

Rogues, unrulies, and nomads: Disrupting the casual tyranny of the schoolroom

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Abstract

In many primary school classrooms, there exists a casual tyranny of control and separation that distorts the bodied humanity of schoolchildren. The intent of this article is to make more visible and so, more actionable, the school structures that devalue and oppress the spirited needs and desires of schoolchildren. This article is directed toward examining the nature of schooling as manifested in the day-to-day lives of children while looking askance at the under-challenged state of those school-lives. Relevant to every aspect of our lives, the potential conflict between rule-following and morally/humanly motivated disobedience is a major theme in this work, leading us to consider the spiritual aspects of childhood—such as wonder, joy, and being in the moment—and how they can be repressed, even denied, by the often arbitrary exercises of power and control inherent in schoolrooms. In this article, classroom-based narratives will rhizomatically meander and intersect with/in a diverse range of texts (including George Leonard's discussion of the rogue, Hesse's poetry, *Batman Begins*, and lyrics of Tupac Shakur) in ways that resist the structures of schooling that serve to assimilate us into a collective consciousness of docility.

Keywords

Carceral, control, disobedience, early childhood education, Foucault, freedom, kindergarten, nomad, power, primary school, rhizomanalysis, rogue, tyranny

Find out just what the people will submit to and you have found out the exact amount of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them; and these will continue until they are resisted with either words or blows, or with both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress. (Frederick Douglass, 4 August 1857)

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In many elementary school classrooms, there exists a casual tyranny of control, separation, and tactile deprivation that distorts the bodied humanity of schoolchildren. The intent of this article is to make more visible and so, more actionable, the school structures that devalue and oppress the spirited needs and desires of schoolchildren. The underlying research is directed toward examining the nature of schooling as manifested in the day-to-day lives of children while looking askance at the under-challenged state of those school-lives. In looking askance at the everyday, we put the philosophical theories of Deleuze and Foucault to work for us, attuning us “to a different kind of observation or angle of vision that renders visible what was not previously apparent” (Roy, 2003: 2).

In dominant narratives of the “good” classroom, run by the “good” teacher, goodness is found in predictable, ordered, and controlled contexts. Techniques of subtle and constant coercion produce “subjected and practiced bodies: ‘docile bodies’” (Foucault, 1979: 138). Nesper (1997) similarly describes the “schooling body, one that stays silent, walks in line, keeps its hands to itself, and doesn’t get out of its chair and walk around the room” (p. 131), while Jardine (1990) describes schoolchildren as “strange and silent objects” that are managed and manipulated by the mechanisms of school. George Leonard (1968) identifies School as a “vast, suffocating web of people, practices and presumptions, kindly in intent, ponderous in response” (p. 101), which aligns with Leafgren’s (2009) notion of school swaddling as a means of separation and control—ostensibly, for the child’s own good. In Deleuzian terms, classrooms are thus governed by strata, and “strata are acts of capture ... striving to capture whatever comes within their reach” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 40). In this way, the School acts as an agent of the State apparatus, and in seeking to produce predictable and docile bodies, it develops pedagogies of control, certainty, and convergence.

In his vastly influential text, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault (1979) details policies of “coercions that act upon the body, calculated manipulation[s] of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour” (p. 138). The coercive techniques described by Foucault easily apply to the stratifying measures in the classroom in which teachers—as agents of the state machinery—determine where each child-body should be and what it should be allowed to touch and do. Put simply, as described in early childhood classroom context by Leafgren (2009: 120–124), these Foucauldian techniques are as follows:

- *Enclosure, partitioning.* Where someone is placed indicates who and what he is. For instance, if he is on the wall at recess, he must be bad.
- *Timetables/minute control of activity.* Decisions are deferred to the schedule and the clock—there is no question of what to do next—it is already determined.
- *Precise system of command.* All are trained to automatically react to a system of signals, verbal, and otherwise. Repetition and intense attention to detail leave no space for impulsive actions or any kind of action requiring individual thought.
- *Surveillance.* Those surveilled accept docility and regulation by the surveillor via the threat implied by the constant (or seemingly constant) observation.
- *Normalizing judgments.* Disciplinary power punishes deviations from normality and rewards “normalcy” (good behavior). Those who transgress are defined not only as bad but also as abnormal, thus consolidating the ranks of the “normal” against all others and impacting the transgressor from the inside.
- *The carceral.* The idea that some hold the power to punish is not only accepted, but embraced! Therefore, the “judges of normality are present everywhere” (Foucault, 1979: 304), and normalizing practices difficult to resist. As Pakosz and Chagani (1998) explain the carceral,

We are punished for many things and often the rules we have broken are arbitrary rules. The only offense is deviance from prescribed norms. What exists is a “penalty of the norm” ... It is non-conformity that is discouraged and punished. (n.p.)

Foucault’s techniques of discipline are exceptionally devastating because they are unremarkable. We *live* these coercions without attention to them and we regularly impose them on others and *ourselves*. The strategies of disciplinary power are oppressive and harshly limiting and are, concurrently, routine and expected, thus creating a casual tyranny in the classroom.

If the classroom were a space where the ordering practices of the State operated unassailed, it would be a harsh place indeed—gray and stagnant and lifeless. In this article, we train our attention to the everyday life in school—to colorful and lively moments occurring in everyday places in school: the playground, the carpet, and the hallway. In those school spaces, we find coercive and capturing practices in play—but we also find children and teachers who act as rogues, disrupting the strata that seek to capture them. It is the rogue, “nobly wild,” who demonstrates the interplay between discipline and freedom, who mocks solemnity and docility, and teaches us that one “does not have to break law or custom in order to come fully awake ... [and to live a] life in which every established order takes as its first task the business of making itself obsolete” (Leonard, 1968: 100).

We find Leonard’s discussion of the rogue to have similarities to the Deleuzian notion of the nomadic thought and action. A roguish interplay between discipline and freedom aligns with the nomad’s creative evasion of capture by the State’s apparatus that occurs in simultaneously and constantly shifting striated and smooth spaces. As children engage in experimental and uncertain thought, they create a line of flight that “does not mean to flee but to re-create or act against dominant systems of thought and social conditions” (Deuchars, 2011: n.p.). Together and in concert, the state and the nomad seek comfort: one derives comfort from markers that striate and control, separate, and make still/docile, and the other derives comfort from markers that allow for smooth and fluid movement and interaction. As in Leonard’s take on rogueness as means of coming fully awake and seeking “order that confounds order” (p. 97), the relationship between the nomadic thought and State thought is one of mutual becoming. What follows are examples of children and teachers engaged in mutual becoming in school spaces—spaces that are deeply striated via methods of normalizing coercion and simultaneously are smoothed through the actions and interactions of the children and teachers who act in those spaces.

Fear of delight

There must be time for play and innocence in life
and room for boundless blossoms.
The world would otherwise be too small
and our life not a delight. (Hesse, 2011: 51)

Often in class discussions, our early childhood education teacher candidates share concerns about the oh-so-common practice of using recess (or the threat of no recess) to coerce children into compliance. As unruly children deviate from the prescribed norms of the classroom (i.e. by talking, getting up before being told to, touching another child, directing one’s gaze in the wrong direction, and not completing work), the concept of the carceral comes into play bringing a “penalty of the norm.” A frequent consequence for such transgressions is a ban from recess. Our teacher candidates report that some particularly rogue-ish children *never* get recess, but are kept in or put on the wall outside on a daily basis. They then worry that “it’s the ones who are kept in that *most* need

recess! They are the ones who need to run off all of that energy!” The unfortunate implication is that recess—playtime—is a trick, a sham. It is a means to calm children down after the pressure of sitting still and quiet for so long becomes too much. It is an object of coercion toward compliance, a carrot dangling, but once achieved, is merely an outlet from the deeply oppressive nature of the classroom—a place to get one’s “energy out” and “let off steam”:

Playtime. Freedom. Not so fast. First the entire class must come to order. That means stillness, silence. Perhaps each row of children will be pitted against others; the row achieving submissive non-activity first gets to line up first at the door. After all the children, again, have come to order and after teacher, again, orders the class to walk, not run, down the stairs the door is opened. The children explode onto the play yard ... but are you observing play? Probably not, unfortunately. The children are likely to be merely letting off steam, with shrill yells and frenetic running about ... Whenever the classroom situation is repressive and antithetical to learning, the playground situation, in direct ratio, is hyperactive and equally antithetical to learning. In true play, the child is intent, responsive, unhurried, completely involved. There is a lovely seriousness about it. The child who explodes out of and in reaction to a static, non-learning environment is hurried, unresponsive, indeed almost spastic. This is not delight; it is desperation. (Leonard, 1968: 108–109)

Leonard’s exposition on the playground/classroom relationship resonates with Dewey’s resistance to the false dichotomies of freedom and movement in the context of children’s experiences. Dewey (1938) wrote, “the commonest mistake made about freedom is ... to identify it with freedom of movement, or with the external or physical side of activity” (p. 61). While outward freedom of movement is limited by the classroom’s “fixed arrangements ... with its fixed rows of desks and its military regimen of pupils who were permitted to move only at certain fixed signals” (p. 61), the problem is not solved by the movement permitted via recess. As Dewey (1938) explains, “this external and physical side of activity cannot be separated from the internal side of activity; from freedom of thought, desire, and purpose” (p. 62). Poet and author Hermann Hesse made similar distinctions between the joy of the soul and imagination and the “quick-acting, over-stimulating fun,” agreeing with “the Indian sage who after a visit to the temple of distraction, Disneyland, simply remarked: ‘There must be very little joy in a culture which needs to have that much fun’” (Hesse, 2011: 27). We suggest that the oppressive nature of day-to-day life in the classroom has contributed to the role of recess as a regimented and conditional release as opposed to a time and place for true freedom of movement *and* of thought, desire, and purpose.

There is yet another consequence of the carceral in play here on the playground—that of children being inducted into their roles of judges of normality and so, unconsciously contributing to the casual tyranny of schooled oppression. We wonder/worry about the consequences of teaching children to disregard the discomfort or exclusion of others. On every school day in thousands of schoolyards, there are many children who stand. They stand on the wall, on the line, against the pole, and on the curb. They are forbidden to play (even spastically, explosively), but instead are sentenced to watch others play during recess time. They have transgressed, and often the rules they have broken are arbitrary—deviations of a norm that result in penalty that leads to their exclusion.

It is clear that for many of the transgressors, the punishment is evidence of their freedom to choose the way to experience school. Because they may prefer to enjoy the privilege of dissonance over the privilege of a grudgingly proffered reward, they can abide their banishment. But as they stand and watch—some of them spending *every* recess on the wall or fence or line or pole or curb—they might well worry about their classmates. The ones who run and shout and play. They might be concerned that children should be “taught a lack of empathy, oblivion and ignorance, and even to engage in scorn for others?” (Leafgren, 2013: n.p.). They might worry that the children who play have not been taught to care about those who don’t. We have inquired of our current early

childhood education students what they remember about the children in their own grade-school classrooms who spent their recesses on walls, and they generally report thinking only that they were “the bad kids.” They do not recall feeling concern for them or even empathy. Thus, children are quickly inducted into their roles of judges of normality and some of them continue in these roles as teachers:

Compliancism
 On the wall.
 On the line.
 On the pole.
 Oppressed, bound & gagged.
 Standing, standing,
 Watching a carceral society
 That
 Cares little for the ones who disobey
 And
 Even less for those who comply. (Leafgren, 2013: n.p.)

Crabs

A question ain't really a question if you know the answer too.
 (John Prine, in Strachota (1996))

In a first grade classroom, 23 children gathered on the carpet to listen to the teacher read from their Voyager basal text. The teacher sat in a chair with her teacher's manual on her lap so that she could quickly and easily access the scripted prompts and questions that accompany each story. The children sat “criss-cross applesauce” on the carpet, silent, and “ready to listen,” as precisely predictable as the script of the lesson to come. An observer, I was sitting in a chair behind the children. The story for the week in the prescriptive text was one about a crab. At one point in the story, it was noted that the crab had 10 legs. In my silent observer's head, I thought to myself, “hey! I thought crabs had 8 legs” and at that very moment, a small boy—leaning forward eagerly, engrossed in text—said aloud, “hey! I thought crabs has 8 legs!” I smiled, thinking, hooray, now the teacher will talk about crab legs!

Instead, she said, “Lamar! You interrupted the story. Go move your card,” and pointed at the large chart posted in a prominent place in the classroom, near the door and on the far side of the room from where the children had gathered to hear the story. The chart was a behavior chart with 23 pockets labeled with children's names, each holding a small stack of cards in green, yellow, and red. What I learned was that if a child managed to never behave in a manner that required him or her to move his or her card, the green card remained showing on top on the stack. Infractions—as arbitrarily determined by the teacher—led to movements of the cards, from green to yellow to red. Compliant “green” children were recompensed for their obedience with various daily, weekly, and monthly rewards; less compliant “yellow” children were not permitted to participate in rewards, and the more troublesome “red” children were further punished with a variety of penalties such as standing on the wall at recess, tattling phone calls to parents, removal from the classroom, and additional tedious work assignments.

While the rest of the children watched (becoming in that moment, judges of normality), Lamar sighed, stood, and made his way slowly to the “Tree-Mendous” behavior chart, stood in front of it for some moments, and reluctantly moved the yellow card in his pocket to the back of his stack, leaving the red card showing above his name. At this point, the teacher—who had, with the rest of

the class, been carefully surveilling Lamar's movements—began to read again and Lamar turned back to begin his trek back to the carpet. Then he did something that made my observer's heart leap with joy and with dread: he dropped to the floor, placing his hands behind him and lifting his hips, and began crab-walking to the place where his teacher and classmates were reading. He was crafty—a bookcase blocked the line of sight and he was low enough to avoid detection, and he stood just before reaching the bookcase to return to the carpet. He sat down in his space on the carpet, his teacher interrupting herself to say, "Are you finally ready to listen, now, Lamar? I think you've interrupted the class enough, right?" He shrugged, which I thought was a legitimate response as he had obviously been listening before and it seemed that the most jarring interruptions had come from the teacher, and not from Lamar. As Leonard (1968) noted,

The average kid gets few chances to respond during the school day. And when he does get a chance, it's generally an echoic response. He just gives the teacher back what the teacher wants to hear ... too often, when he ... does start responding, he gets slapped down. He learns to sit still, to line up in orderly rows, to take instructions, [and] to feel guilt for his natural impulses. (p. 103)

In the narrative above, Lamar acted as a nomad maneuvering his way through ruts of ordering and normalizing striations: the minute control of the teacher's manual, the precise and inflexible procedures of the carpet, the coercive threat of the flip-cards, and the controlled expectations of "reading." Reading, as the School/State has recently defined it in the Common Core standards in the United States, limits the child's relationship with schooled texts, focusing on "craft without involving the ways of being, valuing, knowing, and experiencing that children bring to texts" (Shannon, 2013: 66). The curriculum standards—another layer of strata for the State apparatus—under which the teacher is operating do not expect students to make connections to their lives, personal experiences, or selves—but to attend to textual analysis only.

However, Lamar, nomadically, tended to "wander" away from the semiotic spaces" of the basal text as delivered by his teacher on the classroom carpet. By raising a question outside of the script of the teacher's manual and mandated standards, Lamar "commenced a rhizome—making passages to hitherto disconnected systems of signification" in ways that had potential to "unsettle boundary distinctions and presuppositions" of deeply striated School procedures (Gough, 2006: 640). In this case, the disruption of the school "script" does not only refer to the question itself but the disorderly way in which Lamar raised it, and, more profoundly, the idea that the basal text would evoke curiosity or interest at all. According to the precise script of the carpet and of the basal's teacher manual—purchased by the school for the purpose of narrow uniformity of curriculum—the teacher presents information, then she or he asks questions to ensure that the children are paying attention, and finally assigns tasks (most commonly worksheets) loosely related to the text, and that is all. This is a curriculum that "follows narrow goals, that attempts to homogenize and limit the signs and processes of learning, [and] runs the risk of locking us into increasingly oppressive grids" (Roy, 2003: 4).

As an instrument of the State/School, Lamar's teacher operated under what Leonard (1968) describes as the "Civilized condition"—a condition in which one learns to equate "spirit with lawlessness and adventure with the criminal" (pp. 90–91). Lamar's unsolicited wonderment about crabs and their legs was a manifestation of his rogueness. He was a rascal more interested in pursuing an idea than adhering to the protocol of the carpet; he was unruly, wanting more than a "needless repetition" of something already said and known. Notwithstanding the pedagogical understanding that "learning has to do with the response of the child, not with the presentation of the teacher" (p. 108), Lamar's question was a deviance from the prescribed

norms and so marked him as suspect—a lawless criminal—and so deserving of penalty. One wonders whether the distraction of the card flipping and normalizing judgments of his classmates deterred Lamar from his interest in the story of the crabs. I, for one, am still unsure of just how many legs crabs have—as it apparently depends on how one defines “legs” as opposed to pincers. Wouldn’t that have been a lively (spirited and adventurous) conversation for the children to have had?

Our pack, our identity

No rules can tell us how this disobedience can be done and by whom, when, and where, nor can they tell us which laws foster untruth. It is only experience that can guide us. (Gandhi, in Zinn (1968))

Being rogue enables or smooths all the paths toward delight. As a primary teacher in an urban school, I relied on my own rogueness to playfully and joyfully navigate the striated spaces of school in unison (in mutual becoming) with my students. After being unceremoniously moved away from my beloved class of third graders to a new school 8 weeks into the school year, I found myself with a new classroom of kindergarten students, all of us displaced and discontent, yearning for our previous groups. While our associated groups had changed, we were still members of school and so much was the same, including the universal challenge of walking down the hallway without being human. The school-wide rule demanded a precise system of command: hands behind the back, a bubble of air in the mouth to prevent talking, and uniform spacing between peers as the line snaked its way to its destination. Our newness limited our deeper understanding of one another, but I knew immediately that my students were/are beautifully human. The life inside them was not to be contained, and it often erupted in the bland existence of the barren, rigid, high stakes hallways—high stakes for the kids’ “I was caught being ‘good’” ticket bank and high stakes for the teacher’s hopes of being perceived as a good teacher. Normalizing techniques such as these created a tension between rule-following and morally/humanly motivated disobedience (Zinn, 1968). I was keenly aware that the manner in which students walk in the hall is indicative of the quality of the teacher. Human children in the hallways could not possibly have good teachers.

One day, the children and I were walking to the bus along with the other 500 students in the school. Grade levels were dismissed at the same time, so all of the school’s youngest children inhabited the same long, primary-grade hallway. Another teacher—a judge of normality and casual tyrant—started talking “to her class,” but it was evident that her words were directed only to mine. She spoke loudly and clearly, “Good job, my class. We know how to walk in a line.” Her tone caught my attention, and I, just as my students did, turned to look at and evaluate the children from her classroom. Her children were standing equally spaced, hands to their sides or behind their backs, and they were all facing forward. It was textbook.

My eyes turned to my “line.” My children were line-ish and all accounted for. Several grouped themselves side-by-side-by-side, and some groups were more clumpy than others. I had noticed in my short time there that the children in my classroom were hamster-y. There was joyful comfort in the proximity of friends. Proximity to me. Their line was clear evidence of this. In that moment, Omarian, who had been smiling and laughing, stopped, eyes widening in anticipation of the impending scolding that I was surely going to give them. All of my children froze in their actions, looking to me, just waiting to get it. It doesn’t take long to recognize and understand oppression. Even at 5 years old and only 9 weeks into their first school experience, these children knew that

their teacher had to be embarrassed by them. Even at 5 years old and only 9 weeks into their first school experience, these children knew that they had gotten their teacher in trouble. And even at 5 years old and only 9 weeks into their first school experience, these children were quite sure that trouble was surely going to be passed to them.

I was presented with a conflict: my students were “being disobedient.” It was true, my students and I were blatantly disregarding the school rules as to how to walk in hallway. But in this moment, we find connection to Zinn’s insight toward rule-following and morally/humanly motivated disobedience in the children’s humanity, their innate need to move, to be near one another, to touch, and to interact with their environment and other humans. As the adult, placing myself in the moment with my children, seeing that our conflicts are not separate—that we are mutually becoming in the stratified space of the hallway, I realized that together we had the pleasure of smoothing spaces for unbridled joy and humanity in the face (metaphorically and literally for the opposing teacher) of conflict. I had the choice to recognize my students as the humans they are, versus the “trouble-makers” they were perceived.

My heart was never fonder of my kids in that moment. My human children. My line-ish, laughing, joyful, caring, strong, and dynamic kids. I smiled my deepest smile, proud to be their leader, and to my children (and to the other teacher) said, “C’mon, pack. Let’s go to the bus.” Face muscles again engaged in smiles and mouths re-opened to finish cut-off sentences. Our pack, our identity, was born. Outside of the expectations of formal structures, hallways in this case, the pack forged a separate identity than what was deemed by the highly surveilled and precise expectations of that space and time. Yes, the “line” carried with it the strata of precise systems of command, but my nomadic children were not captured. As Gough (2006) reminds us that “Like rhizomes, nomads have no desire to follow one path” (p. 640), and like the rhizome, my pack did not wander aimlessly, but wandered humanly.

Tales of rascals and Rogues: Batman and Tupac

Henri Ducard: Your compassion is a weakness your enemies will not share.

Bruce Wayne: That’s why it’s so important. It separates us from them.

(Batman Begins; Nolan et al., 2005)

Conflict is a daily, often expected, and occasionally encouraged aspect of every school and classroom. Conflict arises from the simple actions of playing or acting “school”—broken pencils, playground arguments, mean-spirited looks and words. In most of our observations and inquiry, conflict, as understood by teachers or adults in school settings, is a child-issue in that it presumably originates with and persists because of the child. As noted earlier, the relationship between adult and child in the classroom is predicated on the policies of coercion toward producing Foucauldian docile bodies. The adults’ State-authorized role in creating conflict is safely disconnected from blame, and in this chasm between teacher and child, the conflict is construed as disobedience, occasionally translated in the adult mind as outright defiance.

Relevant to every aspect of our lives, there is potential conflict between rule-following and morally/humanly motivated disobedience (Zinn, 1968). As teachers and now observers, we have felt and witnessed the adults’ (usually initiating) role in creating conflict. As shared earlier in the story of Lamar’s wonderment of crabs and their mysterious legs, we have observed the children’s smoothing responses to these often oppressive rules and regulations as nomadic negotiations, including delicate and bold attempts to reclaim their spirited and bodied needs most often suppressed. George Leonard (1968) in describing the humanity of disobedience, even lawlessness, names it “rogue,” writing that

Civilized condition, while nurturing us, robs us of the chance to be all that we could be. Our fascination with every rogue, every free-roving adventurer from Ulysses through ... Jesse James ... reveals an impulse toward lawlessness in us all. Civilization's songs, tales and chronicles are filled with rascals. (p. 88)

We too have found ourselves moved by the tales of rogueness in songs and tales and find our own pursuit of rogueness to be buttressed by our appreciation of various texts, including careful examinations of the movie *Batman Begins* (Nolan et al., 2005) and the perspectives expressed in the lyrics and writings of Tupac Shakur.

Like Batman and Tupac, our understanding stems from both joining and observing. Batman left Gotham City in an attempt to understand "the criminal mind." As he traveled the world, Batman found that he "lost many assumptions about the simple nature of right and wrong" while reflecting on the first time he stole food to keep from starving (Nolan et al., 2005). For Tupac, rogue is thug. He examines oppression, rage, and "fighting back" in his rap. From a position of hunger and need, he describes the starting point of a song, "we are hungry, please let us in," and how the evolution over years of being ignored changes the song to "I'm pickin' the lock, comin' through the door blastin'" (Hoye and Ali, 2003: 132). Tupac reveals how "criminal actions" are founded on inhumanity and decades of oppression and disregard.

As teachers and researchers, we reflect on state versions of right and wrong/good and bad clearly delineated by the "judges of normality" that exclude humanity and only serve to separate children's human selves from their schooled selves. We see children punished for stepping out of line to help a fallen classmate (Leafgren, 2009). We witness children being scolded for standing while taking a test because it is more comfortable for them. We witness children placed on walls, children punished for wondering, and children who are expected to move in straight and silent lines from one school space to another. We worry that we teachers and teacher educators have not resisted the striations inherent in the structure of schooling that somehow serve to assimilate too many of us into a collective consciousness of static and inflexible practices of schooling young children.

Our resistance is particularly inspired by Bruce Wayne's (Batman's) transformation. His identity is carefully formed from his observation of "the criminal," his realization that right and wrong are deeply complex, and from his commitment to his humanity. When graduating from his elite ninja cult, The League of Shadows, the leader, Ra's Al Ghul, instructs Bruce to demonstrate his commitment to "justice" by executing a criminal, a "proven murderer." However, Bruce refuses the fatal act. Another warrior explains to Bruce, "Your compassion is a weakness your enemies will not share," and, in exchange, Bruce is devout in his belief that his compassion is what defines him. This moment is an underappreciated example of heroism, where a man made a choice to acknowledge the deeper complexities of a singular act. In similar vein, Tupac reveals through lyrics an awareness of being unseen/misseen, expressing the deeper complexity of lawlessness as spirited rogue—asking to be seen not as "criminal," but as human: "when you wipe your eyes see it clearly; there's no need for you to fear me; if you take your time and hear me maybe you can learn to cheer me" (Shakur et al., 2004: n.p.).

In rhizomatics, examination of one instance pulls the narratives of all the others. We join MacNaughton (2005) in saying,

Be "nomadic" and find texts beyond the expected ones. Break boundaries ... The choices you make about what texts to layer into the meanings of your observations will link to the rhizome you aim to build—to your political intent. (p. 131)

In our attending to the rogue-ish narratives in schooled places, we take meaning from the tales of rascals and rogues such as Tupac and Batman and link them to an intent to confront the casual tyranny of School.

Can we (teachers) be nobly wild along with our children?

Layering texts and personal experiences, we make visible school structures and techniques of coercive control that serve to produce docility by silencing the needs and desires of schoolchildren. Once visible, our wish is that others will join in a call for action, asking teachers and teacher educators alike to challenge the current state of children's school-lives. Challenging the current state occurs in the everyday spaces in school as described in the authors' experiences—the playground, the carpet, and the hallway—where children and teachers act as rogues, disrupting the structures that serve to constrain and capture them. In their disruptions, they are “nobly wild” (Leonard, 1968: 100), creatively evading the capture of the State as described by the Deleuzian notion of nomadic thought and action.

The disobediences that were described earlier are unremarkable, yet the coercive measures in place to prevent such transgressions are quite profoundly chilling in their unremarkableness, thus forming the casual tyranny that is allowed to persist in school places. Like Batman, our teacher identities have been deeply influenced by our observation of children seen as criminals, our realization that issues of right and wrong are deeply complex, and by our commitment to humanity. We observe that the strata designed to capture the nomadic acts of children too often goes unremarked upon. As instruments of the State apparatus, we teachers too rarely imagine “rhizomes ‘shaking the tree’ and destabilising arborescent conceptions ... rooted in firm foundations” (Gough, 2006) or to seek out “surprises in order to disrupt the familiar and obvious” (pp. 625–626) in early childhood classrooms (MacNaughton, 2005: 134). To guide us in tree-shaking and surprise-seeking, we rely on our rogue-ish mentors and texts to celebrate the potential within disobedient moments to disrupt dominant discourses and their attendant casual tyrannies in early childhood classrooms. We invite others to enjoy the privilege of dissonance over the privilege of a grudgingly proffered reward and join us in our rogue adventures, “... constantly exploring, probing the environment—learning” from and with one another (Leonard, 1968: 91). To our fellow teachers, we call on the “nobly wild” in each of us to come more fully awake and to share in the lawlessness of children marked as *criminal* for their deviation from prescriptive norms. In coming fully awake, we undertake as our first task in making the established order obsolete.

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Author biographies

Sheri L Leafgren is an associate professor of teacher education at Miami University, USA. She builds her scholarship on experiences from her 19 years as a K-3 classroom teacher in a large urban school district. Sheri is particularly interested in the spiritual and moral wisdom of young children and how children find space to enact their moral and spiritual selves while swaddled tightly by the rules, procedures, and surveillance of the schoolroom. Of late, she is expanding this inquiry to examine the spiritual and moral wisdom of early career teachers similarly constrained by State rules, procedures, and surveillance. She is the author of *Reuben's Fall: A Rhizomatic Analysis of Disobedience in Kindergarten* and has published in journals such as *Global Studies of Childhood*, *Cultural Studies of Science Education*, *The International Journal of Social Education*, *The Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, and *The International Journal of Children's Spirituality*.

Catherine Bornhorst has extensive experiences as a volunteer, teacher, and friend/sister in a large, urban community, and public school system, which established her rogue identity and perpetually fueled her passion and continued scholarship. Her research interests intend to disrupt and resist the normative educational landscape, exploring aspects of disobedience, race, poverty, and cultural identities. No longer in the K-12 classroom, Catherine Bornhorst assumes various professional roles that continue to further her educational experiences. She was a grant writer and evaluator for a multitude of projects in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and most recently, she taught in teacher education at Miami University, USA. Currently, Catherine Bornhorst is the Grants Development Coordinator for Sinclair Community College, USA. She recently published a chapter in *Renewed Accountability for Access and Excellence* and has presented her work at various conferences, including American Educational Research Association, Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Education, National Network for Educational Renewal, and Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies.