advances that the exploration of new territories by the

students is done in school through performances, an exploration in which students are just as interested, if not more than in the official agenda of schooling.

In the previous part, we started to delineate this territory through the gang's infiltrations of certain physical limits that were related to authority. In this section, we will see that their ongoing performances in the classroom were a symbolic continuation of their interest in this territory, although in a more immaterial dimension.

**Physical prowess.** Sometimes these performances were made through displays of physical prowess. "During the greeting activity, Oliver jumps on one foot to get another shoe. One student will ask why he is doing that. He doesn't answer. Obviously, this is a performance for other students. Mark, for his part, will jump on the other side of the stack of shoes" (May 4). Mark imitated Oliver: he did a physical performance to get a shoe, but, even if he was following Oliver, he found a way to do it in an original manner. On May 3, David refused to greet, which is not in itself something out of the ordinary in Annie's classroom. Finally, David agreed to greet, but in greeting he started spinning and fell laughing on the ground.

These displays of physical prowess were certainly performances: improvised actions, creative and breaking with usual actions, and directed to a public. Moreover, and this is certainly a characteristic that the other events that I will discuss in this part did not have, these actions were not breaking rules. They were pushing a boundary, but not to the point of entering into conflict with the teacher's authority.

**Verbal performances.** There were also verbal performances. On June 14, two former students of Annie's came to visit the classroom. At one point, after they shared their experience in first grade, the kindergarteners were invited to ask them questions. Here was the intriguing yet shocking question from Chris:

> Then Chris asked a very interesting question: "'is it okay [in first grade] to show your middle finger?" Annie did not let the two first-graders answer this question. She asked them if it is a silly question. And they said "yes"… It was a silly question and this why it didn't deserve to be answered. To me, she said, "If it was a genuine question, I will let him ask it, but because it is not…"

Annie was certainly right in noticing it was a bizarre question, which everyone in the classroom, first graders, adults, kindergarteners and Chris himself was aware of. However, the point of Chris's question was exactly that: it was unexpected and inappropriate. It was a genuine question exactly because of its silliness. We don't know where Chris learned that showing his middle finger was a vulgarity to avoid, but he learned somewhere that it was bad, and this is why his comment was a performance in the gang repertoire. The symbolic moral trespass of his question was what made it provocative and, for that reason, interesting.

The same day, during the journal sharing at the beginning of the day, I noted a similar performance of the gang. It was the time for Peter to share his journal. Peter was not a member of the gang, but according to Annie, he was a leader in the classroom and I noticed him playing sometimes in the gang territory. Peter's journal title was "The

craziest picture ever made." Here was the reaction of two gang members that I could capture:

> Oliver wishes he had put more crazy stuff. But Peters argues that he put what he could with the space he had. Chris says something, which I don't understand… But he follows, "I wish you would draw someone who kills someone else." Peter answers that he is not allowed to do that and if he had been allowed he would have done it.

It really seemed in this case that the gang wanted to protect their domain, as if they wanted to show to Peter that they were crazier that he was. Again, Chris played in the same zone as the previous verbal performance: he surely knew that this was absurd and morally reprehensible for children to draw people killing each other, but it was what made his remark interesting.

Chris's remarks demonstrate again his understanding of the moral order of his classroom, school, and even culture, because they trespassed the frontier of what should not be said. Although we don't know how Chris acquired this knowledge and to what degree he was conscious of his transgression, it is clear that his verbal performances required such knowledge to be made or, said differently, that his verbal performances found their meaning in the knowledge of moral limits that should not be transgressed. I do not know if there were explicit laws that forbid students to draw people killing each other and to show their middle finger in school, but there was certainly a moral agreement that these two things should not be done. The point is that these unspoken

agreements became visible in Chris's performances, a point that can be seen in the following example:

> Annie is withdrawing from supervising the greeting. She is still in the classroom, but she let the students organize themselves. Each student throws a soft inflated globe to another student by greeting him or her in Italian. Chris sends the ball to Donna, saying "To my girlfriend." Donna takes the globe and tells him that she told him that she doesn't like him to say that in school. There is kind of a silence in the classroom, as if something special has been said. I think that Annie heard it, but she won't say anything about it. (May 18)

By calling Donna his girlfriend, Chris was again transgressing a taboo, as the general silence that followed proved.

The gang's interest in what it is supposed to be hidden from children appeared again when Oliver and Chris came to ask me a peculiar question on June 19: "Chris and Oliver come see me. Chris: 'Is it true when you die, you go to under the Earth where there is lava?' Oliver: 'Yeah, my mom told me, you just go under the Earth, very deep, where there is a crack [in the earth] and lava.' Chris: 'Is it true, Olivier?' Me: 'I don't know…'" (Field notes) This question took me very much by surprise, and I didn't know how I was supposed to answer it. Here, it was Oliver who ventured into the unknown territory of death and the afterlife. He gave a typical description of Hell in our culture, which was however a puzzling description for Chris, but also for myself in that context.

All these performances were about making public what was supposed to be silenced, to push the boundaries of what could be said and to explore in front of others what should be hidden from children.  The gang performances were taking place in a definite territory—more precisely, in the boundaries of that territory.

**The moral dimension of performances: around inappropriateness.** As we try to circumscribe the nature of the gang's actions, we get to their eminent moral dimension. Most, if not all the events described in this section were related to the idea of inappropriateness. Some actions were not inappropriate but were exploring the limits of what is inappropriate, like the physical prowess that we have first discussed, where others events were more clearly inappropriate, like Chris asking if it was okay to show your middle finger in first grade.

It is my belief that at the core of the gang and the actions of its members was their engagement with the dimension of the inappropriate. As I was interviewing Annie, she often, if not always, came back with the fact some members of the gang were acting inappropriately (italics added for emphasis):

They say as many *inappropriate* things as they can in a day. You know, they will have to use their arms to make fart sounds. They will have to talk about the bathroom. (Interview April 11)

Then we had this series of little kids, little one, like Oliver and Mark, and all they wanted to do was get attention, and the only way they knew how is by being *inappropriate*. So they wanted their share of that macho man attention so they

will just make the fart jokes, and the puke jokes, and the underwear jokes. (Interview May 30)

And Mark and Oliver, they tried to get their place by being *inappropriate* because they couldn't compete on the size level, so they had to use farting under their arms, all the funny stuff, because being *inappropriate*, that was the only way they can get (sentence unfinished) … (Interview June 26)

Annie was here talking mainly about two members of the gang: Mark and Oliver. These two were often behaving inappropriately, but I do not think that they were that much different than David and Chris, although these two ones may have behaved inappropriately differently.

The clear example of the gang's interest in inappropriateness could be seen in the end of May when all four of the gang started making fart noises with their armpits—something that I personally observed, but to which Annie also referred to in the preceding quote. Children farting with their armpits may appear first as trivial and vulgar to us, but I think we can now see that, despite its vulgarity—or in fact because of its vulgarity—farting was not trivial. Farting with one's arm was a simple but certain aggression to our sense of good manners, which explains the gang's interest in this activity.

This occupation by the gang of the dimension of inappropriateness brings us into the moral aspect of their actions and of their group. Hence, inappropriate and appropriate are moral categories: they are not simply telling us what is, they are firstly *judging* what is. For instance, we will rarely think that something—an object—is in itself appropriate

or inappropriate; we would rather usually keep these words for actions or behaviors, in part because they could have been different in comparison to the order of things that is not ruled by human will and functions under the law of necessity. Beyond the repulsion that we feel in front of something that is inappropriate is a moral intuition, an intuition that tells us that something should not have been done or that should have been differently. By telling us that an act is inappropriate, we are not simply describing, we are making a moral evaluation. Hence, both ideas of appropriateness and inappropriateness help us to direct our conduct, to make actions that we judge and others will judge as appropriate and to avoid what we judge and others will judge as inappropriate. On one hand, the idea of the appropriateness carries the idea that you should do the appropriate and, on the other hand, the idea of inappropriateness carries with it the idea that you should not do the inappropriate.

Thus, the members of the gang always showed a clear sensitivity to the moral boundaries that they were trespassing, because without such knowledge their trespassing would have been impossible. Therefore, gang challenges to teacher authority, or at least some of those challenges, were at the same time challenges to our moral sense. Some of the gang performances were performances not only because they were playing in the boundaries of the authoritative structure of their classroom, but also because they were at the same time playing in the moral order of the classroom, thus indicating to us a certain connection between these two dimensions.

We have already encountered in this study the complex relationship between morality and authority.[27] We are here brought back to this connection, but in a novel and puzzling way. The gang role or effect was to disturb or short circuit the moral order of the school and the moral order of the classroom. Their actions were bringing the immoral into the classroom culture or, at least, to play in the zone between the immoral and the moral.

**David's blunt rejection of the teacher's authority.** David was an important member of the gang, but his performances were of a different type. David didn't strike me as imaginative in his performances as Chris; where Chris liked to enter verbally in uncharted territory, David rather enjoyed opposing the teacher's authority bluntly. This is how the punishment unfolded the day that Annie took the unusual step of removing a part of center time from all the students—an event that we have already encountered previously as discussed in Annie's moral language.[28]

> Miss D made Annie leave the room for the punishment, which is the loss of a part of center time for the whole classroom. Some students are fooling at the tables. Miss D asks if they like losing center time. David answers yes and Mark follows him by also agreeing and laughing. Miss D will give to both of them an additional punishment, as the others are allowed to leave for center time and to have snack. (April 9)

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[27] See section *Morality, authority and schools* in Chapter 2 and part *The Moral Order of the Classroom in its Relationship with the Moral Order of the School* in Chapter 4.

[28] See section *What morality was not in Kindergarten Room 7* in Chapter 4.

The central character of this event was certainly David, as Mark was here, like most of the time, following the leader. David, in comparison to Chris, was not playing in the symbolic taboos, but simply disrespecting the assistant teacher by laughing at the punishment.

In sum, David appeared to be making bare challenges to teacher authority. He was not only letting the teacher know that he would not obey her, but even, like in the last excerpt, that he could laugh at her, which was a double insult to her authority.

> Annie: Like, you know, there are several that don't think that they have to listen to me at all. David, would never think that he has to listen to me ever. He rolls his eyes, he doesn't care, he doesn't care, […] One thing about anything I have to tell him, I don't know if you know that. [Yeah]. I never did, there is never anything that made him care about what I said, I don't know why. (Interview June 26)

David simply dared to oppose his teacher in the crudest way possible. He represented therefore one manifestation of a student's challenge to teacher authority: the one that simply and only refused to acknowledge the teacher's authority, that merely put his will against the mighty power of the teacher, which became through his challenges not

almighty at all.[29] Hence, David's performance was not only to not recognize the teacher's as an authority, but also to laugh at the teacher as an authority.

**Performances that were appreciated by an adults' audience.** Although the gang disruptions appeared to me most of the time as annoying, I noticed that their performances were not only appreciated by their friends, but also by a larger audience. At the end of June was the graduation ceremony in the school library. For this ceremony, a lot of the parents were present and other members of families: brothers, sisters and grand-parents. The high point of the ceremony was the moment when Annie gave the diplomas to her students, which symbolized their successful passage to first grade.

It was not a surprise for me that some members of the gang found a way to create performances during this ceremony, which manifests that even in the most sacred moment the school agenda was not disconnected from the underground agenda of the gang. However, more interestingly in my perspective, was that these performances were received with delight by the public, by persons who didn't have to deal with their daily interruptions. Chris was again our leading character. The students did a play in the ceremony in which the main character was an upset ladybug that was travelling to different animals, all bigger than the previous ones, and to which she would say that they were not big enough to fight her. Chris, before the day of the ceremony, had practiced his performance in the rehearsal, where he answered instead of the prescribed answer, "Yes,

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[29] I'm here in debt to the analysis of Kojève (2004) on the authoritative figure of the master.

I'm big enough." However, the day of the presentation, Patrick first copied him by using the same sentence and then Oliver copied him too. In front of this situation, Chris made a new performance: after entering like a clown, he said, "Yes, I'm big enough," but in addition he hit the ladybug with his stuffed animal. All these acts were certainly understood by the public as deviance from the play, but they found them funny.

Chris's other performance during the ceremony was also practiced before the show. In the morning, Chris went to see Annie to tell her, "You know what I told my mom, that Miss Fredew drives me crazy, because…", to which Annie answered in a funny way that it was him who drove her crazy. During the show, as Annie softly threatened the class to send the diplomas home because they weren't listening, Chris then shouted: "I told you that you are driving her crazy." This shout was also received with some laughter. Peter, who appeared to not want to be left aside, shouted at the end of the presentation: "Time for party!", and added in a smiling voice looking at the crowd, "No?" which was another performance appreciated by the public.

Thus, although the gang's performances were usually not appreciated by the teacher and by me because they often disrupted activities, they were appreciated by another audience. The villain was therefore someone good in a certain context, not just in his eyes or in the eyes of his friends, but in the eyes of a much larger audience. The inappropriate was suddenly appropriate.

**Conclusion.** Gang performances cannot be understood without understanding the territory in which they took place. Displays of physical prowess were not merely

displays; they were first an experience in pushing what can be done in a certain context. Verbal performances for their part pushed the boundaries of what could be said in the classroom. These performances took place in the authoritative limits of the classroom, sometimes without trespassing them and other times requiring the teacher's interventions, but in both cases they always played in these limits. Furthermore, the territory of the gang performances was not only defined through teacher authority, but also by the moral order of the classroom and, even, of the school and of our culture. Hence, their interest in the inappropriate demonstrated that their actions were at the same time a challenge to the teacher's authority and to our moral sense. David's performances didn't show this connection between authority and morality, as they mostly appear as simple yet crude challenges to his teacher's right to be an authority.

Nevertheless, we also noted that these challenges were not completely negative, as in certain contexts, as in the graduation day, they were appreciated, which may be a hint to us about the value of performances in our society and, therefore, on the value for these young boys in exploring that new and intriguing territory.

**Learning about Using Power**

In the previous parts, I have discussed different aspects of the relationship between the gang and the teacher's authority; more precisely how the gang was defined in its essence through a dialogue with teacher authority. In this section, I will analyze another set of events that are definitely related to the theme of this chapter, but that have two characteristics that separate them from the other events discussed so far. First, they

did not directly or only indirectly take for their object the teacher's authority. Hence, they were not provoking or challenging teacher's authority; they happened in a sub-dimension of teacher authority. Second, they were not happening in any authoritative domain as we have defined it since the beginning of the text: as a relationship between a superior and inferior structured by a common moral order. Indeed, these relationships had something of force—although only few of them included overt acts of violence—which has always been one of the criterion used to differentiate a power relationship that is authoritative from one that is not. The use of force indicates that there was not a common moral order between the persons involved. These sections will show that the gang members were not only interested in authority, but they were also interested in a much larger dimension, of which authority is only a part: the power dimension of the classroom.

**Verbal lowering of others.** In April, boys (mainly members of the gang) started yelling "So easy, so easy" when they were doing something and particularly when someone else was trying to do something. "So easy" could be interpreted as a way of teasing each other, but the way it was said was not at all humorous. It was obvious that this remark aimed at two things that were interconnected. On one hand, the person who said it presented himself[30] as superior to others, because he could not only do certain things, but he could do them easily. On the other hand, the person who was the object of the comment was diminished; even if he could do something, he would be less good than the other if he could not do it easily. We can observe this in the next exchange between

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[30] These words were mainly, if not only, used by boys.

Oliver and Chris that I captured:

> Chris: "You don't know how to tie your shoes?"

> Oliver: "I know, but I don't know how to do it double."

> Chris: "You don't know how to make it double? So easy!"

> Oliver- "I know, but…"

Oliver's defense against Chris's judgment was not really convincing, as if he were acknowledging the rightness of his friend's remarks or as if he understood the dimension in which both of them were playing. These kinds of remarks were not exclusive to the gang; they became part of the classroom culture.

A similar event happened May 31 between Chris and Oliver, although this time the exchange was much more intense than in the previous event. Chris and Oliver were working together at my table. I don't know what happened, but Oliver yelled Chris's name in an angry and desperate voice, to which Chris answered that his mouth smelled and asked him if he brushed his teeth in the morning. This time Oliver's answer to his friend was angry. Chris, on his part, here enjoyed his power over his friend until I jumped in to stop this exchange because I could clearly remember a similar incident from my own youth, where an alleged "friend" made comments about the smell of my mouth.

In these two excerpts, it was Chris who tried to diminish Oliver with his words. But, according to Annie, Oliver was just as skillful as Chris in this regard, if not more:

Oliver's parents, because he is an [?] kid, says eh, you know "Chris is bullying him, Chris is bullying Oliver and I think you should, you know, you need to address it." It is like I want to burst out laughing, because Oliver bullies Chris with the words all day long. He tells, you know, he tells him something he did is ugly, you know like […] are you kidding me? Do you realize that your son torments the hell out of [him…] But all the parents are seeing is size, you know; if Chris is big, and Oliver gets into a thing and he gets hurt…" (Interview April 11)

In sum, it appears that our two friends shared a larger moral order in which it was possible to insult each other, as the next story will show.

**Playing with power: the scissor incident.** It took me a long time to understand what this next event was about. Although I had written it, considered it several times, and saw it was clearly related to my subject, at first I wasn't able to figure out what it was truly about. However, it has become obvious what this event was about: it was a radical experiment by the members of the gang with power.

Chris and Oliver were again the actors: if the former was again leading the show, the latter was this time a willing participant. This event will expose a very different use of power than the ones discussed in the previous part. Here is what I captured in my notes from May 18 during art class:

I'm at my favorite table. Oliver and Chris are there. Well, I'm there because there is a free spot, but I like those two guys at the end; for my research they are entertaining. Even if sometimes I feel angry about the fact they don't respect rules

— although I know I had been like them and may still be like them. Today I begin to see an art of answering commands and not following them. The art teacher says: "Oliver," Oliver answers "Yes," turns a second to face the teacher and turns away to face Chris again.

I think that today that there is a very special issue between Chris and Oliver. It will take me a long time to understand what it is about—by the way, the other kid at the table is Bobby. I know nothing of Bobby and don't find him particularly interesting, although he is the one who behaves at that table; interesting comment, isn't? So, Oliver is begging Chris for something. He is saying that he will be is best friend, that he will do whatever he wants, he will give him something—I guess a Ninjago character—that he promises he will do that. Chris is playing the game: "I don't think so, I will tell her…" "I gave you many chances." And this little game will go on for the whole class. At one point, I will intervene and ask what happened. Well, the thing is that Oliver took scissors [and made as if] he would cut Chris's arm. Although Oliver didn't cut Chris's arm, Chris is threatening to tell Annie what he did. Both seem to know the gravity of the offense—this offense is breaking the first and only absolute rule of the class and school: don't put the physical safety of another student in danger. I mean, Chris knows he has an important piece of information—I guess that Chris has been caught several times with serious offenses—and this must be why he waited all this time to tell Annie, because this happened yesterday, so he is clearly playing with this information… And Oliver knows that he is in trouble. This is pretty

weird, for me, because the two seem to be friends. What kind of friend will do that?! Meanwhile in the art class, the activity is to draw an animal with a stencil, to scissor it and to write his/her name on it. They have to do two animals before the end of the class. Well, I guess my two friends are dealing with a much more important issue. As we get back to class, Chris will finally say it to Annie. She answers that she will talk to Oliver. I don't think she did it… Chris waits to see her reaction, looks at me, looks at Oliver, who is looking at Annie. The two boys will exchange few words. However, we see afterward that they are still two friends… What is going on? I will never talk to a friend who betrays me like this. But these kids don't think like that. Annie doesn't look to do something. I ask her if she is going to do something: "I don't think so, it is Chris, and something happens to him yesterday," which seems for her two reasons for not following the investigation on this allegedly crime.

This incident clearly shows how Chris was playing with information that gave him a certain power over his friend. There was even something comical in seeing Chris say to Oliver that he gave him "many chances," as if he were repeating something that had been used on him before by an adult. Chris's goal was not to get any retribution for Oliver's offense, but to keep the drama going and to develop it in new directions. He didn't indeed really want anything in particular: even the promise of Oliver to give him a Ninjago, which appeared something that both highly cherished, was not interesting. It seemed that Chris told the teacher only because he had exhausted every possibility and wanted to explore what would come from this.

Oliver was this time fully cooperative with Chris's demands, promising anything to Chris. In addition, he didn't see Chris's use of power as negative. During an activity later that day, Annie asked the students who they would like to be if they could be someone else. Here was Oliver's answer: "I would like to be Chris, because he has all the Ninjagos." Oliver must not have been upset with Chris's play with power to make such answer, as if they both agree on the game they were playing, although I'm sure it was very serious game for them. In sum, to play with power was a legitimate agenda.

**Violence.** The two violent incidents that happened during my observations both came from members of the gang. These aggressions can be judged as major compared to other forms of physical incidents that also happened, as the latter were not clear and conscious acts to hurt an individual, so the teacher or the aides dealt with them inside the classroom. The former, on the contrary, represented a conscious physical aggression against someone else and required that the perpetrator was sent to the principal's office and even perhaps sent home. They were never in my knowledge major in their consequences regarding the person who was hurt. However, they were major in the rule or principle they were breaking: the physical safety of a student, which is a sacred law in school.

My claim is that the use of violence by some members of the gang was connected to the space or the dimension in which they evolved. This dimension was first characterized by power and not by the use of violence. Thus, on one hand, it is possible that the violent acts were probable outcomes for these individuals who engaged in the

boundaries of the power structure of the classroom. On the other hand, it is also possible that their engagement with power brought them into a slippery slope that could lead them to pursue violent acts. However, Annie always considered that there was no bullying in her classroom and, consequently, stating that the gang never got to that extreme in their practice of force.

**Conclusion.** In this part, we have seen that the gang was not only interested in exploring teacher's authority, but that this interest in fact was part of a more general issue of power inside the classroom. Indeed, the events involving members of the gang in this part were not as such directed to teacher authority, as if they were taking place in another dimension than what has been described up to now in this chapter. However, if they were not interested in challenging teacher authority, then they were undeniably interested in exploring the power dimension of their interrelationship with each other, by diminishing one another and presenting oneself as superior, by controlling someone, and even by using force against another student.

It can even be said that the power dimension was the larger moral framework that structured a part of their relationships. Although in some of the events presented here there was a clear moral disagreement over the meaning of this moral order—like when Chris told Oliver that his mouth smelled— in others the participants appeared to agree on the rules of the games: that any weakness or incapacity to do something would receive the comment "so easy" or that it was okay to use sensitive information to play with your friend, like when Chris was playing with Oliver about the scissors incident. The larger

dimension of power in the classroom, of which the authority of the teacher was only one dimension—although a very important one—was the space that the members of the gang were interested in occupying.

**The Gang and Myself: Boyhood, Manhood, and Authority**

I was born in a very different culture than the individuals in this study. I grew up in a rural town of Quebec of 8,000 people, in which everybody spoke French and in a time before the Internet was invented. However, despite these differences, as I was studying the young boys referred to in this chapter, I had a clear impression of familiarity, that I had been like them and, more surprisingly, that I was in some respects still like them.

Hence, although I think I became a gang member in fourth grade, which is somewhat later than Kindergarten, I have identified myself as disruptive child. I remember indeed that in fourth grade I had what was called at the time a "sheet of conduct," in which I was evaluated by my teacher every day for behavior. In subsequent grades, I was a regular visitor to the principal's office. Like the members of the gang, I was not acting alone; I was looking to hang out with the most disruptive children in the classroom, the ones who had some kind of reputation for misbehaving and who were popular in school. Although I was separated from my friends every year, it was easy for me to find students of my kind, and it was easy for them to find me; we just recognized each other at first glance at the beginning of the year. My whole agenda, like the agenda of the gang, was to see how I could make my friends or the whole classroom laugh, as

well as find new ways of challenging teacher authority. These were my principal goals in school. My closest friend at the time told me that he always saw me as the "protester," not as the person who looked for fun, but as the person who questioned the authorities. I was also famous for daring to do what others wouldn't do.

Before beginning this research, I thought that this side of my personality had disappeared when I moved from my little city to Quebec City in high school at the age of 14. I remember starting to hang out with the "bad" boys at the new school, but I definitely never fit in this new group and didn't really understand the humor of my new culture. I was liberated from my old persona, which freed me to become someone different. As I was not attached anymore to a particular group, I could continue my identity project in new directions.

However, as I was reflecting on these young boys, it appeared to me that maybe I had not removed this side of myself as much as I thought. This idea became clearer as I was reflecting on the gang's interest in farting noises, because I was able to mark the history of my interest in it from kindergarten to nowadays. Hence, I also learned very young the difficult placement of my hand in my armpit to make a sound similar to a fart; something that required time, practice, and effort to achieve. I can even remember going on an end-year trip to Quebec City when I was in fourth grade or a bit older and the high point of the trip for me was to buy a Whoopee Cushion, a balloon in rubber that I could inflate and put under someone as they sit so that the balloon would make the very funny noise of the person farting—at least, very funny in my perspective and that of my friends.

At the end of elementary school and at the beginning of high school, I learned to make other sounds with my fingers and my mouth. I can actually remember learning to make a different kind of fart sound with my mouth up to university. This time it was a few of my friends in the undergraduate association in philosophy who taught me how to do it. I can even go further and see how I'm still interested in farting. I'm indeed a fan of the animated television show *South Park*, in which, as everyone knows, farting and other boy jokes are common.

Thus, it became more and more obvious that I didn't leave this part of my personality behind, and that I had more in common with these boys than I first thought; that, in many ways, I was not that different than the boys I was studying. Could it be possible that they were a caricature of myself? As I was observing the classroom, I found myself surprisingly doing things that were quite similar to what the gang was doing. As the teacher was talking about the one dollar bill to the students, she mentioned that there was something written in Latin, but she didn't know what it meant. I automatically answered that it meant "a New Order of the World." I had encountered this sentence in my study of a text of Arendt (Arendt, 1961a), which I found very important for this research and that I also presented to my undergraduate students. I was partially wrong as I learned that day that there were in fact two Latin quotes on the one-dollar bill, and not only one. A similar thing happened the day that the students were learning to make ice cream. Annie said that she didn't know why they had to put salt with the ice in the Ziploc bag. I again jumped in and said that it was to make the ice melt—maybe this answer was wrong, but this is why we use salt on our road in Quebec during winter. The point is that

I don't think that my answers were only motivated by my desire to help and to share the truth; there was something else in play, like my desire to take my place in the classroom culture. There was something ironic about me behaving like the children I was observing and criticizing, although my behaviors were different.

My connection with the gang went further than my participation in the classroom, but, as I became more aware of it, I started seeing better into some of my actions and habits related to their engagement with authority. For example, as I was going to the school I was studying, I started to notice my natural habit of crossing red lights on my bicycle. However, my conflict with authority happened with a crossing guard who yelled at me to stop at the red light. The day after this incident, I decided to stop at the red light where the crossing guard was and walk to cross the street on the side of my bicycle. This was still certainly a challenge to his authority, as crossing a red light by walking is just as prohibited as crossing a red light by riding a bicycle, but this challenge, as ridiculous as it was, took place inside the boundary of what was permitted.

I did enter in a similar ridiculous conflict earlier in my doctoral studies. I went in the men's bathroom in the basement of the library, although there was a sign saying that it was reserved for the library employees. As an employee there asked me strongly what right I had to enter there, I first complained that it was the only men's bathroom in the basement, but as the employee continued scolding me, I added that maybe he should call security. There is obviously something juvenile in these stories.

However, I don't believe that all my challenges to authority are necessarily negative and can also be seen as positive. A few years ago, in a meeting between the doctoral students and the dean of my college, I was the only one of my department who challenged the dean on her decision to put an end to the doctoral degree in which I was enrolled. I don't think that my intervention was clear or well argued, but at least I tried. I extended my challenge as I went on to present in academic conferences locally and nationally on the disappearance of my doctoral degree and of what I believed was the end of Philosophy for Children at Montclair State University. My advisor supported me in my request for money from my college to present at the American Educational Studies Association conference in Saint-Louis— financial support that was granted by my college. I was definitely, yet differently engaging in a challenge with my school authority by situating myself inside the boundaries of this authority, like the gang was doing on a daily basis. More deeply, my interest in challenging authority may be at the root of my study in philosophy: indeed, I still consider that discipline as a radical project of questioning oneself and our collective relationship to authority.

Therefore, we can see how my persona is similar to that of the young boys described in this chapter, as I was, like them, challenging authorities in different ways. In addition, we can notice that some of my challenges could have been avoided and that others appeared to be more proper. Thus, my personal experience shows that I'm still learning to challenge authority, a lesson that I have perhaps started as young as the members of the gang and that could only be made by practicing to engage in that territory.

**Conclusion**

I started to study the gang because its members were the most disruptive students in the classroom. As they drew the attention of the classroom, I was drawn to them too. They posed the biggest challenge to the practice of shared authority in Kindergarten Room 7. As this chapter showed, the nature and the goals of their actions were to actively explore the authoritative territory of their classroom, which was an undefined territory, but that became more visible through these boys' conduct. We first saw how the gang infiltrated the authoritative limits that were also physical limits. Their interest in the bathroom was the best example of this, as the bathroom was a physical site with clear boundaries to protect their occupants from their teacher's gaze and, for this exact reason, perfect for experimentation. We then saw how their daily performances were a continuation of their physical explorations, yet in more immaterial dimension: in a simple and crude way, like in David's rejection of his teacher's authority, or in more abstract way, like in Chris's plays in the moral taboos of his classroom and, to some point, of his culture. The gang performances were defined in its essence through its relationship to authority as they engaged in mapping its uncharted frontiers.

Why were these young boys interested in this inquiry into the authoritative structure of the classroom? Our first intuition will be to claim that they were gaining something in this exercise, but what exactly? I do not believe that they really gained power in the classroom. The members of the gang were powerful, but I never saw them as having power over other students; their power was rather limited to their small group

and to bringing their agenda to the collective agenda of the classroom. In addition, I do think that this chapter provided hints to other reasons that would explain the interest of these students in this dimension. First, as we have seen in their graduation ceremony, their performances were appreciated by another audience and, therefore, on the value and importance to learn to do performances. Second, it is possible that these students were simply, yet mysteriously attracted to the dimension of power, as we have seen in our study of their power relationships with their friends.

Third, as my own experience demonstrated, contesting authority is sometimes a good thing: although I do recognize that I should have abstained from some challenges to authority, I see others in very positive light for myself and for the culture I inhabit. It is therefore possible that these young boys were simply learning something that we indeed value in this culture: that we do believe that challenging authority is at least sometimes a good thing. The problem is however that we are unsure how to do that education to authority and, even, how could we educate individuals to make good challenges to authority and to avoid other ones—as if we ourselves possessed the criteria that would permit us to make such distinction?

The goal of this chapter was double. On one hand, I wanted to clarify the nature of this group of boys that appeared at first to me as related to the issue of authority. It is what I have done in the major part of this chapter. On the other hand, I also wanted to see how this group of boys affected the negotiation of authority in Kindergarten Room 7. It is this point I want now to take up. First, it has to be noticed that this chapter gave us a

completely different vision of the functioning of authority in Kindergarten Room 7.

Hence, we have passed in this chapter from how the teacher could share authority with

her students to how the students determined how they would share authority with her. We

have now a more textured and nuanced understanding of the classroom culture through

these boys' ongoing performances and how difficult it appeared to be, and almost

insoluble, to deal with them.

Second, and in the relationship of the previous point, the members of the gang

help us clarify the conditions of possibility of a shared authority pedagogy. They made

more obvious to us the fact that sharing authority means that the teachers and the students

agree on what subjects are opened to negotiation and which one are not, on the form of

that negotiation and on the role of the teacher to direct the classroom. Therefore, this

form of authority, like any form of authority, requires the establishment of certain limits

that are respected by all the individuals of a group.

Third, that Annie's shared pedagogy was not able to cope with the intensity and

constancy of their disruptions. Although it is unclear what could have been done,

something had to be done as she mentioned to me in our last interview:

I used to think that kids didn't ever do things deliberately to, you know, to pull

your chain, you know that expression, pull your chain? [explain that to me]. It

gets on your nerves [yeah], I used to think that kids would never deliberately try

to get on your nerves. Maybe I still think that, but they are trying to tell you I

don't have to listen to you. They do not try to get on your nerves, but I think at

times they are trying to tell you, 'I don't recognize you as an authority.' I don't

have to listen… They are trying to say that by their actions. So in that, maybe I

made them that way, because I try to not be too much an authority, so they are

telling me, but, at the same time, even if I'm not an authority, I'm still a member

of this community here. And, if what they are doing is affecting us as community,

they can't do it. (Interview June 26)

However, similarly to Annie, I have been puzzled about what could have been done to

adapt a pedagogy of shared authority to better deal with the disturbances of these

particular boys, who had an agenda to confront her authority. Interestingly, Annie

mentioned here that maybe it was her pedagogy that was partly responsible for that.

However, I'm doubtful that a different pedagogical approach would have made a

difference. Hence, it is my impression that these children were not really acting that way

because of the authoritative structure of their classroom; that they would have acted in a

different authoritative structure. It is uncertain if the members of the gang were more

sensitive to issues of power, authority, and morality inside of their classroom than the

other students, but it is clear they were more interested in investigating these dimensions

and, more specifically, investigating these dimensions in a challenging manner.

Therefore, there is no reason to believe that this interest would have diminished in

another authoritative structure.

Therefore, David, Chris, Oliver, and Mark brought us back to the central issue of

educational authority. Authority requires a central element to exist and to function: that

the persons involved in it agree on the value and importance of its existence. Moreover, we are unsure how this agreement can be created when it is not already there. At the end, teacher authority reveals to us its limits: that authority needs something else to be effective and that the teachers—as the teacher of this study— appear to be ill-equipped to create this something else. We are, at the end, brought back to the fundamental issue of a democratic education: the difficulty to create authorities in a society that was built on the possibility to question all forms of authority.

## Chapter 6: The Role and Effect of the Practice of Philosophy on the Authoritative Culture of Kindergarten Room 7

The first goal of this research has been to study how the practice of philosophy affected the negotiation of authority in Kindergarten Room 7. However, it soon became obvious to me that we could not understand the role of the practice of philosophy without understanding the general authoritative culture of the classroom. This is what has been the focus of the two previous chapters: I analyzed the larger themes surrounding the practice of shared authority in Kindergarten Room 7 in Chapter 4 before examining the role and nature of one specific group of students—the gang—in its relationship with the practice of shared authority in the classroom in the Chapter 5. As long as these prior steps may have seemed, they were indispensable for the project of this dissertation and have given us the perspective necessary to address the question of how the practice of philosophy interacted with the authoritative structure of the classroom.

The main occasion to observe philosophy was during the weekly sessions that took place every Thursday morning: the official and designated time for philosophy. This chapter in particular draws on my observations from these sessions. However, for Annie, philosophy permeated the classroom life and was not just something attached to one specific time period each week. "Well, we do philosophy in the philosophy session, but when you have that mindset, philosophy is all the time. […] There are the Thursday sessions, but then these things come up all the time" (Interview May 7). I could indeed observe how philosophy was employed in other moments than in the official philosophy

sessions. Although I did capture a few of these moments in my notes (to which I will return later), they were harder for me to find and document. It is possible that a longer time frame for the study would have permitted me to have a better view of how philosophy manifested outside of the philosophy sessions.  For this study, I will refer mainly to philosophy as what happened inside the philosophy session each Thursday morning, because these were the best occasions to observe its practice in Kindergarten Room 7.

Philosophy was a peculiar element of the classroom studied, an element that is missing in any of the literature on authority and shared authority in early childhood. P4C appeared to me as one of the most eminent forms of sharing authority in Kindergarten Room 7 and, for this reason, it gives us a valuable vantage point to understand such pedagogy better—to understand not just its nature, but also its tensions.

I will first present how P4C was naturally interconnected with Annie's pedagogical philosophy and how it was similar to other sharing activities before examining how P4C introduced into the classroom culture something unseen up to this point in this dissertation regarding the practice of shared authority. In the chapter parts that follow, I will look at the special relationship between philosophy and authority; the moral dimension of philosophy session; and the complexities and even contradictions related to the practice of philosophy in that classroom.

**The Practice of Philosophy in Kindergarten Room 7**

Philosophy was a central component of the culture of Kindergarten Room 7. Its importance could be seen in the fact that philosophy was part of the weekly curriculum, which is in itself a rarity in elementary schools. If there were at some point a strong program of P4C at Mountain View school, it was no longer the case at the time of my study. Annie was the only teacher who was doing P4C at the school. When I met Annie for my pilot study, she was teaching philosophy not only in her class, but also in another class in third grade. The weekly newsletters always reported on the subject that had been addressed in the philosophy session that week and, by the same token, included philosophy in what counted as learning. Philosophy was therefore becoming an educational subject, just as mathematics, literacy, or science. In sum, Annie deeply believed in the value of philosophy in school. Annie's commitment to P4C went further than obtaining a degree in this discipline; it translated into practical pedagogical implications in her classroom.

The place of philosophy as a structural element in Kindergarten Room 7 could be seen in a more important element that I have already talked about: the gigantic round rug, which I presented in Chapter 4 as a physical symbol of the DNA of the authoritative structure of the classroom as shared authority. But the round rug was also a symbol of P4C: In a P4C session, all of the participants, including the teacher/facilitator, are indeed placed in a circle. Therefore, in the rug the shared authority perspective of the classroom

and the practice of philosophy were symbolically united; the rug was an unmistakable visible incarnation of two abstract and fundamental ideas of the classroom culture.

In this part, I will start to define the practice of P4C in Kindergarten Room 7 before taking up its relationship with Annie's pedagogy of shared authority.

**How philosophy was happening.** In the next section, I will present one example of a philosophical discussion that happened in Kindergarten Room 7; I will limit myself here to the general components of these philosophy sessions as they took place typically every Thursday morning. Children were first asked to move to the perimeter of the rug. The teacher would most of the time take a place among them, but she would sometimes sit outside of the circle. Annie would then take out a box in which there were two pair of puppets, which she used to make a little story with a philosophical theme. As she was doing that, there was a certain excitement in the group; students clearly enjoyed this moment. Annie theatrically took out the dolls by, for example, commenting where the dolls went for Spring Break. With one doll in each hand, one named Philo and the other named Sophie, Annie would enact a short piece of theater consisting of a dialogue between the dolls. Annie wrote the stories herself in the morning before the sessions, but she also sometimes improvised them. The stories were inspired from the recent life of the classroom and, therefore, were part of what I called the integrated curriculum, a curriculum that start from the classroom life and in which subject matters were interrelated.

After the story ended, the little dolls would bow. As Annie was about to tell the story a second time, some students would ask her to make it longer, which shows how much they liked it. Before telling the story a second time, Annie would make the comment "One time for listening, one time for thinking," and then asked the students to put on their "thinking caps," which was done by some students with play-acting and sounds, as if they were putting on a cap like superheroes in a comic book.

After the story was told a second time with the second pair of dolls, Annie asked the students what questions they had about the story. However, students most of the time started to discuss the story without raising a question, which may point out their interest to talk about the topic raised in the dolls' play. A question would at some point be asked by a student, and the classroom would informally agree to respond to this question. The discussion would proceed for 15-20 minutes before it ended in a certain kind of chaos coming from the behaviors of students who became more and more restless during the discussion. The dialogue would advance through questions and answers between the teacher and the students. It was not uncommon to hear some students say "I agree with such and such" or "I disagree with this person." The word "because" could often be heard from the teacher as well as from the students. Annie's questions and comments were of different kinds. Among them, here were the principals: Annie asked the students to give a reason for their position and to develop their opinion; she reframed or redirected the discussion by asking the students to see a new aspect of the issue discussed; or she restated the comment of a student and asked the other students what they thought about it. Another set of her comments aimed to keep the discipline in the classroom: asking

students to not talk, to raise their hand if they wanted to talk, or to pay attention to the discussion.

**An example: what is real and not real in a story.** The following P4C session that happened April 26 can be seen as a general example of the content and format of these sessions.  That day, the two dolls discussed a woman who came to tell a story and argued about what was real and not real in that story. That dialogue referred to an actual visit in the classroom two days prior, of a woman who gave a performance in which she combined poetry and dance. After the show, the students started to ask questions about what was real and not real in the story: was the alarm clock real? Was she really asleep? And so on. Annie used this interest, which was not taken up after the artist's performance on April 24, to launch the P4C session on April 26. The philosophical problem was then the puzzlement regarding the relationship between artistic creation and reality—a confusion that is not limited just to Annie's students, but that we can also experience.

The discussion then advanced in several phases. The first one was about the relationship between a fictional story and a lie: does telling a story that didn't happen count as lying? The class then agreed that there were fake stories, but that they were not lies, and that there were real stories that really happened. Afterward, the discussion moved to two TV shows, *Dolphin Tales* and *Ninjago*, and their relationship with reality. The discussion ended on how we can know which kind of TV shows are real and which ones are not real.

If the discussion didn't resolve the issue, it certainly advanced and opened the space of the issue. For instance, the concept of lying gave a new dimension to the problem by tackling the relationship between a fiction and lying: "Is fiction necessarily a lie?" and "Are there lies that are not fiction?" are some of the questions that students may have asked themselves at that point. In other words, what were the ethical dimensions of fictional stories? The discussion finished with the examples of the above TV shows and, therefore, on children and our relationship to a particular medium—more specifically, on how we can understand how real the stories told to us through this medium are. The philosophical discussion was here a short, difficult, and intense exploration of a new undetermined territory.

**The natural affinity between philosophy and Annie's educational philosophy.** As said before, the affinity between P4C and Annie's educational project was represented in their symbolic reunion in the gigantic round rug.  It is this fundamental interconnection between these two elements of her pedagogy that I will now develop. To do so, I will use the results of the previous section on Annie's educational philosophy.[31] I identified three central ideas in Annie's educational philosophy in its relationship to authority: children are not essentially different beings than adults; they should have a certain ownership over their educational experience; and a teacher's authority should be exerted through the use of reasons. P4C, envisioned also as a cluster

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[31] Section *Annie's educational philosophy in its relationship to authority* in Chapter 4.

of ideas, naturally interconnects with these same ideas. First, if we consider philosophy as something important for adults to practice, we should also consider its practice important for children: They are able to philosophize, and will gain from doing it. These are necessary presuppositions to Annie's effort to include philosophy in her classroom. Second, and related to the previous point, part of the argument for the value of the practice of philosophy for adults as well for children comes from the belief that this practice is fundamentally democratic. Hence, a philosophical community of inquiry is often presented as a democratic society because individuals in it are in an equal position to one another and, more importantly, they engage together in a communal project (Bleazby, 2006; Cevallos-Estarellas & Sigurdardottir, 2000; Lipman, 1998). In addition, the philosophical community of inquiry is rooted in the experiences, desires, and ideas of its participants; it is not a pure imposition from a superior and absolute authority. Children are not learning about philosophy—they are philosophizing together.

Lastly, yet again related to the previous points, P4C is intimately connected with the practice of rationality. P4C is fundamentally a rational dialogue in which, among other things, children discuss reasons and give reasons and counter-reasons for certain claims; the role of the teacher/facilitator of these discussions is to ensure that the procedures of rational dialogue are respected. In the sessions I observed, this was visible through the constant use by the teacher and the students of the word "because," which is the hallmark of a claim that is, at least tentatively, supported. As I pointed out before, it is fundamental to see how this idea is connected with the two previous ones. Rational thinking is not only valuable for adults, but also for children. Furthermore, the democratic

community is related to the practice of rationality, a space that is ordered through reason, not through opinion, superstition, or violence.

In sum, philosophy as a group of ideas was naturally connected with Annie's educational philosophy; they both shared a certain worldview regarding fundamental ideas about education. This larger set of fundamental ideas is related to a certain perspective on authority that I have named in this text as "shared authority": the idea that authority must not only be imposed on students, but that these elements should be included in some way in its construction and functioning. In the next section, we will see how P4C was part of the activities that Annie put in place to share authority with her students.

**Philosophy as a sharing activity.** P4C was one of the sharing activities that Annie put in place in the structure of the classroom, as the journal sharing or center time.[32] I presented these sharing activities as occasions built into the functioning of the classroom in which sharing authority was happening between the teacher and the students on different levels: students were invited to direct activities, to bring their personal agenda in the classroom, to participate in decision-making, and, for center time, to engage in the activity and with the persons of their choice. Philosophy was a similar activity to the above. From the multiple levels of sharing that could be seen in a P4C session, the most important level in my eyes was that the content of the discussion was

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[32] I have presented these activities in the third part of Chapter 4.

co-constructed between the teacher and the students.[33] Revisiting the example of the

discussion of whether a story told is real or not, a student mentioned that we should

differentiate *Dolphin Tales* from *Ninjago* because the first is real and the second is not.

As we see, this new direction of the discussion was the continuation of the first topic, that

there are stories that refer to real events and others that are imaginary. The personal

agenda of the student, in this case his interest in *Dolphin Tales* and *Ninjago*, was

channeled into a communal agenda, a discussion about the relationship between reality

and fiction. The teacher was not retracting her authority completely in the process—she

was the one choosing the larger topic of the discussion by writing the story and directing

the discussion in different ways. Therefore, none of the students nor the teacher

controlled the discussion; or, said differently, they *both* shared the direction through a

complex and fluid process of pushes and pulls, as ideas were advanced, some abandoned,

and some taken up. Therefore, philosophy was an additional element that Annie put in

place in the structure of the classroom to share her authority with the students.

**Conclusion.** At this point, because of its clear correspondence with Annie's

educational philosophy and the sharing activities, it is obvious that practice of philosophy

was part of Annie larger educational project, which I described as shared authority. It was

an additional element to reinforce the democratic agenda of the classroom. This is why I

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[33] Other levels of sharing were, for example, that the story was based on the interests
of the students, that sometimes a student was put in the position to call on which students
would speak and that students would sometimes agree on a question to discuss. Although all
of this was true, it appeared to me as secondary to the point I'm now discussing.

believe that Annie told me in an interview that she already believed in P4C when she first encountered it: "Well, it's almost the other way around, you know; I saw philosophy, and this is the way I do things anyway. It is the other way around. Like when I went up to MSU and they first talked about bringing it to our school. [When] I saw it once, I was like, 'I'm doing that, because I felt I always did that.' " (Interview May 7) By saying it is "the other way around," Annie meant that she already had a certain approach to education that was similar to P4C, that she didn't learn this approach from P4C. Hence, we can see how P4C easily blended with pedagogy based on the idea of shared authority.

**The Special Role of Practice of Philosophy in the Authoritative Structure of Kindergarten Room 7**

My contention is that P4C was not only a continuation of Annie's pedagogy, but also a transformation and, to some point, a radicalization of her democratic project. Hence, in this part we will see how the practice of philosophy brought a democratic dimension to the classroom that would not have been there otherwise. Noteworthy, the democratic symbol of the rug became mostly if not only realized in the classroom in P4C sessions. If the rug was used for different activities, students would most of the time sit in the middle of the circle and not on its perimeter. Furthermore, it appeared to me that only in a philosophy session were children seated on the perimeter *and* engaged in a communal construction of meaning. In the following sections, I will analyze how the exercise of authority in Kindergarten Room 7 changed in P4C sessions from what has been presented up to that point.

**How P4C was different than other sharing activities.** Philosophy was, as I said previously, a "sharing" activity, but it had a special nature in comparison to the other sharing activities. In center time, children were free to engage in the activity and with whom they wanted. In philosophy, children were obliged to sit together, but still in a different manner than in rug sharing or journal sharing. If their personal experiences were part of the philosophical discussions, they were not the beginning and the end of the discussion like in the rug sharing, which would revolve entirely around a specific experience of a child. In P4C, the experience of a child was part of the larger project of the discussion with the experiences of other children and other elements, like ideas and beliefs. In the previous example, the student who shared his experience of watching *Dolphin Tales* and *Ninjago* was not valuable in itself, but his personal story aimed to make the point that there was a distinction between two kinds of TV shows, which in turn was part of the discussion that day on the different relationship of the reality of stories that were told.

Philosophy was, like other sharing activities, a project that was not completely defined by the teacher but in which students played an essential part in its proceeding. The philosophical sessions were different, however, because of the space and time in which they took place—a space that we have just started to define. In philosophical discussions, personal experiences were part of something larger than themselves: the subject of the discussion, which was common to all of them.  Hence, the problem discussed in the example above was not peculiar to one student, but to all the students and, to some point, to all individuals: how we can make sense of the paradoxical

relationship of an aesthetic performance with reality when we all have experienced the strange feeling that sometimes fiction appears more real than reality. Before continuing to discuss the particularity of the philosophical space, I will first analyze the particular temporal dimension of the philosophical sessions.

**The time of philosophy.** The philosophy sessions created a certain rupture in the flow of the classroom. They indeed seemed to me to happen in a different temporality than the other activities. Philosophy was an obligational pause in the rhythm of the class where students were at some point forced to stay with a problem and to think about it. This elicited a certain reaction from the students who appeared annoyed and restless throughout the P4C sessions. However, the slow pace and often redundant nature of philosophical discussions was also the time of the common: an obligation to enter *but also to stay* in a space where all belong. Without such an obligation, everyone would have quickly abandoned this space to return to their multiple individual worlds.

As much as Annie connected P4C to her students' experiences—they were based on an issue that the class had been presented with and that issue was presented to students in a little show with puppets—her authority was then more apparent, as it insisted the students sit, literally and abstractly, with an issue. In sum, the class could only enter in the special temporal dimension through the teacher's imposition of her authority. Behind the encounter between the teacher and the students was the teacher's authority, which forced this encounter to happen. If authority was shared in the discussion to a certain extent, as the teacher and students worked together to construct the discussion in which

they were engaged, the discussion emerged from the teacher's act. We arrive here to a paradoxical conclusion: *students in Kindergarten Room 7 were forced to share authority*. If this could be seen from all events in the classrooms, it became more obvious in P4C.

The action of the teacher was not consumed in the source of the philosophical discussions; rather, she had to vigilantly continue to keep children in the philosophical space. The same misbehaviors and disciplinary problems that I described before were present in P4C sessions: some students would call out, others would not pay attention to the conversation, some would speak without raising their hands, others would play with their friends, etc.[34] All of this forced Annie to constantly intervene to keep the discussion going.

However, the students always had the last word, as the escalation of their disruptions would force the discussion to end. The omnipotence of the teacher's authority necessary for the discussion was not all-encompassing and required a certain degree of cooperation from the students. The time for philosophy that had no clear limits was at the end circumscribed to about twenty minutes in the classroom, which is a fairly long period of focus for kindergarteners.

**Philosophy: a space that shouldn't be closed.** The time for philosophy was a time that had no definite end. The corresponding quality of the philosophical space was that the philosophical space didn't aim to be closed. The P4C discussions were inquiries

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[34] For the overview of these problems see the last section of Chapter 4.

into problems that rarely had a specific conclusion, and when they reached a conclusion, new problems would emerge and would push the discussion in new directions. The discussion presented in this chapter of what is real and not real in a story did not aim to reach a definitive conclusion. It is an assumption of philosophical inquiry that there are different answers to this problem and we are not sure which one is definitive. In other words, philosophical problems are usually open to debate. Finally, even if we agree tentatively on an answer to this problem, we can immediately find new problems to discuss. In our example, the discussion evolved from the relationship between a lie and a story to how people can differentiate the relationship of realities in different TV shows.

Therefore, this space is in a special relationship with authority. In other domains of knowledge present in school, there are certain answers or, at least, most of the time a lot of answers are presented as certain: one plus one equals two, the word "apple" has two P's, the solar system is composed of one star, etc. These are some examples of answers that are *not* open for discussion. The natural structure of schooling is to transmit authoritatively what is considered as legitimate and valid knowledge.

Philosophy cannot be authoritatively transmitted in the same way. Rather, it exists in the absence of such answers and, consequently, is in a different relationship to authority. As I have presented, the teacher had authority during the philosophy session: she decided what would be discussed, influenced the direction of the discussion, and ensured that some rational procedures were respected. But her authority had one particular aspect: that it had to not give an answer to the problem proposed but instead

constantly intervene to ensure that the space for inquiry remained open. Ultimately, teacher's authority in a philosophy session had the paradoxical role of creating a space in which philosophical inquiry was possible, but at the same time to restrain and exercise her authority so the space of inquiry was not foreclosed into an answer.

**Beyond a political understanding of democracy.** Westheimer and Kahne (2004) in their article, "What kind of citizen? The politics of educating for democracy", reject character education as a democratic form of education; they point out that the inculcation of certain values in children, such as honesty or courage, could be envisioned in a society that is not democratic. They therefore limit the scope of their research to two distinct forms of democratic education: participatory and justice oriented (p. 238). Participatory democratic education aims to help students resolve public issues, whereas justice oriented democratic education seeks to bring students to understand the social causes of public issues. They give the example of a food drive to illustrate the difference between the two approaches: the participatory education program would help students organize a food drive, whereas the justice oriented program would encourage the students ask why there are people who lack food in the first place.[35] Westheimer and Kahne don't conclude their text by saying that one of these two approaches to democratic education is better than the other, but rather indicate that they are both important for a complete democratic education.

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[35] In this example, the character education program would aim to make students to bring food in the food drive.

The interesting point is that philosophy in Kindergarten Room 7 as it has been presented in this part does not fit into this schema. On one hand, philosophy did not appear to me to be leading to decision-making that would transform reality. On the other hand, although philosophy may have raised issues around power and injustice, it was not necessarily linked to them. Hence, the example of the relationship between aesthetics and reality do not fit in the categories defined by Westheimer and Kahne. Although philosophy sessions did not necessarily lead children to transform reality or to question injustices, they were nevertheless certainly democratic and political: they forced the students to inhabit their world together. The philosophical space was in that sense a political space without leading to a political action or political interrogation per se. It was a space behind or below our usual understanding of politics: a space constituted of the concepts that structured students' experiences, but that would have most likely remained hidden without the philosophical discussions. In the case of the woman's performance, the students had the intuition of that dimension as they started interrogating her on the reality of her presentation, but they did not at that point understand that the issue they were dealing with was philosophical. Hence, they did not know that beyond the issue of the particular performance that day was a larger issue about the nature of the relationship between art and reality. This philosophical dimension of the classroom, and even of students' lives, became very philosophical as the teacher told the students to reflect on this relationship and to not abandon this reflection. It is in the P4C session that what had only been first alluded to after the performance became visible to everyone. The

philosophical space embedded in the reality emerged for a moment in the philosophical session before receding into the social background.

Democracy is too often defined through a simplistic political vision. This tends to obscure the social dimensions of a democratic culture that are not directly political.[36] This section reminds us that democracy can also mean a more fundamental shared experience. In Kindergarten Room 7, the philosophical dimension of the classroom life was not left in the shadows, but brought into the collective consciousness. Here, like in many places in the text, it was the teacher who ensured the communal experience of that space. Indeed, the origin of the philosophical discussion was found in Annie's sensitivity to the philosophical dimension of the classroom. For example, she was the one who grasped that the discussion after the woman's performance had a philosophical dimension and decided to incorporate it into the philosophy session that week. The democratic space of philosophy sessions in Kindergarten Room 7 came from Annie's desire to share her awareness of that dimension with her students; in other words, from her democratic practice inside the classroom and her desire to create a space for students to practice this form of democracy – questioning together, listening and building on each other, agreeing and disagreeing.

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[36] Tocqueville's second book of *Democracy in America* (1840/2003) is a classical example of how democracy should be understood as a much larger social phenomenon rather than being reduced to its political dimension. In education, the classical example is certainly Dewey's *Democracy and Education* (1916), in which democracy doesn't mean a political action but a special kind of social interrelationship.

**Philosophy, democracy, and rationality.** The philosophical space had another characteristic that made it unique in the classroom culture: it was defined through rationality. P4C sessions were the moment par excellence of rational dialogue. We have to differentiate the use of a reason to justify an act, which I presented as one of the central ideas of Annie's practice of shared authority, from the area of philosophy where students were invited to reason together.

The fact that one of the hallmarks of the P4C sessions was that the teacher and the students constantly used the word "because" was a clear sign of its rational dimension. Annie was constantly asking her students "Because?" and "Why?" during the philosophical discussions, therefore prompting students to support their opinions rather than merely expressing them. The students themselves integrated this aspect as they used "because" in their remarks. Therefore, the philosophical dialogue was a space in which statements tended to incorporate a reason.

Although valuable in itself as a desired habit of mind, the assertion of including a "because" is problematic: it is evident that the use of that word was not enough to transform a student's assertion into a supported judgment. Hence, an assertion is not true only if it is constituted of a "because"; there must be a way to distinguish a good reason from a bad reason. Without entering into a debate about informal logic, here is how I saw that the statements were evaluated in P4C sessions. First, students' assertions were evaluated by their peers. The first hallmark of a P4C discussion that I have just described, the use of "because," was completed by a second hallmark of these discussions, the use

of "I agree" or "I disagree." Indeed, the philosophical dialogues were constituted as much

by students noticing with whom they agreed and with whom they disagreed as by their

use of "because." Likewise, Annie asked many students if they agreed or disagreed with a

student's statement, then asked them to support their thoughts. The "agree or disagree"

comments were the explicit sign of the social aspect of rationality in P4C sessions. The

reason became a reason as it was taken up, rejected, or completed by other students.

Truth, validity, and good reasons were a shared production. Rationality was therefore

happening in a democratic process.

The second evaluation I observed of students' reasons came from the teacher. In

P4C the teacher not only imposed a space in which rationality was compelled but also

participated in the evaluation of students' reasons. Hence, Annie was the special

interlocutor of the students as they were always in some way speaking to her, even when

they were commenting on someone else's idea. Students' comments were physically and

intentionally directed to the teacher—they faced her and spoke to her. The key element

here is that the teacher was also an evaluator of students' reasons; she would herself

make a judgment about the reasons stated and was therefore herself a check to students'

reasons. The teacher had the central role as the hub of the discussion. If she didn't

impose reasons, she imposed the *use* of reasons and helped evaluate them.

**Conclusion.** At the beginning of this part, I claimed that the ideal of the round rug

was mostly if not only realized in P4C sessions. We can now better understand how P4C

transformed the authoritative functioning of the classroom. It seemed to me that all the

sections of this part report on a double movement regarding authority. In one dimension, the authority of the teacher appeared to me to be more present or visible in the philosophy session. It has become evident for me that the special space and time for the philosophy sessions was made possible through the teacher's authoritative action and, furthermore, that this special space and time continued to exist through that action.

The teacher's authority was constituted by a second dimension in the special space and time of P4C. Hence, in this space, the teacher's authority had to contain itself to not close the inquiry and to keep the inquiry going. The teacher became a co-participant—although one with a special role—with the students in evaluating the reasons advanced. If the subject and the action of philosophical inquiry were not necessarily political, its domain was in some way deeper than our usual understanding of politics as a pre-political domain: the primary concepts that structured students' experiences. The role of the teacher was to bring this domain to question but not to resolve it for the students.

Therefore, if in the primary dimension the teacher imposed her authority, in the second dimension she restricted it. These two dimensions appeared to me simultaneous and inseparable.

**Philosophy, Authority, Morality, and Ethics**

In the first chapter of the data analysis, I began to analyze the complex relationship between authority and morality in Annie's classroom. I then studied how the relationship between these two concepts differed in a few school-wide events from the

daily functioning of the classroom. I have developed the relationship between morality and authority in the school through the study of the emergency events and the school assembly. Although these events were specific moments in time, they represented an essential aspect of schooling: through them, the immense, absolute, and complete authority of the school ordered the students' behavior, what to believe, and who to follow. Morality and authority appeared in the same moment and act, and through the same logic of imposition had its source beyond individual judgment, beyond the classroom, and almost beyond the school, which transmitted to the members of the institution a definite moral code and that legitimized the authorities inside the school. In contrast, the classroom presented the picture of a culture based on a different vision of the relationship between morality and authority: that authority should not organize all aspects of students' lives and that it should design spaces where students could shape or transform their own lives. Where the logic of the school was one of imposition, the logic of the classroom was one of a relationship built over time. [37]

I will now develop how philosophy affected this relationship between authority and morality in the classroom. From the outset we can say that P4C had a special connection with morality, because it is a natural topic of philosophical inquiry. My contention is that the particular effects of philosophy in the authoritative functioning of the classroom may not appear more clearly than its interconnection with morality. I have

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[37] See part *The Moral Order of the Classroom in its Relationship with the Moral Order of the School* in Chapter 4.

divided my analysis of morality into two categories: morality and ethics. By "morality" I refer to the domain of how an individual should relate to others. By ethics I refer to the way that that one individual relates to oneself, of how someone tries to live the good life. This distinction between morality and ethics is not complete: the way we relate to others may affect how we envision ourselves, and, in turn, how we construct who we are has implications on how we conduct ourselves with others. However, these two dimensions of morality have appeared to me distinct enough to be treated separately.

The practice of philosophy in Kindergarten Room 7 not only tended to be in a moral domain broadly construed, but also—and more importantly—to engage with this domain in a radically different authoritative manner than what has been analyzed up to this point. Indeed, although in the first chapter of the data analysis I have contrasted the relationship between authority and morality in the classroom from its relationship in the school, the contrast with philosophy now permits us to seize how in these two sites there was a certain imposition of an order that indicated to students how they should behave and whom they should obey. The practice of philosophy in Kindergarten Room 7 interrupted this logic to a certain extent and truly opened a new space regarding authority and morality: hence, in a philosophical discussion, morality cannot be received authoritatively or, said differently, morality in P4C is by principle opened to inquiry.

**Philosophy and morality: how to relate to others.** Mountain View school had a definite and overt character education program. This program was characterized by the aim of developing in children a certain set of values and behaviors. Most of these values

were about how children should learn to behave with one another. One of these values was, for example, "caring," which is a general idea about how one should interact with others. A philosophical inquiry would naturally take a different path into moral education in which values would be interrogated rather than received authoritatively.

One clear example of this can be found in the second philosophy session I attended in Annie's classroom, on May 3. The story of Sophie and Philo that day was about how a crayfish was killed by several other crayfish when it was put in a tank, along with the reasons animals fight. This story was again coming from the life of the classroom, as Sophie and Philo appeared to refer to an event that the students witnessed that week. They discussed the reasons that humans fight and whether there were good reasons for fighting. This is a perfect example to see how the philosophical space was qualitatively different between the school and the classroom in regard to morality and authority. If there was one sacred rule in the school and in the classroom, it was to not fight with anyone under any circumstances. Although there may be some hypothetical circumstances in which it would legitimately be allowed for a student to fight, the rule was that you *must* not fight in school or in the classroom. During my observations, any physical aggression between students led to the aggressor being automatically sent to the principal's office with the additional threat of being sent home. In contrast to the philosophical discussion of May 3, this sacred rule of schooling was put in question: was there a circumstance in which fighting was not *immoral*? This was a radical shift from how the school framed this issue as an unquestionable law: you cannot fight; fighting is fundamentally bad.

Furthermore, by opening the question of the legitimacy of fighting, the philosophical discussion of May 3 opened at the same time the complexity of that issue, such as exploring the different significance of fighting and students' own experience of fighting. Thus, the student who gave an example of him having a pillow fight with his cousin problematized the simple equation that fighting was bad, although even this kind of fighting was forbidden in school.[38] In a philosophical dialogue, morality was not crystallized in an answer; although it may not be the end of the dialogue, it must be its point of departure. In school, but also in the classroom, there were answers about morality: you should do this and not that; you were expected to behave this way and not that way; these acts are allowed and these forbidden. Where schooling naturally created a moral code that was definite and clear, philosophy undermined this order and revealed its complex dimensions.

However, if the content of philosophy in regard to morality was open to discussion, its form was more traditionally authoritative. Students were expected to be seated, to be quiet, and to listen to others speak. They were expected to say certain things in a certain way, such as raising their hands before they spoke and backing up their statements with reasons. They were not allowed to physically hit each other during the discussion, nor hurt each other's feelings. Thus, if students could discuss the possibility and legitimacy of fighting, all forms of physical fighting were rejected in the process of

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[38] I personally remember being stopped from engaging in a similar kind of fight in the snow with other students when I was in first grade.

the discussion itself. Some of these rules were enunciated clearly, as when someone could speak, but others were generally understood without being enunciated, like the interdiction of fighting during the sessions. Thus, the content of philosophy, the open-ended inquiry on virtually any subject, required an authoritative order that was dogmatic.

It is unclear to me how the practice of philosophy affected the morality of the students and their behaviors: whether the non-imposition in the philosophical discussion of desired values in school actually induced children to adopt them or, on the contrary, if the experience of the possibility to question all values led students to see them all as uncertain. What I can say in turn is that the philosophical space stood apart in the moral order of the school and of the classroom, as philosophy suspended the natural logic of moral imposition. Philosophy can then be seen as a subverting seed put inside the moral order of the school and of the classroom.

Morality is a central element in the culture of the group: moral concepts establish what can be done and not done, moral reasons justify rules, and moral beliefs give sense to a specific culture. Philosophy had the double particularity of, first, having the possibility of being directly situated in the moral dimension of the classroom life and, second, engaging this dimension in a special authoritative manner of opening this space to inquiry rather than trying to transmit a definite moral code.

**Philosophy and ethics: how to relate to oneself.** The moral dimension of a group is usually understood as how individuals should relate to each other, which was the topic of the last section. However, morality has also been used differently in the history

of philosophy: how we relate to ourselves. As Hadot (2002a) noticed justly, Socrates is a philosopher not only because of what he said, but also because of how he lived. This is why Hadot defines philosophy as a way of living, a path in transformation of oneself. When Montaigne, for example, thinks about death, he is trying to change his relationship to it and, even, its whole being: to stop being afraid of death, to be ready when it would come, but also to remember that his life has an end and to live accordingly to that fact (Montaigne, 1595/1992, Book 1, Chapter 20). Thus, Montaigne's philosophical act in that particular case was an act firstly directed on himself, on shaping his own being.

This aspect of philosophy, which I considered in the large category of morality and that I name "ethics" for the purpose of this text, appeared to me as an important component of how philosophy was practiced in Kindergarten Room 7. The best example of this happened in the philosophy session that I was able to catch outside of the Thursday morning sessions. I'm not sure what prompted the discussion, but here is how it unfolded. Annie first asked her students who they would like to be and why. Here are few of the answers: Laura would like to be Nick because his father lets him watch TV on the weekend; Oliver would like to be Chris, because he has all the Ninjagos; Katherine would like to be her little sister because she gets out of school earlier; and the list went on. Annie was writing the reasons on the board. We already see that the discussion was related to the construction of the students' selves, in their desires and dreams, at the same time that it was related to the practice of rationality, the reasons that the students had to be someone else.

The most interesting point however is how the discussion progressed. First, Annie entered the discussion by saying she would like to be the wife of Bruce Springsteen. My belief is that Bruce Springsteen was not a new topic in the class, that Annie had shared in the past her adulation for him. At this point, there is nothing special, but what she added at the end of the discussion was I believe quite astonishing. She asked the students what would happen if their dreams were realized and pursued this by saying that maybe she would not be happier as Bruce Springsteen's wife. "Yeah, what about if God realizes your wishes? [Here we are passing from a descriptive inquiry to a prescriptive inquiry] Like maybe I will not like being the wife of Bruce Springsteen, I will tell him: 'Will you stop playing this guitar?" (May 18 field notes). In sum, she asked the students if it was possible that their dreams, as her dream, were irrational and that their magical realization would in fact not lead them to be happier.

The discussion entered partially in the schema of P4C— a discussion to explore individuals' reasons to become someone else—, but it was certainly eminently philosophical: Annie then invited the students into a certain experience of the self. This experience was created in two ways: first, the students acknowledged their desire and, second, pondered on if their desire was reasonable or not. It is an experience that we can relate to: we may have some secret hope that we would have the life of someone else, but, at the same time, we can understand that our desire may be unreasonable. Indeed, we have no way to know if our desire is right, if its accomplishment would be good for us, or, more importantly, whether this kind of desire hinders us in appreciating what we have. Furthermore, if our wish were fulfilled, it is probable that we would just start

hoping again to be someone else, never achieving a state where we would be content. At the end, the only life we live is the one we have.

This is the kind of exercise I label as ethical: an inquiry about the *good* life. It is therefore entering into the same educational subject matter as what the clown at the school assembly was imparting by telling the students what they should believe and what they should do to live the good life. If the subject is similar, there is, however, a major difference between the school assembly and the philosophy ethical education as presented in this section. Annie's philosophical experience didn't really tell the students how to live and what to believe; she created a situation in which a certain problem was unveiled, but she didn't resolve that problem. Indeed, she did not conclude the activity by saying, "Stop hoping to be someone else!" but she let the students make up their own minds on the topic. In that sense, as in the previous section, authority was significantly different in the philosophical space than what has been presented up to now.

**Conclusion.** The practice of philosophy in Kindergarten Room 7 presented the particularity of engaging with the moral and ethical issues and, at the same time, engaging students with these issues in a very different authoritative manner than what could be seen in the school and in the classroom: in philosophy both of these dimensions were radically opened to students' inquiry. It is the conjunction of these two elements—that philosophy spontaneously situated students' learning into the moral territory *and* that authority in this process was suspended regarding the end of the moral inquiry—that made philosophy the most complete form of sharing authority in Kindergarten Room 7.

In the previous part, I presented philosophy through the example of the interrogation of the reality of the artistic creation as taking place in a pre-political or sub-political dimension. Now we can see how philosophy also was eminently political by making the students engage in the most fundamental concepts that structure their group culture as well as their personal lives.

## The Various Dimensions of the Practice of Philosophy in its Relationship to Authority in Kindergarten Room 7

Up until now, in this chapter we have analyzed different aspects of the practice of philosophy in Kindergarten Room 7. We have first seen how P4C was naturally linked to Annie's practice of shared authority and, in the second part, how it transformed the exercise of authority in the classroom. The third part concentrated on one aspect of this transformation, what I have put under the large umbrella of "morality." At this point, philosophy appears to us mainly as something positive, or at least as something that did not have any negative dimensions. In this part I will focus on analyzing its murkier aspects and the problems related to the practice of philosophy.

**Oliver: the dual facets of a gang member's participation in P4C.** The official agenda of a philosophy session was structured around one main idea: the discussion was oriented toward a topic and students had to relate their interventions to this topic. This did not preclude students from introducing aspects of their personal lives into the discussion, as if they had to make abstractions of their selves to participate in the conversation: the topic was indeed related to students' lives, and their personal experiences were an

essential part of the discussion. However, there were also certain expectations about how students' personal lives should be integrated into the philosophical dialogue. In sum, a philosophical dialogue was naturally opposed to the gang's agenda and rejected it.

Of all the members of the gang, Oliver was the most actively engaged during the philosophy sessions. Oliver was in his element in the P4C sessions. He often appeared interested in the topic, he intervened in the discussion, and his interventions were insightful and pertinent. He spoke in a clear, articulate, strong voice that stood out from other children's interventions. Here is how Annie talked with me about Oliver in philosophy in our second interview:

> Me: Oliver, on the other hand, seems to be pretty…
>
> Annie: Oliver is great [at philosophy]!
>
> Me: I saw, I mean…
>
> Annie: No, Oliver is great at it! That is almost his biggest strength.

There was certainly something in philosophy that attracted Oliver to it. I want to propose that there was a link between Oliver's interest in philosophy and his membership in the gang. Hence, I think that my encounter with philosophy, although it happened when I was much older, was similar in its nature to what Oliver experienced at his young age. I do believe that there was something in my first interest in philosophy that was related to my interest in challenging authority.[39] I then experienced philosophy as a way to question

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[39] My relationship to authority was presented in the last part of the last chapter.

the most important concepts of my life and of my society. Through philosophy, all the authorities that surrounded me were called into question. Philosophy was then, for me, a new territory to exert my interest in playing with authority and probably the most radical one I had experienced until then. Instead of challenging the authority of the teacher, I could then pursue a similar activity in a more abstract, yet as real dimension. Oliver's case—and my own—may therefore suggest that the gang's agenda partly mixed with the official agenda of P4C.

However, some of Oliver's other interventions were of a different nature: they did not really aim to participate in the communal construction of meaning, but rather took their meaning from the gang's agenda. There were at least two of these interventions that I was able to capture. The first one happened in a discussion around what was philosophy. The first performance came from Collin: as the students were discussing if they liked philosophy, Collin answered theatrically that he didn't like philosophy because they only "talk, talk, talk, and talk!" Although Oliver didn't start this performance, he certainly found it valuable as he restaged it by saying almost the same thing in the same manner, before Annie stopped him by telling him that he was only repeating what Collin said and was not expressing his own opinion. I'm doubtful that Oliver didn't like philosophy at all, but in that circumstance he decided to copy Collin's performance, a performance that was by its content and its form in the gang's territory of challenges to authority.

A second similar event happened June 14. That day Annie didn't start philosophy with a dialogue between the two puppets, but instead with a story in a book in which an ant tried to convince a little boy to not squish her. This story brought in the moral kind of discussions that I have discussed in the previous part, although this time the subject was not about the relationship between humans—how should we treat each other—but about the relationship between humans and animals—how should we treat animals. The dialogue evolved following the story in which each page added a new dimension in the issue discussed. Annie at the end asked who would squish the ant and who wouldn't. Most of the class answered that they wouldn't squish it, but a few answered they would and Oliver was one of them. Annie asked him why he would squish the ant, and Oliver replied, "It will be cool." I do not think Oliver was sincere in his response, that he really thought he would be cool to squish an ant, but I'm sure he thought that his answer was cool, because it was certainly a challenge to our sense of morality and, by the same token, a challenge to an indefinite form of authority—indeed, here Oliver is not specifically challenging Annie's authority, but daring to say something that shouldn't be said. Here, as in the previous example, the agenda of the gang was colliding with the official agenda of P4C.

P4C and the community of philosophical inquiry are often described as pure models in which everyone participates honestly, rationally, and genuinely (e.g. Sharp, 1993). I do believe that this aspect of P4C was observable in Kindergarten Room 7. Indeed, the philosophy sessions were without any doubt stand out in the flow of classroom life as the moment in which philosophy was the best realized. It is not that

philosophy didn't happen anywhere else during the class, but the Thursday morning sessions were the moment par excellence to observe it. That said, Oliver's case shows us that there were often multiple agendas at play in a community of philosophical inquiry. Although Oliver often participated—brilliantly, we can say— in the official agenda of P4C, he also sometimes played in another dimension: the dimension of the gang; which brought a different kind of struggle about authority in the philosophy session.

**Philosophy aims to teach children to question authority.** In the previous section I advanced that Oliver's participation in the gang agenda brought him to do two kinds of interventions in P4C: on one hand, Oliver was shining during philosophy sessions, as if he were in his element, but Oliver also tried, at least two times, to undermine the philosophical discussions. Noteworthy, his two kinds of interventions were stemming from the same source: his general interest in challenging authority. Oliver was therefore perhaps one of the students who understood the best what philosophy was about: that the goal of philosophy was to teach children to question adults' authority.

As I asked Annie why she believed in the value of practicing philosophy, she answered that for her one of its paramount characteristics was that it led children to be critical of adults' authority.

Me: Why do you find it important to do philosophy?

Annie: Because it affects everything else. And even if doesn't affect them this year, I have seen my students later, sometimes, and I know it affects them later. I know it affects the way they talk at home; I know that they stop, maybe they don't

like it, but they stop thinking of adults as the ultimate authority on everything. Because sometimes, I go, "Go home and ask your parents what this means—they won't know." I think it is good for them to stop thinking of grownups as the ultimate authority on everything. I think that teaches them to trust themselves and what they think. The only [thing], what bothers me most, is that, I will do it this year, but some of them won't do it next year. So then it dies anyway. So that kinds of bother me. Like, you think you can change their lives in one year, but you can't. You can give memories and stuff. You can't change it unless it is ongoing. And it is usually not. That's kind of annoying. Or even like, you know, I can spend a whole year respecting their opinions and letting them express themselves. And they can go to the classroom next year, where it is just like, sit down, I told you this… And I just go, what is the use of that? You know what I mean? (Interview May 7).

In this quote, Annie placed philosophy as the nexus of the functioning of authority in the classroom. She stated here that she believed in the value of philosophy because it taught children to not see adults as an ultimate authority. Hence, the presupposition of philosophical inquiry was the possibility for children to question what they first received authoritatively and, simultaneously, that permitted the children to think for themselves. Therefore, questioning authority and thinking by oneself were two faces of the same coin. Thus, for Annie, one of the fundamental aspects of philosophy was to teach children to question authority—or, on the other side of the same idea, to think for themselves.

The last quote also points out that philosophy was, for this reason, at the center of Annie's educational goals. For Annie, the good classroom was not the well-ordered one in which children are seated quietly and are obedient, but the classroom in which students were active and expressing their opinion, which also implied that children were not always looking for an authority to tell them what to do, but in which they also had the capacity to challenge their teacher's authority. In philosophy, they were certainly invited to voice their opinion and to question their received ideas.

Oliver, therefore, was perhaps one of the students who better integrated this aspect of philosophy, but he also showed us the double consequences of that practice. On one hand, Oliver was an excellent participant in philosophical discussion, someone whom we could count on to advance the discussion, and we enjoyed hearing him talk. On the other hand, some of his other interventions and, more important, his participation in the gang exposed the problematic goal of using philosophy to teach children to criticize authority. In sum, the gang didn't need more encouragement in criticizing authority, but rather they did need encouragement to be more respectful of it.

We are left to wonder if there is a way to have the positive aspect of philosophy without its negative ones. Philosophy and the gang were maybe just revealing more clearly to us this contradiction inherent to the pedagogy of shared authority: we want students to question authority, but at the same time we want them to be respectful of authority.

**The contradiction of the practice of philosophy in regard to authority.** This

contradiction between philosophy and authority found its best expression, curiously, on the last day of class. The school year ended June 21, which was a Thursday and, consequently, a day where P4C usually happened. Annie mentioned me that she didn't know what to talk about for the last session of philosophy, but a subject emerged by itself from the life of the classroom, which I believe especially exhibited the contradiction between philosophy and the issue of authority in Kindergarten Room 7.

> The philosophical discussion was prompted by Annie's intervention:
>
> You know what happens. I give you instructions, and a lot of you are ignoring me. The first day, I thought that it was because you were five. I asked you to pick up books. We got better in Math, in reading, but not in listening. I will put it in the newsletter. There are good reasons why people make rules.

There was some anger and exasperation in her tone that I believe I had never heard before. It has been puzzling for me that Annie waited so long before making such a move. Here Annie was stating with force that she was the authority and the students were supposed to obey her. However, this strong authoritative act had a special proceeding.

Annie indeed used this event to prompt the philosophical discussion of that day. She first asked the students to name good rules and bad rules and to explain why they judge them that way. From an authoritative act about the teacher position and authority, we moved to an open-ended inquiry. Annie drew a table on the board with three columns for different kinds of value judgment possible on the rules: rules that students were not sure if they were bad or good; rules that they considered bad; and rules that they

considered good. It was my understanding that we had then entered into the P4C portion of the day. The subject entered in the large category of philosophical moral inquiry, but with the particularity this time of being a direct and clear political inquiry by inviting students to judge the rules that they experienced.

Here are the other elements that made me see this inquiry as philosophical and moral: first, the inquiry was not in the description of different existing rules, but in students' judgment of them as good or bad. Second, this inquiry did not start or end with a particular answer about rules; it was instead an exploration of a field with no definite frontiers. Third, the invitation to students was not to say which rules they liked and which rules they didn't like, but to give their reason why they think a rule was good or why a rule was bad and, also, to discuss each other reason and example.

Here was one example of the content of that inquiry. Some students advanced that the rules that forbade kindergarteners to play a game is bad, as are the rules that older students create to keep them away, because this is unfair. Other students however said that there may have been a reason for forbidding kindergarteners to play certain games: because they may be dangerous for them. Therefore, in this short excerpt of discussion, we can see two kinds of criteria that students may have used to judge a rule: is a rule fair, and is a rule required for children's safety.

My point here is to underline the strange and peculiar connection between this P4C session and what preceded it. At the beginning was Annie's authoritative act to tell her students to respect her authority, to obey her, and to follow the rules she gave them.

The philosophical discussion operated in a completely different authoritative dimension. In it rules were no longer imposed, but opened to students' questions and judgments. Did Annie here, like me, believe that—through rational discussion—students would understand the goodness of the rules that directed their lives and submit to them more willingly? In other words, that the rational discussion would establish what is right and wrong?

Although I'm not sure if rational dialogue can ultimately establish what is right and wrong and have the force to bend personal judgment, it is not my main reason to be perplexed by this method. My worry comes from the interconnection between the philosophical dimension and the order of schooling. The notes that I have used in a previous part of this chapter[40] showed how the classroom required the strong authority of the teacher before inviting the children to question the authority that surrounded them, as if these two aspects of the classroom life ultimately revealed their inherent unity (or perhaps tension) in the same moment. Annie could tell her students, "In first grade, there will be many rules you will have to respect; practice it in the summer to listen; you are not little anymore…" (June 21) and at the same time invited them to judge rules.

**Conclusion.** The goal of this part was to present the more problematic dimension of the practice of philosophy in Kindergarten Room 7, which can be summarized in the tension it seemed to create between questioning authority and imposing authority. Oliver

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[40] Part *The Special Role of Practice of Philosophy in the Authoritative Structure of Kindergarten Room 7.*

showed the dual facets of this problematic scenario: on one hand, most of his interventions were brilliant in philosophy, but, on the other hand, others were rather aiming to play in the gang's territory. My claim is that his two types of interventions were in fact coming from the same impulse—that they were indeed two expressions of his interest in playing with authority.

I then proposed that Oliver was actually successfully practicing one of Annie's educational goals in integrating philosophy in her classroom: she saw philosophy as an activity in which students learn to criticize authority and that would help them to learn by themselves. This is the tension between philosophy and authority, of which Oliver was a paradigmatic example: how is it possible to impose authority at the same time that we invite students to criticize authority?

This contradiction between imposing authority and inviting students to criticize authority was unveiled unexpectedly on the last day of class, when Annie told the students to be obedient and to listen to her and, shortly after, started a philosophical discussion on students' judgment of rules and, therefore, on the possibility for them to criticize rules that adults or others give them.

The contradiction in a shared authority classroom between imposing authority on children and then at the same inviting them to confront authority was revealed the most clearly in my study of the philosophy sessions, of which this moment was the epitome. This apparent contradiction certainly found a solution in Kindergarten Room 7, as it

found a solution in our daily life, but it remains undetermined how these two aspects may be better united theoretically and practically in a classroom.

**Conclusion**

The goal of this chapter was to analyze the role of the practice of philosophy in the exercise of shared authority in Kindergarten Room 7. In the first part, we saw how P4C was naturally linked to Annie's pedagogical philosophy—how it was connected to her ideas about children, ownership, and rationality—and also how P4C was another sharing activity, as the rug sharing for example, that she put in place in the structure of the classroom. In the second part, I started to explore how philosophy was different than other sharing activities; how philosophy had significant and special time and space qualities, which were defined through their relationship to authority. I then claimed that the classroom only entered and stayed in the space-time of philosophy through the authoritative action of the teacher. However, if the teacher had to impose her authority to generate the philosophical discussions, inside the discussions she had r to restrain her authority to not close the open-ended inquiry. Furthermore, I presented the object of philosophical inquiry as democratic, not because it aimed necessarily to transform reality or to question injustices, but because it took up students' communal and fundamental experiences. These experiences were brought to collective interrogation, in which the teacher imposed the need for reasons but did not require particular reasons. Students' reasons were becoming reasons as they were reiterated or contested by their peers and, also, by their teacher.

In the third part, I continued to develop the particular object of philosophical inquiries: I then claimed that P4C sessions naturally tended to be situated in moral matters. Morality was separated into two domains: by morality I meant the reflection on how individuals should relate to each other, which I differentiate from ethics that I labeled as the reflection on how an individual relates to herself. Again, I did not see that philosophy aimed to resolve issues of morality and ethics, but rather that Annie's authority situated the students in that dimension without shutting it by telling the students what they should think on those matters. Therefore, P4C transformed—or, more precisely, interrupted—the usual logic of schooling, which instructed students how to behave and what to believe.

In the fourth and last part, I turned my attention to the more problematic issues related to the practice of philosophy in Kindergarten Room 7. I presented Oliver, one of the members of the gang, as playing in two dimensions during the P4C sessions: if his interventions were pertinent most of the time, clever, and original, some of his other interventions aimed to undermine the discussions and took place in the gang's agenda. My claim was that both dimensions of Oliver's interventions could be seen as coming from his interest in playing with authority. In that sense, Oliver could be seen as having successfully integrated one of Annie's goals in conducting P4C sessions with her students, as she stated that one of her goals with philosophy was to bring her students to question adult's authorities. This led us to examine the peculiar tension in the classroom between imposing authority on children and inviting them to criticize authority, a tension

that was especially well represented in the last philosophy session of the year—which happened to also be the last day of the school year.

In sum, through P4C the practice of shared authority changed in Kindergarten Room 7. First, it became obvious that the teacher had to impose her authority to bring the classroom to the space-time of philosophy. If this strong authority was required in other sharing moments, it was most evident in the philosophy sessions.

Second, the object of authority was certainly different in P4C. Therefore, the strong authoritative act of the teacher in the creation of philosophy session had as a consequence a change in the objective of knowledge. Whether through questioning the fundamental relationship between aesthetics and reality or through the different interrogations on morality and ethics, the philosophical inquiries took place in a special domain. If this domain were an essential part of the classroom culture, it was almost always in the background and came to light for a moment through the P4C sessions, before slipping back into the group's daily life. Philosophy was not about making decisions or transforming reality, but rather engaging with this underlying reality.

Third, the role of philosophy was not to close this domain by telling the students what they should believe, but rather to always intervene to keep that domain open. Thus, the imposition of the teacher's authority was at the same time a "non-imposition". The teacher imposed a subject, obligated students to stay with it for a certain period of time and to talk about in a certain manner, but the teacher also was not imposing an answer

regarding the subject discussed, or, at best, she participated with her students in the co-construction of discussions.

As such, the practice of philosophy in Kindergarten Room 7 was not anti-authoritative or against the teacher's authority; it was rather a transformation of the general idea of shared authority as it has been presented in this text. However, as we move to the final section of the paper, we then have to ponder on the problematic relationship between the practice of philosophy and the construction of authority. In sum, it appears that the qualities of the philosophical engagement as well as its domain of inquiry would be favorable to encouraging children to challenge their teacher's authority. Philosophy aims to question, where authority aims to transmit; philosophy problematizes, whereas authority orders; philosophy creates problems, whereas authority gives answers. In that sense, philosophy created a certain problem regarding the functioning of authority in Kindergarten Room 7: it radicalized the practice of shared authority and can be seen as contradictory to many of the purposes of schooling as we commonly know it.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

**A Summary of the Research Objective and of the Previous Chapters**

This research is an effort to better understand the functioning of authority in school, which has been theorized as a fundamental element of educational relationships, an under researcher area that has become increasingly problematic (Brubaker, 2012; Metz, 1978; Pace & Hemmings, 2007). My intent was to study this problematic through the study of a specific model of educational authority: the idea that authority should be shared between a teacher and her students. I also planned to study the practice of shared authority in a classroom that had integrated P4C in the classroom culture, a practice that has been theorized as fundamentally democratic in that students are invited to think for themselves and not defer to authorities (Lipman, 2003; Nussbaum, 2010; Sasseville, 2000). My goal was not to study these subjects simply from a theoretical perspective, but rather to study them as they were purposefully intertwined in a particular context. Hence, this qualitative research was based on the opportunity I had to closely study Kindergarten Room 7 in Mountain View School, where Annie was dedicated to giving to her children the experience of democracy and philosophy. By immersing myself in this site and by observing their participants I have been able to study the interconnection between the issues of educational authority, a culture based on shared authority, and the practice of philosophy with younger students.

In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, I presented my analysis of the data I collected during my stay there in light of my research objective. In Chapter 4, I gave a broad overview of how

shared authority was practiced by Annie with her students. We saw that Annie placed at the center of her classroom a gigantic round rug, a symbol of her perspective on authority and of her philosophy of education. I then showed how the idea of shared authority shaped the curriculum in a certain way, mainly by inviting the students to choose the curriculum for the school year and through the integrated curriculum, of which the animal project was an astonishing example. In the following part, I examined the different activities that Annie put in place in the structure of the daily life of the classroom to overtly involve the students in their education: giving them the opportunity to direct activities, bringing their own agenda in the classroom agenda, influencing teacher's decisions, and organizing freely during center time. In the last part of the chapter, I looked at how the idea of shared authority gave a certain form to the morality of the classroom, which stood out in comparison to some school-wide events. I ended this part and the chapter with the behavioral issues in the classroom and the failure of Annie's practice of shared authority to deal with them. All these elements taken together showed that authority was indeed shared in the Kindergarten room, how it was shared, and its general effects on the classroom culture.

In Chapter 5, I took a different perspective on the practice of shared authority by analyzing the actions and the nature of a particular group of boys, which I have called "the gang." This group of boys stood out from the flow of the classroom because of their constant disruptions. By drawing the attention of the teacher, they were also drawing my attention to them. If, in the previous chapter, I mainly examined how authority was shared from the perspective of the teacher, in this chapter I looked at how some students

took up shared authority with their teacher on their own terms. This chapter gave us therefore a different perspective than Chapter 4 on how authority was shared in Kindergarten Room 7. The effect of the gang on the classroom culture came from the nature of their group, which was to explore and to challenge authority. Hence, we saw how the gang members engaged with the physical and authoritative limits of their classroom and how their continual performances were a continuation of their physical inquiry, although in a different dimension. These boys were not just interested in engaging with their teacher's authority. They were also interested in exploring the larger dimension of power in their classroom. These students helped me become aware of my own relationship to authorities and, as I started to interrogate my own relationship to authorities—a relationship that I'm still learning about—I could observe how challenging authority was not only as something negative, but it was also as something I could consider as valuable. Nevertheless, the gang and its members brought us to the limits of a pedagogy of shared authority as Annie could not find a way to limit their negative effects on the classroom life.

Chapters 4 and 5, in giving us a general picture of how authority was shared in Kindergarten Room 7, gave us the perspective necessary to take up in Chapter 6 the question of how philosophy affected the overall authoritative structure of the classroom. Philosophy was certainly part of Annie's project to share authority with her students. On one level, philosophy was part of other sharing activities that Annie put in place in the daily life of the classroom. However, on a second level, philosophy definitely took the practice of shared authority in new directions. In philosophy, students were obliged to

engage and to stay with an issue that was common to all of them. If the teacher obliged

the students to contemplate a philosophical issue, to not abandon such inquiry, and to

support their ideas with reasons, she did not close the special time and space of the

philosophical inquiry by an authoritative answer to the problem discussed. In P4C, not

only was the functioning of authority transformed, but also the object of authority. We

saw, for instance, that philosophy tended naturally to tackle moral and ethical matters. In

the last section of the chapter, I presented more problematic aspects of the practice of

philosophy in its relationship to authority. If Oliver, a notorious member of the gang, was

a brilliant participant in a P4C session, his interventions were also sometimes situated in

the gang agenda and, therefore, pointing out the existence of different competing agendas

in the P4C discussions. Furthermore, the practice of philosophy appeared to us as a

radical invitation to children to put into question authorities and, consequently, created a

contradiction or at least a tension in the classroom order between imposing authority on

students and inviting them to question authority. Through P4C, the practice of shared

authority in Kindergarten Room 7 was transformed and was in some aspects radicalized.

In the following parts, I will underline the findings of this study in regard to the

larger themes it is connected to and their respective literatures. I will center my

discussion around the issue of shared authority, as it is central to this dissertation and the

other problematics are fundamentally connected to it.

**A Thick Description of Shared Authority in a Classroom in a Particular Context**

The data analysis chapters have given a valuable picture of what it means to share authority in a classroom. In Chapter 4, we saw that sharing authority was a multidimensional phenomenon that shaped the entire classroom life, from how the teacher made sense of her own authority, to the creation of a curriculum and its enactment, to daily activities that aimed to give power to the students, and to the moral order of the classroom in comparison to the moral order of the school. If some of these elements have been discussed by other researchers—as the formal activities in which students are put in the position of being in authority and being an authority (Oyler, 1996)—some of the other elements appear new in the literature on this subject, particularly the discussion of how the moral order of the classroom was different than the moral order of the school in some particular events. Such a study of the larger effects of sharing authority in a classroom appeared to me to be missing from the literature. By conducting  a careful analysis of the different aspects of a classroom based on the idea of shared authority, this dissertation brings a better understanding of how such pedagogy is realized in a specific context (Amit & Fried, 2005; Oyler, 1996; Schultz & Oyler, 2006). In the following parts, I will focus on a few elements that I believe this dissertation brought to the research on shared authority.

**Shared Authority and Teacher's Agency**

It seems that much of the discussion on shared authority or educational authority in general is focused on the relationship between the teacher and her students or on the

relationship between the classroom and a higher authority, such as the authority of the school or the district (Bixby, 2006; Metz, 1978; Schultz & Oyler, 2006; Swidler, 1979). I think that one important element that comes from this dissertation and one to which the research on educational authority should pay more attention is in how teachers make sense of their own authority.

For instance, I have been puzzled for a long time about which educational model regarding authority is better. I think that ultimately it may depend, as Swidler framed it, on the "*terms of the debate*" (1979, p. 100, italics original). If you value the fact that children express themselves and are active in their education, then you are more likely to see shared authority pedagogy as the most favorable for good education. However, I want now to advance another kind of argument in that debate. As I looked and re-looked at the classroom I studied, I couldn't help but be amazed by the energy and creativity that Annie put into creating what she believed was a worthwhile education for her students. I couldn't explain the animal project[41], which appeared to me as one of the most incredible educational experiences I have seen in my life, by referring to the interests of the students in that subject, but in Annie's passion for their education. In sum, her own agency appeared to me as the central element in the construction of the classroom life of Kindergarten Room 7. I do think that there is a clear relationship between the way that Annie envisions her authority with her students and how she envisioned herself as an active thinker and actor. Said differently, the fact that she values the agency of her

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[41] See section *The animal project* in Chapter 4.

students, that she believes it was good to question authority and to be creative, was linked

to her meaning-making as a teacher and her role in the educational system. Therefore,

although it remains a matter of debate which authoritative model is better than others, I

think we can advance that the shared authority model may tend to make teachers feel

more like professional actors and as persons able to create a meaningful education for

their students. If we value this element, this may be a reason to value shared authority

pedagogy—which may be even more important in the current educational climate, in

which standardization tends to push teachers to submit to a bureaucratic authority and to

devalue their personal expertise (Hursh, 2001; Michaud, 2010; Russell Weinstein &

Wood, 2013).

That said, Annie's passion for teaching and her practice of shared authority came

at a cost.

**Sharing Authority and Students' Involvement**

One of the central hypotheses of the theory of shared authority has been that by

involving students in their education, they will see their education as meaningful and will

find the authority of their classroom and school as legitimate (Dewey, 1938; Perrone,

2005; Shor, 1992). Furthermore, if we refer to the literature on shared authority, there

seems to be no mention of issues of discipline in classrooms based on that idea. Oyler

(1996), who started with the aim to study the "bumps" of shared authority in a first-grade

classroom, ended up presenting a classroom in which everything was orderly and

peaceful.

However, as this dissertation has revealed in many places, things may not be as simple as they appear, and it is very doubtful that the teacher in the study was responsible for the issues we have addressed. Like Valerie Walkerdine (1992) before her, Annie found herself in the difficult position of creating a progressive classroom and being confronted with the complex and difficult reality of such an endeavor; complexities and difficulties that seemed to be absent from the theoretical discussion on shared authority. Hence, Annie mentioned to me that it is common to hear people laud the importance of involving students in their education, but that they don't seem to understand what it really means to *do* it.

The gang most clearly showed that some students may not be interested in a democratic classroom or simply that they found a certain value in undermining its moral order and in challenging the teacher's authority. It remains uncertain why the gang engaged in such behaviors, but their group was certainly united in the same endeavor of pushing the limits of what was permissible. In that situation, the pedagogy of shared authority appeared to be of little help to cope with their behaviors. Hence, these students were not looking for more fairness in their classroom, but were rather interested in playing with the authoritative and moral boundaries of their classroom.

Although their experiments with authority were certainly valuable in some respect, the gang's overall effect on the classroom and particularly on Annie was more negative. Thus, the problem becomes: how can we find the place for these students to explore the power dimension of their classroom in which they are interested—and will be

interested in any form of authoritative model we can hypothesize— and to limit the scope of their negative effect on the general classroom culture.

**Annie's Inner Conflicts**

Furthermore, it is important to underscore the inner conflicts and tensions that Annie faced and lived daily in front of this problem. She refused to end it by changing her exercise of authority in the classroom, as the following quotes that we have already encountered from our interviews indicate: "I think I always can get them to listen by being somebody I don't want to be, if that makes sense. Which is like: 'If you don't listen, you got', you know, really mean, mean, keep it stern, and, like, I have to become who I don't want be." And "So, I guess if you ask me why I'm not tougher, because, sometimes I'm not sure that's fair what we are asking in the first place." (April 11) Thus, the teacher was caught in an inner contradiction in her beliefs about what was a good education and the difficult reality with which she had to live. .

Furthermore, Annie's inner contradiction appears to be inherent to a pedagogy of shared authority, which, as we have seen, is constructed on the tension between imposing order on students and involving them in their learning, rather than aiming to resolve this tension. If we are to value progressive education and democratic education, we shall have to better understand the conflicts that teachers, like Annie, live as they try to implement such pedagogy in their classroom.

**Clarifying the Idea of Shared Authority**

I do think that this dissertation offers a certain path toward a solution to the problematic of shared authority. Hence, based on my analysis, I want to offer a new element to define the theory of shared authority that is usually absent in the literature on that subject (Amit & Fried, 2005; Brubaker, 2012; Oyler, 1996). In my analysis of the practice of philosophy in Kindergarten Room 7, it appeared to me that there were two dimensions of a teacher's authority at play in it. The first dimension of the teacher's authority was the one that created and kept the space and time of philosophy. Hence, Annie was in some way obliging her students to discuss a philosophical issue and not abandon such a discussion. The second dimension of the teacher's authority was the one inside the philosophical community of inquiry, in which Annie restrained her authority by not resolving the issue discussed and by becoming a co-inquirer with the students.

Thus, I want to propose that we should understand shared authority as composed of these two dimensions. Consequently, the practice of shared authority between a teacher and her students required first an authority that established the conditions of how authority would be shared. In Chapter 5, the members of the gang—by infiltrating and crossing the limits of what was permitted—made visible those limits and, consequently, the need that these limits be respected. There should therefore be a difference between the subjects that are open to discussion between students and teachers and the subjects that are not open to such discussion. Thus, the sharing dimension of a classroom required theoretically an anterior authority that permits the sharing to happen. As in philosophy,

where students were forced to engage in a philosophical discussion in a certain manner, sharing authority on a daily basis required the imposition of a similar authority that will establish which subjects are negotiable and the format of such negotiation.

It is still unclear how the difference between these two levels of authority would be done in a daily basis and if it would really help to cope with the behavioral problems of some students as the ones of "the gang" in this research. However, I do think it helps to understand shared authority through these two dimensions. Hence, through them the natural contradiction in shared authority between imposing authority on students and creating a space where authority is shared is hampered, as the former is the condition of the possibility of the latter.

Certainly, democratic communities are rare organizations, if we understand by them organizations in which individuals are free to participate and are equals in its direction. Although a school classroom presents all the contrary characteristics to such an organization, principally because individuals are obliged to be there, they can become, as this study shows, a community that tends to be democratic, which I claim is only possible because the teacher is ensuring the limits of that community. In sum, before it can be shared, authority must be imposed; even for an authority to be continuously shared, it required an authority that is constantly imposed. I think it would be advantageous to clarify this aspect of shared authority for theorists but also for practitioners, as they may be caught, as Annie, in a contradiction between liberating and disciplining students.

**The Problematic Role of Philosophy in Sharing Authority**

The problematic of shared authority in Kindergarten Room 7 could not appear more clearly than in the philosophy session. On one hand, we saw how the practice of philosophy could be seen as positive. In P4C sessions, students engaged with subjects such as the nature of aesthetic performances and on the good or bad reasons to fight. Philosophy permitted students to explore some dimensions of their individual and communal experiences, ones that may have most likely remained hidden without such an opportunity to inquire into them. Furthermore, the transformation of the object of inquiry in P4C was related to a transformation in the exercise of authority, which aimed to not foreclose the discussion into that subject and thus keep the space of inquiry open.

On the other hand, the practice of philosophy was in a problematic relationship to the teacher's authority. First, one of Annie's goals in inviting students to do philosophy was to teach them to think by and for themselves, which could only be done by putting into questions the ideas received and the authorities that settled these ideas. This goal regarding philosophy was not idiosyncratic to Annie; it is rather part of the project of P4C in K-12 (Gregory, 2004; Nussbaum, 2010; Sasseville, 2005). Furthermore, as we have seen, the ideas that children were invited to criticize in P4C were of a special nature, particularly as philosophical discussions tended to be situated in the moral and ethical domains. Therefore, the experience of philosophy was to put into question the most fundamental ideas that structure one individual life as well as the ones that structure her community. This was a special quality of P4C in comparison to other sharing activities in

Kindergarten Room 7. It is because of the special and radical relationship between philosophy, morality, and authority that a central problematic of shared authority has appeared more clearly to us: how can we balance or reconcile the invitation to students to question authorities and the need that they submit to authority, at least on some occasions and on some subjects? These problematics were revealed the most distinctly during the last day of school in the last session of philosophy as the teacher scolded the students for their lack of obedience and at the same time invited them to judge rules.

**Morality, Rationality, and Authority**

One idea central in P4C has been that by becoming inquiring individuals, the fundamental concepts of their lives will become more meaningful to them. In education, this means that students through philosophical inquiry into the concepts of their education will stop seeing education as something forced onto them and empty of signification, but something in which they participate (Lipman, Sharp, & Oscanyan, 1980; Russell Weinstein & Wood, 2011; Sharp, 1993). Although P4C may radicalize this idea, it is not specific to this movement. As we have seen, it is part of the general assumption of shared authority pedagogy: that students, by being involved in their education, will find this meaningful and are most likely to see the authority of the teacher or the school as legitimate (Schultz & Oyler, 2006; Thornberg, 2009; Thornberg & Elvstrand, 2012).

Yet, through P4C we have observed a certain tension and even contradiction between imposing moral ideas on children and inviting them to discuss rationally such ideas. Furthermore, the life in community requires some beliefs and behaviors that are

not open to personal investigation. We can even see that certain behaviors and ideas are the prerequisites without which P4C sessions are simply impossible—students have to respect each other, to listen to the different ideas proposed and restrain from some behaviors that would undermine the discussions.

Furthermore, this leads me to question if we have not been putting too much faith in the possibility to construct a moral order in a group through rational discussions and, if such construction was possible, that through it individuals would not only have reasonable beliefs, but they would have beliefs that they would be willing to apply in their life. Cynthia Ballenger (1992a) also advanced that giving reasons may not be the best authoritative language with some groups of students. Individuals of the gang for example didn't appear to be moved by the same reasons as the adults of the classroom, as they seemed to have their own set of reasons they found more important. "You know, whenever they can say, that will get a laugh, and it is the most important thing to them all along, more important than anything I can ever say" (April 11 interview). I'm unsure that an open-ended inquiry on that issue would have changed the gang members' perspective and behaviors. Thus, it may be that such issues as the ones that appear in our analysis of the gang should not be resolved through rational dialogue, because it should be settled by an authority before the dialogue even begins: there are certain things you should do in class and others you should avoid doing.

I think that this problematic between inviting children to question morality and to impose authority on them brings us back to a subject that I have proposed in the section,

*Philosophy, Authority, Morality and Ethics* in Chapter 6: on the necessity to clearly

define two domains of action for teacher's authority in a shared authority pedagogy and,

consequently, the necessity to differentiate two domains of morality and their respective

relationship to authority: a moral domain that should be opened to communal inquiry and

a moral domain that should be imposed.

This need of the imposition of morality to create a shared authority pedagogy

appears interestingly in Dewey's chapter on "Social Control" in *Experience and*

*Education* (1938). In this chapter, Dewey explains at length how the social control of a

classroom should come from the activities that the students and the teacher are engaged

in. In sum, control is not imposed on the group but emerges from their communal project.

However, interestingly, Dewey finished this chapter on the importance of manners in

school and to teach them to children. It seems that Dewey was pointing here toward the

necessity of certain attitudes and beliefs that were necessary to a democratic community

to function, that were a prerequisite for such a community. Although it is unclear how

such manners may be created in students when they are lacking, they remain essential for

a democratic community to succeed.

**Concluding Remarks**

This study is part of a larger research conversation that has been exploring the

different issues related to authority in American schools (Hurn, 1985; Pace, 2003c; Pace

& Hemmings, 2006a). This study has been exploring one particular model of educational

authority, a model based on the idea that authority should be shared between a teacher

and her students. This qualitative research took place in a kindergarten classroom in which the teacher was committed to giving her students a democratic education and, in addition, in which she integrated the practice of P4C, one of the most radical practices of shared authority. Although it has been advanced that sharing authority with students would ultimately strengthen a teacher's authority (Oyler, 1996; Shor, 1996; Thornberg & Elvstrand, 2012), this dissertation points out that doing so has its own set of problems, which may be different than the ones we encounter in a traditional classroom (Swidler, 1979).

In many regards, Annie's classroom was an extraordinary place to be. Students had the opportunity to vote on the choice of the curriculum at the beginning of the year, they were experiencing learning in wonderful ways from projects and from hands-on experiences, they were going on field trips, they had visitors come to the classroom to give presentations on specific subjects, they were experiencing a high-quality learning environment (which was unbelievably rich during the animal project), they had different opportunities to shape their classroom culture, they had the chance to practice philosophy and to explore valuable dimensions of their existence, and so on. However, this amazing learning experience was accompanied by some behavioral problems, with the members of gang as the students most effective at disrupting the classroom activities.

If we do indeed value democratic education and progressive learning, it is the duty of theorists and researchers to better understand the kind of problems that Annie lived in her classroom and the possible solutions to them. It is certainly not enough to

praise democratic education and the engagement of students in their education without paying attention to the issues that teachers such as Annie face in their classrooms as they try to implement such ideas. The hypothesis that I have been drawing in the last parts of this conclusion is that we should redefine the theory and practice of shared authority by differentiating two dimensions of teacher's authority. In the first dimension, the teacher imposes her authority on the classroom by defining what can be done and not done, what can be negotiated and what cannot be negotiated, what are the moral matters that are open to inquiry and the ones that are not. In the second dimension, in the dimension of what can be shared, discussed and negotiated, the teacher becomes a co-participant in the creation of authority. In sum, teachers should not feel that they betray their beliefs when they impose their authority on students, because that imposition may in some subjects and at some point be required for their classroom to become a democratic community.

However, at the end, this study supports previous research on the fact that authority remains something extremely problematic, which can create serious difficulties for a positive relationship between a teacher and her students, but also underscore its need for a good educational relationship to happen. Further studies are needed to better understand what makes a democratic education function and what the problems are that teachers encounter as they try to implement it in their classroom. Furthermore, studies on democratic classrooms should pay attention to how authority functions in these classrooms and how positive authoritative relationships are constructed in them or, on the contrary, weaken them. In addition, researchers interested in this subject should study the issue of shared authority in different contexts, grades, and social background to see how

shared authority is realized in different settings, as this study was limited to one kindergarten classroom. Finally, researchers who want to study authority should shift their focus beyond specific classrooms, and analyze how broader social causes affect educational authority in specific settings.

My goal in future research is to investigate theoretically and empirically these different lines of inquiry related to educational authority, to the practice of democratic education, shared authority and philosophy in schools, and their interrelationships.

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