

RESTORYING THE WOUNDS OF EDUCATION:  
VULNERABILITY, HOPE, AND THE (QUEER) CHILD

by

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Restorying the wounds of education: vulnerability, hope, and the (queer) child

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## ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I ask: *How might the concepts of vulnerability, hope, and the child queer thinking about what education is and does, especially in relation to trauma?* To bring this question to life, I envision this project as a creative, improvisational ‘scene of constraint’ (Butler, 2004b, p. 1 as cited in Farley, 2018, p. 19) that includes vignettes and literature that speak to each concept. Bringing disorientation (Ahmed, 2006, 2010), queerness (Muñoz, 2009), and cruel optimism (Berlant, 2006, 2011) in conversation with these concepts, while gesturing towards post qualitative inquiry (St. Pierre, 2011, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017a, 2017b), I use this work to examine the question of how it is “that we become available to a transformation” of what education is and does, “a contestation which compels us to rethink ourselves, a reconfiguration of our ‘place’ and ‘ground’” (Butler, 1995, p. 132 as cited in St. Pierre, 2011, p. 614).

As in my educative journey, this thesis dances with the vulnerability of ‘undoing and redoing’ what (I think) I know about trauma and hope, and what (I think) I wish to uncover to support children in the realm of education. My work remains haunted by the confusion of the ‘posts’ (St. Pierre, 2011), the unknowability of the decolonial as a settler educator (Tuck and Yang, 2012), and the “shock to thought” (Massumi, 2012 as cited in Jackson, 2017, p. 671) that is an examination of losing children and youth at the site of education. Woven from a ‘broken web’ (Rich, 1981), this thesis restories trauma and restores vulnerability-as-strength, hope-as-radical-action, and the (queer)-child-as-guide, leaving space for the next steps that might allow us to take better care of ourselves, each other and the more-than-human world.

## LAY SUMMARY

In the context of recent changes in education, such as the ‘renewed’ curriculum of British Columbia and the *Calls to Action* in education of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015), this thesis examines the concepts of vulnerability, hope, and the child while experimenting with post qualitative research practices. Recognizing the presence of trauma in education, both historical and ongoing, this work is committed to seeking a transformation of the ‘wounds’ of education. Personal experiences of trauma are brought into conversation with each concept in the hopes of arriving at a different story of what education *is* and *does*, so that we might take better care of ourselves, each other and the more-than-human world.

## PREFACE

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, S. Mazerolle.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge that I derive benefit from being a settler and uninvited guest on/in:

*Mi'kma'ki*, the Traditional, Ancestral and Unceded Territory of the Mi'kmaq

(where I am from and always come back to):

**Wela'liq**

*xaʔxáʔ tumxʷulaʔxʷ*, the Traditional, Ancestral and Unceded Territory of the Sinixt

(where I live, work, and learn):

**Lim Limt, Lim Limt, Lim Limt**

*tə šxʷʔaməts tə šxʷməθkʷəyəm*, the Traditional, Ancestral and Unceded Territory of the

*həŋqəmiŋəm* Speaking *xʷməθkʷəyəm* (Musqueam) People

(where the University of British Columbia is located):

**hay ch q̓a'**

My effervescent thanks goes to Dr. Lisa W. Loutzenheiser,

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## DEDICATION

*Aux coeurs brisés pis résilients du monde que j'ai côtoyé en mil-neuf-cent-quatre-vingt-dix-neuf*

*À toutes zeux qui osent agir, créer, parler, pis écouter, même quand c'est malaisé*

*Aux enseignant.e.s dans ma vie, en commençant par ma famille acadienne*

*À Kisa, qui m'aime pis qui m'appuie en plus de m'endurer*

*J'vous admire pis vous m'inspirez*

*Sylvie*

## Introduction

*I came to explore the wreck.*

*The words are purposes.*

*The words are maps.*

*I came to see the damage that was done*

*and the treasures that prevail.*

—Adrienne Rich

Education for change, for peace, for reconciliation, for social justice, for transformation; these are the desires that I have attached to education, the ideals tethered to the domain that encompasses the complex, tension-filled concept of *education*. An education such as this one moves always forward towards betterment, understood as moving towards building (not deconstructing), towards learning (not unlearning), towards helping (not hindering), and towards healing (not harming). Such is the education I have had in heart and mind as an emerging teacher, scholar, and school leader. My desire-filled education, my imaginary of what education might be, is a phantasy that nourishes the child, uplifts the teacher, and operates from an ethic of care (Noddings, 2013). It inspires, empowers, and enlightens.

Infused with the promise of something new, something *renewed*, this particular story of education entrusts curriculum and pedagogy—and therefore educators—to respond to and repair trauma, and to restore what has been erased, forgotten, or hidden by, through, and from the public education of children. In this imaginary, the possibility of the failure of education that

confronts certain children more than others—namely children who have experienced or are experiencing trauma, LGBT2SQ+<sup>1</sup> children, Indigenous children—absolves itself; that is, this imaginary reconfigures education as ‘antidote’ to the harms children might otherwise encounter at the site of education (see Cavanaugh, 2016; Farley, 2009; hooks, 1994; Pitt & Britzman, 2003; Tupper, 2014; Zembylas, 2014).

Glimmers of such hopeful desires are embedded in the ‘renewed’ curriculum of the British Columbia (BC) Ministry of Education, which was piloted in 2015, progressively enacted starting in 2017, and continues today. Previously marginalized, unthinkable knowledges and identities (e.g. Indigenous and queer) have become encapsulated in state-sanctioned curricula, meant to be implemented by teachers under the guidance and oversight of administrators and school districts. On the heels of changes to the BC Human Rights Code, new ministerial directives now obligate districts to implement sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) policies in all schools.

Additionally, in the spirit of the *Calls to Action* in education of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada (2015), the integration of *First Peoples’ Principles of Learning* and the ‘indigenization’ of BC curriculum now explicitly mandates public educators to (re)tell colonial history and to surface ‘absent presences’ (Leanne Simpson, 2011 in Nxumalo, 2015) in/through curriculum, including the history and legacy of residential schools and the resilience of Indigenous Peoples and cultures. It is in this recent context that my imaginary of

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<sup>1</sup> LGBT2SQ+ is an acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Two-Spirit, Queer, as well as markers of identity that exceed the ones listed here, as indicated by the plus sign, which also holds space for change over time and/or along the continuum of possible identities included in the LGBT2SQ+ spectrum. Source:

<http://serc.mb.ca/sexual-health-info/sexuality/lgbt2sq/>

what education *might be* took flight and reoriented my intertwining personal, professional, and academic paths.

In the following section, I elaborate the ‘conceptual archeology’—a term I borrow from Pitt and Britzman (2003)—of this thesis, many times ‘undone and redone’ as I have engaged in what Butler (2004b) describes as a “practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint” (p. 1 as cited in Farley, 2018, pp. 19-20). The improvisational practice of unravelling and reworking my imaginary of education echoes the pattern of my artistic practice as a dance artist, my chosen field prior to delving into education. I am continuously drawn to exploring what binds us, and what I am bound to, in the hopes of uncovering strands of transformative (i.e. healing) potential. As a dance artist, I have buried myself in sand and pebbles, wrapped myself in wool, and draped myself in an overbearing, oversized dress—all of which I have adorned as I searched for literal and metaphoric ways out of their weights as I interfaced with the theme of trauma and hope carried in the earth, in the body, and in history.

This pattern finds its way here, in this thesis and in my educative journey, as I dance with the vulnerability of ‘undoing and redoing’ what (I think) I know about the heaviness of trauma and the optimism of hope, and what (I think) I wish to uncover to support children in the realm of education. If one assumes that there is no growth without discomfort, as I do, then the dissonance of ‘constrained’ yet hopeful improvisation carries the promise of new ways of ‘doing’ education. I root my recursive search for *renewal* in a genuine, albeit complicated desire to ‘learn from the past’ and ‘make things better.’ As I will explore more deeply throughout this text, ‘weaving from a broken web’ (to paraphrase Adrienne Rich) is an apt metaphor for the precarious hopefulness and resilience that can be sifted from what has fallen apart. Recognizing the weaving of trauma in education, including the trauma to which I am bound, I am compelled

to attend to concepts that might reconfigure the ‘broken web’ into something that holds us as we tend to the ‘wounds’ of education.

### **Conceptual Archeology**

In the last few years, the strands of curricular and policy changes named above have interwoven tightly into my web of educative desires. Their fusion reinforced a personal career turn away from dance and towards ‘education for reconciliation.’ This reorientation was catalyzed by events that I witnessed at Elsipogtog, Mi’kma’ki (or Rexton, New Brunswick as named by the settlers) in the Fall of 2013. Visiting the Mi’kmaw Warrior camp set up to prevent hydraulic fracturing, I saw first-hand the violence done to Indigenous bodies trying to defend their land and water to protect the health of present and future generations. This historical moment transpired in the heartland of the Richibucto River (i.e. the River of Fire), bringing into sharp relief a topography of ongoing trauma, the strength and resurgence of Indigenous peoples and the land, as well as the urgent need for the reparation of relations among peoples and with the earth. I felt profoundly compelled to ‘do something’ to support the latter.

During this time, I began working with children as an educational assistant in small, rural schools in the area. Standing at the confluence of the River of Fire and the sea, one of the elementary schools where I worked became a symbol imbued with the hope that education could be a way of doing ‘something more.’ At this school, students from distinct cultural backgrounds (e.g. Acadian, Mi’kmaw, Anglophone, Hispanic) were coming together through music-based and social-emotional initiatives. In my mind, this restorative work was echoing the joining of previously at-odds communities now standing with Elsipogtog. With the concept of reconciliation strongly anchored at its center, my educative web became suffused with the conviction that the wounds of settler colonialism (e.g. the intergenerational trauma of residential

schools) could somehow be redressed through public education centered on respect and care for each other and the planet.

My emergent understanding of the concept of ‘education for reconciliation’ found a home in the words of Justice Murray Sinclair of the TRC who, referring to residential schools in Canada and their enduring impact on Indigenous Peoples, stated that: “Education got us into this mess, and education will get us out” (as cited in Atleo, 2013). The surfacing of ‘truth and reconciliation’ in BC’s new curricular orientations reinforced my imaginary that education could be akin to the ‘wounded healer’ that uses their own trauma to help others heal, and that settler educators could, and should, be ‘allies’ to the education-based project of ‘getting out of the mess’ of education.

As I spiraled deeper into my wish to capture *How do settler teachers enact reconciliation through education?*—the intention that carried me into the realm of professional education—I avidly read thinkers such as Battiste (2013), Grande (2009), Smith (2012), Gaztambide-Fernández (2012), Tupper (2014), Simpson (2014), Haig-Brown (2009), Morgensen (2011), and Tuck and McKenzie (2014). Their work transformed my questioning into a profound and persistent, at times haunting, desire to understand how settler educators like myself might support decolonization in a settler colonial state such as Canada. Yet, as I extended my thinking and sense of being in this direction, the goal of ‘allying’ my settler self to decolonization became mired in ‘aporias and impasses’ (Lather, 2006) enmeshed in the ontological, epistemological, and ethical limitations of the concept of reconciliation.

Incommensurably, reconciliation both propelled me along my educative path, and removed the very ground on which I thought I was walking. Groundlessness eventually became an intentional place from which to think, read, and seek new understanding of place-



consciousness in education (Mazerolle, 2017). In this light, the metaphor of the web gains new meaning as a place that is continuously recreated without being attached to solid ground. Such uprootings continue to move this thesis in unforeseen directions, and impasses, such as those I turn to briefly in the section below.

### **Decolonization, settler futurity, and incommensurability.**

In reading the work of Tuck and Yang (2012) at the beginning of my graduate studies, it became increasingly clear that my desire-filled questions attached to the concepts of settler allyship, reconciliation, and decolonization through education were owed no answer; that is, decolonization is not accountable to (my) settler futurity. Settler futurity according to Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) “seeks to recuperate and not interrupt settler colonialism, to reform the settlement and incorporate Indigenous peoples into the multicultural settler colonial nation state” (p. 80). In contrast, the ‘ethic of incommensurability’ articulated by Tuck and Yang (2012) means “relinquishing settler futurity, abandoning the hope that settlers may one day be commensurable to Native peoples” (p. 36). Despite—perhaps even because of—the hope of contributing to reconciliation, I was recreating what I sought to prevent. “Those strategies or positionings that attempt to relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege, without having to change much at all” are ‘settler moves to innocence’ (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 10). My involvement in the continuation of settler colonial education through my professional and academic work is entangled with “the settler colonial curricular project of replacement” (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013, p. 80). Settler colonialism continues to give me access to power and to accrue privilege and resources as a settler educator, regardless of my earnest attempts to understand or contribute to reconciliation or decolonization.

My emergent understanding of the discursive and material impossibilities of decolonization through settler colonial projects led to a pervasive *remise en question* of my original educational intentions. From the unravelling, a new question arose: *What are the barriers to teachers engaging in difficult conversations and with difficult knowledges (Britzman, 2000) such as SOGI and the TRC Calls to Action?* Although different, this question still did not escape my settler colonial desire for education to be conciliatory, knowable, forward-moving, and future-oriented. The unspoken desire embedded in this line of inquiry was that, through conversations with teachers, I could identify and *remove* barriers, thus move past and hopefully resolve the tensions and hesitations around teaching ‘difficult knowledge’ (Farley, 2009; Tupper, 2014; Zembylas, 2014) such as SOGI and ‘truth and reconciliation.’

### **Begin and begin again.**

As I engaged with this second question through writing and reading for my thesis, my thinking and my research again came undone. Leaning into the discomfort and uncertainty, I took up this change of course as an invitation to explore the invitation “to begin and begin again” (Foucault, 1984/1985 as cited in Taguchi & St. Pierre, 2017, p. 644). This recursive process offered an opportunity to queer the course of my educational thinking/doing/being through new lines of inquiry. In using the notion of queering, I am referring to the sense imbued by Muñoz (2009), who defines queerness as that which “lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing,” and as that which insists “on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world” (p. 1). Although interconnected, this usage is distinct from the word ‘queer’ in the historically reclaimed sense of personal identity, or in the sense of non-heteronormative. It is a term that can move in many directions, one whose fluidity I call upon throughout this thesis—wherein ‘queer’ is intended and employed to examine the possibilities for ‘another (educative)

world,’ to hint at what is ‘missing,’ and to (dis)orient the theoretical concepts and methodological pathways of this thesis. Queer/ness is complex and tension-filled, namely as it pushes up against other concepts to be explored in the next sections, e.g. Berlant’s (2006, 2011) ‘cruel optimism’ and Stockton’s (2009) ‘queer child.’

Where does the course of education run, when it is not the education I had in mind? Beginning and beginning again, and again, I find myself in radically different theoretical, ontological, and methodological terrains as I compose the third iteration of my thesis. As fissures, tensions and incommensurabilities reveal themselves across and within my desired ‘educations,’ I stand on the fault lines, unsettled, unsure. To paraphrase James Baldwin (1962), if nothing can be changed until it is faced (if it can be changed at all) how does one face this ‘mess’ or ‘wreck’ of a seemingly always already ruined endeavor? What happens when encounters with land, water, history, identity, curriculum, and theory unravel one’s ‘nexus of desire’ (Berlant, 2011) and break apart an idealist pedagogical heart?

As I continue to linger in this moment of ‘disorientation’ (Ahmed, 2006, 2010) and of broken yet enduring educative desires for ‘renewal’ and ‘repair,’ I am called to examine the profound question of “how is it that we become available to a transformation” of what education is and does, “a contestation which compels us to rethink ourselves, a reconfiguration of our ‘place’ and ‘ground’” (Butler, 1995, p. 132 as cited in St. Pierre, 2011, p. 614). This complex question permeates my thinking and writing, anchoring the surge of questions that move within this thesis. What remains as the ‘ground’ and ‘place’ of education shifts? And, who is left standing?

Who the ‘child’ is understood to be, the one that education seeks to educate, is imbued with educative desires of futurity that cannot escape an undertow of trauma, one that exceeds my

metaphors and spills into the lives of children—and of those who, like me, are ‘adults looking backwards’ (to borrow from Stockton, 2009) at their childhood education. As is explained in more detail below, I dive into this ‘looking backwards’ at trauma in education with the help of vignettes that serve as buoys to mark the main concepts examined in this thesis. The queer desire for ‘another world’ that resolves and heals from trauma in/through education propels the at-times painful work of looking back in the hopes of looking forward again, or looking ‘differently.’

Thus I begin and begin again once more, not on any solid ground, but in the flux of three concepts that emerge in the wake of my *tourbillon* of questions around trauma and education: vulnerability, hope, and the child. The journey of this thesis has unexpectedly also meant turning to face their confluence, and turbulence, in my life. Using the concepts of vulnerability, hope, and the child to think queerly about education—and, in the act of thinking, queering each concept in turn—invokes an “ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 1), one that faces trauma and loss at the same time as it attempts both to deconstruct and recreate (new) educative imaginaries.

From the constellation of experiences and thinking that I have shared here, my guiding question for this thesis has become: *How might the concepts of vulnerability, hope, and the child queer thinking about what education is and does, especially in relation to trauma?* To bring this question to life, I am creating a ‘scene of constraint’ that includes vignettes and literature that speak to each concept. I also engage in a ‘practice of improvisation’ with theoretical, ontological, ethical, epistemological, and methodological pathways (and cul-de-sacs) that might allow for a transformation and reconfiguring of education, trauma, vulnerability, hope, and the child.

Embracing groundlessness involves theory, ontology and methodology that destabilize the researcher, which in my case has meant reconceptualizing my thesis as an experimental,

conceptual, at times philosophical piece with post qualitative commitments (which I explicate more fully below). My divergent pathway follows threads pulled from Adrienne Rich's writing, whose poem *Diving into the Wreck* (quoted in the epigraph) in part reads: "I came to explore the wreck. / The words are purposes. / The words are maps. / I came to see the damage that was done / and the treasures that prevail" (Rich, 1973). Similarly, my questions are exploratory, drawn to what is 'broken,' intentionally guided by concepts, and attracted to the glint of hope—and the 'glow' of data—amidst the debris of my educative imaginary.

In the following sections, I bring in theory and methodology that hold the 'scene' for the subsequent encounters with the three main concepts that illuminate this thesis. I then turn to the 'restorying' that emerges, the 'broken web' of this work, as well as wonderings that I carry with me after this journey. In retrospect, another dance pattern emerges in the organization of this thesis: flowing, staccato, chaos, lyrical, and stillness (Gabrielle Roth's five rhythms; see *5Rhythms*, 2019). From the flow of this introduction, I move through the sharper edges of theory, the chaos of post qualitative inquiry, the lyrical depth of each concept, then venturing into resonant stillness at the end.

## Theoretical Framework

Whereas I was propelled into the world of education—academic and professional—by the binding force of desires attached to reconciliation, encounters with theoretical concepts and practices such as incommensurability, disorientation, cruel optimism and post qualitative inquiry unexpectedly made ‘reconciliation’ begin to unravel and lose its charge. Without the steady pulse of reconciliation driving me and my place in education, I felt lost. What becomes my story of education *without* reconciliation at its heart? It seemed impossible to resolve this question without diving more deeply into the places where I lost my bearings, where my ‘compass’ broke; places that I invested with the potentiality of leading to new, queered ways of knowing, thinking and understanding the web of education and my place in it.

To help make sense of what is broken, I continue to search for the fissures that let the light get in, to paraphrase poet and singer Leonard Cohen (1992). Thus, I am inspired by José Esteban Muñoz (2009) who wrote that he uses other’s theories “not as orthodoxy, but instead to create an opening in queer thought” (p. 2). Encounters with theorists such as Tuck and Yang (2012), Ahmed (2006, 2010), Berlant (2006, 2011), and St. Pierre (2011, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017a, 2017b) ‘cracked’ my thinking and writing, shedding new ‘light’ that redirected my focus towards what is fracturing and disorienting. This process echoes Mazzei and Jackson (2012) who look “for the places of rupture that signal the partial, the incomplete, and always-in-process tellings” (p. 750). What ‘glows’ through these places of rupture attracts my attention for its potential to help me make sense of similarly fractured, partial, incomplete, and ‘always-in-process tellings’ that are shared as vignettes on traumatic experiences from 1999.

As an emerging scholar intrigued by queer theory, critiques of settler colonialism, poststructuralism, and post qualitative research—in particular for their capacity to provoke

rethinkings, unravellings, and ‘new’ lines of inquiry—the aforementioned theorists produce “vital moments of disorientation” (Ahmed, 2006, p. 157) such as those described in the introduction. These ‘moments’ bring into tension hope and uncertainty at the site of education, including within educational research. Just as the hope-filled path that led me to the field of education is entangled with the persistent spectre of vulnerability, so too is my thesis enmeshed in concepts and thinkers whose work inspires as much as it undoes me. The possibility that I might create unintended harm through my very attempts at preventing harm—e.g. that I may be furthering settler colonialism through ‘education for reconciliation’ or that addressing trauma in education in my thesis might amplify trauma—makes me pause and contemplate my potential implication in those very things I wish to resolve.

The undoing, or breaking apart of that which was previously held tightly together (e.g. my sense of self as an educator for peace) creates dissonant interruptions that move me into unfamiliar, at-times painful, often chaotic terrains—literal and metaphorical concussions that blur my thinking and force me to stop. Yet my attachments persist, such as the hope that I might find ‘answers’ on how to ‘fix the mess’ of education and do things ‘better’ by learning new ways of moving through, and within, the discomfort, trauma, and disorientation.

What Berlant (2011) names as one’s “endurance in the object” is apparent in my pattern of optimistic attachment to the ‘scene’ of education as making possible ‘a cluster of promises’ (pp. 23-24) of positive change, healing, and reconciliation through education. In great part, this thesis is a ‘becoming aware’ of the object’s pull, which sets the stage for a confrontation to what is “incoherent or enigmatic in [my] attachments” (p. 23). Read through the lens of cruel optimism (Berlant, 2011), which is “a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility” (p. 21), my ‘endurance’ in education reveals my choice to “ride the wave of the

system of attachment” of my educative desires (p. 28). I continue to choose to enter the surf, if only to learn how to recover from the crashing waves and attend to a “relation of reciprocity, reconciliation, or resignation that does not mean defeat by it” (p. 28). Perhaps misguided, I keep diving back in as I attempt to pierce through waters that are at times utterly impassable. To buoy my attempts at breaking through, I have gathered theories and concepts as referents that allow me to think (queerly) within a dizzying nexus of cruel optimism.

Queerness appears here to push up against the brackets that constrain what can be imagined or lived, insisting “on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 1). Disorientation emerges as a way in (i.e. a way of being), and as a result of, the ‘hall of mirror’ type confrontation to what is “incoherent or enigmatic in [my] attachments” (Berlant, 2011, p. 23). Before delving into queerness and disorientation further, I linger briefly with the notion of cruel optimism as it applies to my theoretical inclinations. Part of what makes optimism cruel, according to Berlant (2011), is that we form attachments “likely ahead of their loss” (p. 21). In a similar line of thought, St. Pierre (2011) shares: “I formed and then shed attachments to scholars and their theories as I read, and those shifts taught me there would always be another sentence in another book that might well shatter my life again” (p. 620). Although I presently attach my research to those with whom I may very well end up breaking up—to paraphrase Eve Tuck (2010) on Deleuze—I proceed, compelled to place my thinking on vulnerability, hope, and the child in resonance with queerness, cruel optimism, and disorientation as my theoretical framework.

### **Queerness and Cruel Optimism**

My ongoing attachments to future-oriented hope both affectively and theoretically inform the writing of this thesis. By taking up queerness as a mode of theoretical desire, I follow Muñoz



(2009) who posits queerness as ‘not-here-yet’ ideality, as another world permeated with potentiality, and as a “structuring mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present” (p. 1). In *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz (2009) invites us not only to “reconsider ideas such as hope and utopia,” but also to *feel* them as we “carefully cruise” for the potentialities of the ‘not-yet-here’ (p. 18). I take up his invitation and enter the “realm of educated hope” (p. 3), curious to see what happens when hope is consciously employed; namely, as a “backward glance that enacts a future vision” (p. 4). This project attempts this partly by writing vignettes and a conceptual archeology that glance backwards and surface ‘disappointed hopes’—a concept that Muñoz borrows from Bloch (1961)—that “are nonetheless indispensable to the act of imagining transformation” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 9). This brings me back to Butler’s (1995) question of how one becomes available to a transformation (p. 132 as cited in St. Pierre, 2011, p. 614), in this case even when what we desire, e.g. hope, is undone in the process. Muñoz (2009) states that “the eventual disappointment of hope is not a reason to forsake it as a critical thought process” (p. 10). I take this to heart as I engage with broken yet enduring desires for a transformation of education.

Whereas Muñoz (2009) proposes queerness as a holding onto hope that does not feel like a foreboding loss but a gain of futurity, cruel optimism is a relation that “exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing” (Berlant, 2011, p. 1). The claim I am making here is that this ‘contradiction’ or tension can be read not only in the desire for—and obstacles to—the ‘flourishing’ of my educative imaginary, but also in the desire that queerness can birth potentiality, aided by hope.

In this thesis, I read with the cruel optimism of queerness as a mode of theoretical desiring, bringing together two seemingly at-odds yet mutually resonant theoretical constructs.

At the risk of being reductive, I briefly sketch some of these convergences and divergences here. Berlant (2011) makes her argument about (cruel) optimism in resonance with Muñoz (2009), but she does so with the caveat that her optimism is not future-oriented; unlike Muñoz, she does not see the present as “more or less a problem to be solved by hope’s temporal projection” (Berlant, 2011, p. 13). When Muñoz (2009) writes that queerness “is that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing” (p. 1), it is a form of queerness that we can read into Berlant’s (2011) description of the present moment as being in “extended crisis” (p. 7), or what she refers to as “the overwhelmingly present moment” (p. 49). The difference is that Berlant (2011) does not move from this observation of the ‘not-enough’ of the world to ‘hook’ optimism onto the future; rather, she describes optimism as a way of organizing the present (p. 14) and of attuning to what “makes beings bound to the present rather than to futures” (p. 12). Yet queerness desires another future, outside of the ‘norm’ of crises.

The queer yearning for, and cruel optimism of, a temporality that resolves the overwhelming present is a desire that may ultimately threaten our well-being (Berlant, 2006, p. 21). That is to say, where cruel optimism is at play, the object or scene of our desire can contribute “to the attrition of the very thriving that is supposed to be made possible in the work of attachment in the first place” (Berlant, 2006, p. 21). Yet attachments continue in their form, despite ‘disappointed hopes’ (Bloch, 1961 as cited in Muñoz, 2009, p. 9) or diminished health, because they nonetheless continue to give us a “sense of what it means to keep on living on and to look forward to being in the world” (p. 21). For instance, exhaustion, burnout, even concussions, are illustrations—and embodied experiences—of the ‘attrition’ of thriving that results from being attached to ‘flourishing’ through/of education.

Such compromised conditions of possibility, i.e. cruel optimism of futurity include the incommensurability of decolonization (Tuck & Yang, 2012) and the tension embedded in the concept of queer *settler* futurity that is necessarily entangled in “colonial desires to belong to stolen land” (Morgensen, 2011, p. 227). This realization has made the concept of ‘place-consciousness’ as a queer settler become mired in the disjunction of *not* belonging to Indigenous land and therefore the places I inhabit and love. To dream up a different (queer) future is to dream it up *somewhere*, yet how can this incommensurable elsewhere be gained ethically on stolen land? Queer settler futurity also has to grapple with the “mistiming” of its belated futurity since queer childhood, symbolically, “refers to a time that ‘has never been present’ as such, and does not spawn seamlessly forth into a future made after its image” (Stockton, 2009 as cited in Farley, 2018, p. 129). As will be explored in more depth later, the myth of “linear trajectories of development” is exposed by the queer child that is never “simply ‘on their way’” (Rose, 1992, p. 13 as cited in Farley, 2018, p. 129). The cruel optimism of queerness as a mode of theoretical desiring endures in the work of this thesis precisely because it surfaces the tensions, incommensurabilities, and ‘mistimings’ that feel necessary, namely, for dislodging my assumptions and claims of rooting into places that do not belong to me.

I move forward, and ‘sideways,’ knowing that the concepts to which I have attached the queer ideality of ‘looking forward’ are rooted in settler groundlessness. This tension-filled desiring is what propels my research theoretically, epistemologically, ontologically, and methodologically—even though I hear Berlant’s warning that these attachments may prevent the very ‘flourishing’ or survival of what they are intended to help me *think, be* and *do* within the context of education and educational research. Having now briefly danced with Berlant’s ideas, I cannot yet unthink them, or write without them, even as I attempt to navigate and move through

their disorienting force. Her statement that the “labor of reproducing life”—in this case in the form of working towards educative renewal and futurity, professionally and academically—is “also the work of being worn out by it” (Berlant, 2006, p. 23) deeply resonates within me. My ‘endurance’ in this theoretical scene and its objects continues, although compromised and disorienting, because I remain profoundly attached to the ‘possibility’ of queering the future of education.

### **(Dis)orientation**

Ahmed’s (2006) notion of orientation focuses attention on “how we come to find our way in a world that acquires new shapes, depending on which way we turn” (p. 1). To be oriented is “to be turned toward certain objects” (p. 1) and not others. What or whom we face and direct our energy towards shapes our inhabitation of the world and how we “apprehend this world of shared inhabitation” (p. 3). In this thesis, I am asking *How might the concepts of vulnerability, hope, and the child queer thinking about what education is and does, especially in relation to trauma?* To attend to this question, I am turning to face ‘objects’ that direct me towards certain thinkers and modes of inquiring, and away from others. It is in the hopes of showing the “work that is repeated over time that is often ‘hidden from view’” that I am including a conceptual archeology (shared in the introduction) as a gesture towards the “background” of the objects of this thesis (p. 63). Ahmed (2006) writes that “what is behind us is also what allows other ways of gathering in time and space, of making lines that do not reproduce what we follow but instead create wrinkles in the earth” (p. 179). This idea captivates me, and inspires my use of five vignettes to reveal other fragments of ‘what is behind me’ and to alter the topography of my research, as explained in greater detail in the subsequent methodology section.

A related concept or practice that is embedded in my thinking is *disorientation devices*, which Ahmed (2010) names as those that make “things lose their place, which means the loss of coherence of a certain world” (p. 254). Cruel optimism, queerness, and disorientation act as theoretical disorientation devices that challenge the compass of what educational research might look like, testing the boundaries of this ‘scene of constraint’ (Butler, 2004b as cited in Farley, 2018, pp. 19-20). These ‘disorientation devices’ have been dislodging my beliefs and expectations that my work could not yet be experimental and that I needed to adopt empirical or qualitative research leanings to support my work. Instead, the idea that I could let *what* I am researching and thinking with inform *how* I could do this work made space for the unexpected, including weaving in elements taken from art-based i.e. somatics/dance practices. The ‘spinning compass’ of post qualitative inquiry similarly became a way of (attempting) to make sense of the displacement of trauma, i.e. the ‘wounds’ of education, that I did not intend to summon in this work. In short, what I am researching is also the way that I am researching it as I ‘grow sideways’ (Stockton, 2009) into and with this project.

In a similar vein, Lather (2006) proposes “a ‘disjunctive affirmation’ of multiple ways of going about educational research” that layers complexity, foregrounds problems, and thinks outside “easy intelligibility and transparent understanding” in order to “move educational research in many different directions” (pp. 52-53). By “thinking difference differently” the hope is to “create alternative practices of research as a site of being and becoming” and surface more “interesting and useful ways of knowing” by reappropriating “contradictory available scripts” (pp. 52-53). To value the ‘irreconcilable’ (Tuck, 2010) wrinkles and shatters ‘easy intelligibility,’ unsettling ways of thinking, being in, and doing educational research. The potentiality of other worlds that are not beholden to trauma has emerged as what is queerly, and

perhaps cruelly, desired through this unsettling work.

An interconnected element is that of deconstruction, whose contested definition offers multiple points of entry for analyzing an object of desire such as education. Spivak (1993) wrote that the deconstructive stance is to persistently “critique a structure that one cannot not (wish to) inhabit” (p. 284 as cited in St. Pierre, 2011, p. 613). What interests me, or what I remain attached to, is the potentiality of deconstruction that Derrida names as the “overturning and displacing [of] a conceptual order, as well as a non-conceptual order with which the conceptual order is articulated” (p. 329, in St. Pierre, 2011, p. 613). Displacement and overturning recall the effects of disorientation devices as described above. Yet Derrida (1971/1982) considers deconstruction to be “neither a theory nor a philosophy. It is neither a school nor a method. It is not even a discourse, nor an act, nor a practice. It is what happens” (as cited in St. Pierre, 2017, p. 39). Whether taken up as ‘happening’ or stance, deconstruction holds the cruel optimism of conceptual (and non-conceptual) space for what St. Pierre (2011) calls “productive transformation” that does not suppress or ignore that which is “troubling” (p. 622). Calling in rather than avoiding that which is disorienting, deconstructive, creative, emergent, and partial, post qualitative inquiry reoriented me towards different epistemological and ontological points of entry into the work of this project.

### ***Détours***

In the ‘restorying’ of this thesis, detours into ‘different things to think about’ have taken place, such as trying out post qualitative inquiry (more on that in the methodology section). Seeing where the ontological turn might take my theoretical framework is another deviation that veers onto side roads that hopefully are entryways into doing and thinking things differently. Moving through theory in this way takes me more time as it asks me not just to think through my

concepts, but to embody them through the action orientation of the ontological turn. This echoes my previous experiences of doing inquiry through the body (i.e. dance), where movement is a way of creating new understanding. The action orientation also affirms the ethical imperative to act, namely in the face of injustice or harm. The pulse of ‘reconciliation’ runs through this ethical charge and is part of what magnetizes my thesis/imaginary to a place where it might be reinvented.

Bazzul and Kayomova (2006) frame the ontological turn as “[a] conceptualization of education and learning through acknowledging the politicization of ontology [that] allows educators to merge critical, post-foundational perspectives with questions of ontology: not only what exists, but *what could exist and how things could or should be*” (emphasis added, as cited in Zembylas, 2017b, p. 1410). This is particularly interesting in its echoing of queerness-as-ideality, for it reframes queerness as both theoretical construct and as an ontological stance that moves us, ideally, towards action. In his work on trauma and difficult knowledge in education, Zembylas (2017b) stresses an action orientation, declaring that:

the contribution of the ontological turn is that it develops a theoretical, ontological basis for a critical orientation in education and learning that can realize the *possibility of shifting between different realities* (or different ‘worlds’) as an opening that holds great implications for the quest of a radical politics that could develop *a radically different world*. (emphasis added, p. 1410)

I cite this passage at length as it provides an example of the intersection of education and the cruel optimism of queerness: the (cruel) optimism that education can be re-oriented through ontology and theory, opening up a world of radical difference. The aspiration of queerness through education, of a radically different world, presumes that we can choose to enter

*ontologically* into the difficult terrains of the past and present. Zembylas' work, which seeks to engage "ethically and politically with traumatic representations of curriculum and grievable lives," acknowledges that stepping "into the terrain of learning and acting in the face of difficult knowledge is nothing less than a daunting task" (Zembylas, 2014, p. 408). Moving through this task is inherently vulnerable—ontologically, theoretically, epistemologically, affectively—as it involves risks of 're-traumatizing,' disheartening, or overwhelming those who address trauma and grief at the site of education.

Is there a different way of entering into this 'daunting task' of engaging vulnerability, hope, and the child in terrains where trauma dwells? Writing from the vantage point of the 'ontological turn,' Holdbraad (2010) proposes a "reversal of the conventional relationship between analytic concepts and data;" that rather "than using our own analytical concepts to make sense of a given ethnography (explanation, interpretation), we use ethnography *to rethink our analytical concepts*" (emphasis added, p. 184 as cited in Zembylas, 2017b, p. 1407). Here, instead of using the three main concepts of this thesis to understand experiences of trauma in education, I use experiences of trauma to open up my three concepts.

Being and dwelling in the realm of trauma in education is not possible for me without a sense of safety. I seek this support namely in the form of theory, ontology, epistemology and methodology that model the courage (and vulnerability) to think, embody, see, and do things differently, or queerly, i.e. in the hopes of arriving *elsewhere* safely, and ethically. Inquiry that seeks 'difference' includes what Lather (2006) calls the "longing and wariness of an ontological and epistemological home." In the seeking, the task to confront "the limits of our conceptual frameworks that are so much about what we have already ceased to be" moves us towards "some place where oppositions dissolve through the very thinking they have facilitated" (p. 40). To



‘confront’ in order to ‘dissolve’ echoes the queerness that desires and is attached to an ‘ideal’ elsewhere, in this case, to a ‘home’ where my questions (and attachments) might find shelter.

After the many sharp edges of this section, I now let myself fall into the next rhythm i.e. the chaos of methodology that improvises with practices of post qualitative inquiry. These bring to mind Deleuze’s improvisational “spider-strategy” of “undoing and redoing” (Jackson, 2017, p. 673), whereby the spider learns “by following different rhythms, on very different occasions,” thus following a method that “is not a plan or a starting point but is emergent and revealed in fragments along the way” (Jackson, 2017, p. 667). There is comfort in knowing that the spider can always weave its own web and therefore shelter, in various (dis)orientations, even if the web has been deconstructed or has fallen apart.

## Methodological Dis(Orientation)

Post qualitative inquiry arrived unexpectedly in my intellectual life by way of a supplementary reading by St. Pierre (2011) in one of my graduate courses. Unaware at first, I began to form attachments to the dream (and also dread) of being amongst the students who, having:

to decide ‘what to do,’ how to inquire, what counts as research, and what counts as methodology and method [are] exceedingly fortunate and likely to become our best educational researchers because they are confused from the start, unmoored, exposed from the beginning to diverse knowledges, methodologies, and research practices—at best, wary of attaching themselves to any one research methodology and obliged to invent inquiry in the middle of things. (St. Pierre, 2016, p. 7)

How does one embrace the creative potential of being ‘unmoored’ as well as the confusion of trying to articulate and adopt methodology that is intentionally and unavoidably unclear? How do I reconcile the ‘fortunate’ confusion of my “mix-and-match eclecticism” to the warning of many that “there are some features of alternative epistemologies and methodologies that simply cannot be reconciled” (Wyly, 2009, p. 319 as cited in St. Pierre, 2017, p. 40)? My theoretical framework includes the queer phenomenology of Ahmed (2006, 2010); yet according to Clough (2009), phenomenology centers the (humanist) *I* and, arguably, this cannot sit alongside Deleuze (from whom St. Pierre heavily draws), whose work I still do not comprehend—in English or in French—and have relegated to the proverbial cutting room floor. Tuck (2010) appears here again, whose ‘break up’ with Deleuze and valuing of the ‘irreconcilable’ might offer somewhere

else to anchor my eclecticism—all the while knowing ethically that Tuck’s work is irreconcilable to mine as a settler educator.

Recalling Lather (2006), might this confused, unhinged, messy place of invention-in-the-middle be a “place where oppositions dissolve” (p. 40) into other frequencies? [The background of this question is the song “Wish You Were Here” by Pink Floyd (1975) literally playing on a loop.] Sharing St. Pierre’s (2011) aspiration that inquiry be “provocative, risky, stunning, astounding” and that it “remain *unstable*” (emphasis original, p. 623), I choose to lean into the discomfort of being “lost from the beginning” as I inquire (St. Pierre, 2017, p. 42). In trying on some of the commitments or practices of post qualitative research, a conventional methods-based approach of qualitative research no longer fits—yet I am still held within its ‘ruins’ to paraphrase St. Pierre and Pillow (2000). What does this mean for this project’s methodology, which post qualitative research renders in so many ways unknowable? My answers to this disorienting question remain tentative at best.

To set my bearings in this chosen ‘scene of constraint,’ I set up an ‘improvisational score’ that leaves room for contradictions, distortions, confusion and (cruel) optimism. The data and concepts that I encounter through this experimentation—shared in the form of short vignettes in the following three sections on vulnerability, hope, and the (queer) child—have lit the way, catching my focus even when I would have preferred looking away. Repeatedly, my intuition and my intellect ask of me to brave the discomfort and dare to experiment with disorienting practices that might create space, so that I can hold this process as lightly as possible amidst the density of addressing suicide, and the grandiose yet entirely sincere hope to restore healing and affirm life. In the next pages, I turn to the practices of post qualitative inquiry that I will put in resonance with my concepts and vignettes.

## Practices of Post Qualitative Inquiry

St. Pierre introduced *post qualitative inquiry* in 2011, in her words “to encourage researchers to move past 1980s qualitative methodology, much of which I believe has been overtaken by positivism” (St. Pierre, 2015, p. 82). To do something else methodologically is intended to create conditions out of which the ‘new’ might arise. Post qualitative inquiry can be met with skepticism or be seen as “suspect because it is not recognizable but different, unproven according to standards of the dominant model, perhaps false, and, hence, not good” (St. Pierre, 2017, p. 39). Another form of skepticism, or doubt, informs post qualitative research. Taylor (2017) states that: “Post-qualitative research is more overtly sympathetic to techniques of postmodernist deconstructionism which privilege epistemological doubt and interpretive multiplicity, and which foreground textual experimentation” (p. 312). By making room for the unexpected, these ‘techniques’ intersect with what St. Pierre has recently articulated as practices “that might increase our odds of accomplishing something ‘new’ in new empirical, new material, posthuman, post qualitative inquiry” (St. Pierre, 2015, p. 86). Distilled from this work are four practices for experimenting with post qualitative research: 1) *refusing qualitative methodology*, 2) *read, read, read*, 3) *begin with theory/concepts*, and 4) *trust yourself and get to work*. They are both ways of navigating my ‘scene of constraint’ as well as parameters that mark or delineate my ‘improvisational score’ on the themes of trauma, vulnerability, hope, and the child in education.

In the being and doing of inquiry that centers on specific experiences of trauma and education, which I describe intimately in my vignettes, methodological practices such as *refusing qualitative methodology*, *thinking without method*, *doing the next thing*, *beginning with concepts that demand my attention*, and *following data that ‘glows’* create interruptions that can make

room for counter-stories to come out. The work of this thesis has taken me so much longer than would have a more traditional qualitative methodology, and is replete with doubt and detours even as I attend to the final revisions. On the upside, post qualitative inquiry offers ample room to turn towards and attend to concepts in multiple, sometimes at-odds ways. In the process, I have ended up in unexpected places, in the company of thinkers, poets, dancers, singers and writers that ask of me, and my readers, to trust that the work can be done differently. They have been lights along the sometimes darkened journey of restorying the ‘wounds of education.’ I now turn to four practices of post qualitative inquiry that I invest with the (cruel) optimism of dissolving what binds trauma to the site of education.

### **Refusing qualitative methodology.**

First, post qualitative inquiry comprises “a refusal space” to “think within and against the weight” of qualitative research and its enduring relation to “neo-positivism” (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013, p. 629). The resurgence of positivism can be linked to the endurance of post-World War II ‘methodological positivism,’ which Steinmetz (2005) ties to an unseen “epistemological unconscious” in U.S. sociology (as cited in Clough, 2009). By historicizing and bringing conscious awareness to neo-positivism, and to what St. Pierre (2017) calls the “discursive and material formation” that is “conventional humanist qualitative methodology,” we encounter the possibility of “other formations, other methodologies, or *no methodology at all*” (emphasis original, p. 38). For instance, Jackson (2017) coins and experiments with “thinking without method” as a feminist project of refusal (p. 668). Taking up Deleuze’s description of method as ‘dogmatic image,’ Jackson (2017) articulates *thinking without method* as a way to refuse the naturalization of a “fixed image of method” and instead enter “into the conditions under which concepts are created and expressed” (p. 666). Deleuzian “thought without image” entails

destruction for creation: “to create something new, the dogmatic image of thought must be disrupted and destroyed. We don’t try to understand, recognize, or resolve this force. Instead, we create” (Jackson, 2017, p. 669). Jackson (2017) continues: “my concept of ‘thinking without method’ is not a *solution to* the problem of methods-driven qualitative research but *living with* ‘the possibilities for being otherwise’ (Grosz, 2011, p. 78)” (p. 669). Refusing traditional empirical methods is not merely an act of negation or deconstruction, but an opening towards generative new possibilities. Partly, my intention is to move away from humanism and the idea that there is a singular truth about education, or trauma. Of course there is much to be gleaned of ‘evidence-based research’ on e.g. trauma-informed educative practices, or medical perspectives on trauma (see Levine, 2015); however, trauma within education (or because of it) cannot be transformed within the rigid frames of scientism. Another structure is needed if we are *not* to remain caught in the same cycle of education-trauma, or the ‘mess of education.’ Engaging creatively in post qualitative educational research (and education) is a *gesture toward* what inquiry (and education) *might become*, a *living with* the queer possibility of an elsewhere or otherwise. Refusal is creative, generative movement, an action hinting at its own potential of becoming. In this prism, my thesis recasts itself as a *gesture* towards what might become of my concepts—theoretically, ontologically, and so on—as I live with the possibilities of post qualitative educational research.

Vignettes arose partly as a gesture towards refusal, or at least, from a strong desire *not* to use qualitative methods or data collection in its conventional sense. Through the theorization of the vignettes, refusal arises variously as/through breakdown, uncertainty, discomfort and the deconstruction of concepts such as innocence, modernity or the subjective ‘I’ (that I attempt to

refuse yet cannot escape). The vignettes also refuse to settle any questions, or offer any definitive answers.

### **Read, read, read.**

The texts with which I ‘read, read, read’ as a second practice of post qualitative inquiry are multiple, and multiplying. They include thinking and writing intensely with authors such as Farley (2009, 2018), Zembylas (2014, 2017a, 2017b), Butler (2004), Stockton (2009), and Britzman (2000). If time allowed, my list would include exponentially more texts that emerge as I ‘do the next thing’ (St. Pierre, 2015 as cited in Guttorm, Hohti, & Paakkari, 2015). I connect the practice of ‘read, read, reading’ to ‘doing the next thing’ both because reading is a ‘next thing’ to do when one text surfaces others that connect to or extend the work of one author, and also because reading this intensely invites other practices or ‘next things’ that “experimental ontology enables” (St. Pierre, 2015, pp. 91-92). Examples include walking in the forest, reading in the water, listening to a podcast, lighting a candle, trying to go to yoga, attending a musical, shoveling snow, or months later, picking berries. These are ways to read, ways to avoid reading, and ways to let the readings linger. Read, read, reading also includes reading my writing over and over again, forwards and backwards and sideways, and reading new texts as a result of the reading and writing. In this context, it is important to name the work of writing as a research practice, that is, “writing to think what could not have been thought except in writing” (St. Pierre, 2017, p. 43). Writing and other experimental practices are therefore seen as parts of ‘read, read, reading,’ all of which are meant to help me think and ‘do the next thing.’

Opening up reading as inter-being with the body, actions, avoidances, and various interactions is useful to this project because each ‘thing’ provides unique insights into the concepts. Attending *Children of God* (Payette, 2017) or walking the red brick hallways of *St.*

*Eugene's Mission and Resort* (in June 2019) are visceral (and partial) 'readings' of trauma at the site of education that have no equivalent in print-based text. Watching footage from Chadwick's (2018) documentary *1999*, which I turned away from seeing for almost two years, bypasses the ineffable through imagery, sound, silence, or even the play of a refracted light in front of the camera lens. These ontological turns and embodied practices inform my understanding as much as, perhaps more so, than my other ways of 'reading' the concepts and stories of education that are part of this work. They are also used as ways of 're-reading' my vignettes, which are incredibly difficult for me to witness and share (at least at first); they require meandering moments of integration, including pauses and other mediating experiences to help deal with the affective force of embodied memory.

bell hooks (1994) argues that self-actualization and educator well-being, which are at the heart of 'engaged pedagogy,' are often at odds with academia (p. 18). Yet I am suggesting that they can be aligned; my tea, candles, big blue chair, and even the distant ice caps on the mountain peaks are essential to my work. They are small (and immense) things that help ground me as I 'dive into the wreck' of a thesis on trauma in education. They give me a sense of safety to begin in the first place. In my experience, trauma—understood here as the inability to respond, process, or deal with a painful experience, namely for lack of capacity, support or safety—requires gentle holding so that what is wound tightly together might begin to release. Caring for our wounds and ourselves can be radical, especially if it means building the capacity to engage with each other and the world from a place of expansion rather than contraction. Although naming this engagement is slightly at odds with much of the language of the academic world—including posthumanism—and my assumptions of what I *should* be writing about, there is a sense that it fits into a cultural moment where self care is entering public discourse in a new way.



The study guide accompanying Corey Payette's (2017) *Children of God* (see appendix), a musical that delves powerfully in the trauma and history of Canada's Indian Residential Schools, can be seen as a small example of this as it shares a list of self care practices. The appendix of this thesis is offered in a similar attempt to center well-being and support.

This project also includes less 'romanticized' (e.g. not involving gazing into the distance at picturesque mountains) distractions, delays, avoidances, (two) concussions, crises, and other forms of being held, or forced to stop, in the space between each 'next thing.' The interplay of active practices and 'absence' echoes the creative use of structured improvisation scores, such as in contemporary dance, where the intention and the parameters are relatively fixed, but what happens in between the 'known' markers such as time, body, movement, and space are filled with generative unknowns. I see my Table of Contents in this way, as dotting the topography of my thesis with key elements or viewpoints that are surrounded by elongated ellipses (i.e. ". . . . .  
.....") and numbers. Composing my thesis structure as I might a dance score (see Bogart & Landau, 2005) transposes elements such as body, space, relationship, repetition, and rhythm into my work. Another analogy that I draw from to inform working with 'negative space' is that of 'reading' music by listening for the silence between the notes. An evocative example is Estonian composer Arvo Pärt's use of silences as 'connective pauses,' described by Kähler (2003) as being filled with the radiance of what came before and what comes after. Such liminal, in-between space, is as much a part of the music as are the notes. A final illustration of this point is a web or a net, where the empty space is integral to the 'materiality' of the structure. Bringing these metaphors back to my thesis: what I *do* as I engage with this project is held in both the 'liminal' and the 'material' as I gather fragments of stories that radiate with the concepts of vulnerability, hope, the child. The vignettes are both the

liminality and the materiality of this work; they punctuate as well as hold the field of trauma that I am trying to learn about/from and, as I explain later, within.

**Begin with theory/concepts.**

St. Pierre (2014) explains that “[i]nstead of beginning with methodology, I recommend putting the concepts and theories of experimental ontology to work using the conceptual practices that are appropriate for a particular study” (para. #53). This aspiration materialized partly in the deconstruction of the first two iterations of my thesis, begun again literally by teasing out the concepts that were haunting me, then seeking out theory that spoke to each. Building on this idea of beginning with concepts/theory, Mazzei (2017) offers the observation that “We go to concepts that emerge in the nexus of problems that demand our attention” (p. 677). Trauma that haunts education, particularly the trauma that is carried by some children more than others, has demanded my attention in both professional and scholarly realms.

Thus I begin (again) with St. Pierre’s (2015) advice that I start with “theory(ies) or a concept or several related concepts” that I have identified in my reading “that helps them think about whatever” I am interested in thinking about (p. 89)—not what I thought I should be interested in (e.g. SOGI policy implementation in BC teachers’ classrooms, or decolonial pedagogy by ‘ally’ teachers). After sharing each vignette, I go to the theories and concepts such as queerness, cruel optimism, disorientation, deconstruction, difficult knowledge, mutual trauma, growing sideways, adults looking back, and children looking forward (to name just those). These arose after throwing out two proposals, and then sending a long list of things that bring me joy to my supervisor (from which were teased out the recurring, interrelated themes of vulnerability, hope, and the child, and as a complete ‘shock to thought,’ trauma).

***Concepts as/without method.***

The place where one begins to think without method is “always in the middle of the unexpected, in the violence of an encounter that cannot be predicted” (Jackson, 2017, p. 671). In the context of my conceptual archeology and unfolding research, many a “shock to thought” (Massumi, 2012, cited in Jackson, 2017, p. 671) have been brought into conversation with the concepts of vulnerability, hope, and the child. At times, they force stillness, lead to dead-ends, or summon interconnected ‘shocks to thought’ that change the timbre of this work. Suicidality is an extreme example of a shock to thought that provoked the rebirth of this thesis and the ontological turn towards the ethical imperative to protect youth. Concepts as experiences or “practices that reorient thinking” (Taguchi & St. Pierre, 2017, p. 643) can make us aware of “new variations and unknown resonances” when they converge with each other (Mazzei, 2017, p. 676). In the context of the ‘shock’ of trauma in education, what I attempt to understand is how the use of concepts as method (Specter, 2014 as cited in Mazzei, 2017) might shed new light on the constellation of hope, the child, and vulnerability. If I think about these from new vantage points, can I make them “appear with a different radiance, ambiance, vibration, or tone” (Taguchi & St. Pierre, 2017, p. 646)? The nexus of theory, epistemology, ontology and methodology that informs this inquiry creates a resonant (at times dissonant) field where *vulnerability*, *hope*, and *the child* has morphed into *vulnerability*, *hope*, and *the (queer) child*. Each concept glows differently in the aftermath of each other, as I attempt to show in the following sections.

MacLure (2013) describes data “that ‘glows’ as ‘a fieldnote fragment or video image’ [that] ‘starts to glimmer, gathering our attention’ because it resists analysis, refuses to render up its meaning” (as cited in Sommerville, 2016, p. 1163). An illustration would be Jackson’s (2017) encounter with a backflip (unplanned and in the middle of a dance), a perplexing occurrence during her doctoral research that she was not able to recognize, yet sensed as a ‘shock to

thought.’ Sommerville (2016) gives the example two tiny videos created during her fieldwork that produced an “affective pull that grabbed my attention and would not let go” (p. 1164). In other words, “data that glows chooses us” (p. 1169). My vignettes on trauma arrived in the middle of what I thought was another project entirely, somehow emerging as I contemplated joy (the vignettes are *not* joyful). Like little lanterns, they have lead me in all sorts of shocking ways.

*Vignettes as data that glow.*

While the word vignette is usually employed in the sense of a brief illustration, a *vignette* in its French etymology also denotes an engraving as well as typographical marks at the end of a chapter. Loss is often inscribed in stone, and is a marker and metaphor for grieving. I have inserted this small gesture of inscription after each vignette. Mixing these multilingual, many layered meanings together, the vignettes brought to light in the following sections are meant as a way of looking at etchings of trauma in the realm of education as well as a means of differently marking the concepts driving my inquiry. Orbiting in a ‘nexus of problems’ tied to trauma and education, the concepts are refracted in the theorization sections that follow “Turning (my) back to 1999,” “Facing the Place Where the Light Enters,” “Redux,” “Running Through / Going Around / Looking Away,” and lastly, “Wish you were here.” These are the five vignettes that have taken on a life of their own, firmly incised yet “growing sideways” (Stockton, 2009) out of these pages. They come from my lived experience of the concepts that drive this inquiry.

In using these vignettes as part of my research process, I am emulating Muñoz (2009) who brought personal experiences into the fold of his writing and thinking not to “wax anecdotally, but, instead, to reach for other modes of associative argumentation and evidencing” (pp. 3-4). Thinking of them queerly as ‘data,’ these vignettes are gathered from an assemblage of memories, correspondence and conversations with acquaintances, friends, family, and other

professionals working in the field of education or mental health, as well as collected from media, including film and video, and archives that relate to the events that they describe. Necessarily partial, and unable to escape the humanist and reflexive ‘I,’ these etchings act as fragmented restoryings. They can also be seen as disorientation devices that weave ‘connective pauses’ throughout the text. Each vignette is followed (and sometimes preceded) by intentional ‘silent’ space, marked by leaving part of the page empty. As short breaks, the spaces left blank point towards what is absent or could have been (there), making room for affect, reflection, and a settling of the ‘shock to thought’ that some of the vignettes may carry.

**Trust yourself and get to work.**

St. Pierre (2015) specifies that the practice of trusting ourselves includes trusting ourselves in *not knowing*. Differently stated: “It is in the experimental moment of *not knowing* what to do next because we are *not* driven by method and methodology that we might push through the grooves of the given and the self-evident toward the new and different in our work and lives” (St. Pierre, 2015, p. 92). In the context of my thesis, making room for experimental moments (e.g. vignettes) holds the promise—and cruel optimism—of accessing modes of thinking and doing research that might bring in something new, or renewed, regarding education and trauma. This hope is entangled in the same nexus of desire that wishes for education itself to be made anew, and that yearns to create a balm for the ‘markings’ of trauma (see Farley, 2009, p. 538) that remain etched in ways of knowing, doing, and being in, settler colonial education.

The detour of the last paragraph illustrates well how what one desires can be an obstacle to its arrival, or the cruel optimism of creating a thesis attached to the hope of ‘resolving’ trauma and changing education. In one paragraph on getting to work and trusting myself, the desires I attach to what I *want* the work to *do* quickly overshadow the *doing*. The push-pull and paradoxes

of experimental epistemology, intuitive inquiry, and action orientated ontology often leave me feeling like my work is the opposite of productive, and the previous paragraph mirrors this sentiment. Yet if I am to *trust* in the work that I am doing, I recognize that detours and dead-ends are indeed a part of the work. St. Pierre (2016) writes: “I like to imagine educational research-to-come as difference instead of repetition when those who inquire do not know what to do next but trust that something new might come out of ‘experimentation in contact with the real’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 12)” (St. Pierre, 2016, p. 10). On that note, it is time to get to work.

## Vulnerability

### Turning (my) back to 1999

In 2018, events in my extended learning community unexpectedly and suddenly brought me back to 1999, or rather, to fragments of memories and intense emotions linked to the year that my high school community went through the shock of multiple suicides and unexpected deaths. Over the course of that year almost two decades ago, I experienced an overwhelming, paralyzing mixture of confusion, fear and heart-breaking grief that shattered students and adults alike as we were repeatedly confronted to the unthinkable deaths of youth by suicide. I remember hearing whispers of one such unspeakable loss in the years just before I attended *Polyvalente Mathieu-Martin* public high school. A few years later, I was amongst the thousands swept under

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In 1999 I was

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An entire community, extending far beyond the school walls, was at a loss in the wake of these suicides. Like a rush of massive, incoming water arriving in a set of quickly collapsing whitewash, each suicide plunged us into deeper mourning and shock.

News headlines followed, some calling our high school “Suicide High.” I searched for meaning and ached for ways to cope. We tried not asking, *Who is next?* No one said to me, *This is trauma*. At the time, it seemed as if no one knew what to do or how to respond. There was so much chaos, so little support...

A fellow alumna, who had watched my dear friend Samara Grace Chadwick’s (2018) film *1999*, recalls how we (the students) were asked to compose lists naming three friends or peers that showed signs of distress or being in need of help. This former student recounts writing down not three but thirty names to be sure to include their closest friends, *just in case* they too were at risk of suicide. Oddly, I have no recollection of this infamous list...

Everything feels partial, blurred, fragmented as I try to remember. My remembrance is mostly empty space, held tightly together by the knots of trauma in my body.

Each loss evokes palpable, unmistakable sadness surrounded by elusive and imprecise details. There are gaps in my memory that obscure names, faces, places and whatever fleeting encounters I had with those who left us too soon. There were nearly 2,000 students attending my high school in 1999...

Although my experience of 1999 is intimately tied to wanting to ‘help’ children (get) through education, for so long I did not look back at that year to face the trauma I share with so many others. I was not able to watch the film *1999* until the very end of this project.



It took tremendous self care work to be able to look directly at the trauma that others, like me, carry with them, and face the ‘wreck’ of 1999 that has remained under the surface for twenty years.

## **Living inside/with trauma.**

In this section I work with the narrative of trauma shared in the preceding vignette to see how the concept of vulnerability might be rethought, reversed, repurposed or reclaimed. For Britzman (2000), “What makes trauma traumatic is the incapacity to respond adequately, accompanied by feelings of profound helplessness and loss, and a sense that no other person or group will intervene” (p. 202). Trauma as the inability to respond (e.g. to injury, loss, abuse, or other forms of ‘wounds’) can be applied to both persons and places; to youth as well as to the systems they inhabit. A traumatized school community beset by a wave of suicides, as was my high school in 1999, brings into focus the precarity of institutions that are intended to ‘help’ children and youth, yet are bound in trauma as well. Asking every student to disclose at least three names of potentially at-risk peers marked the entire student body as vulnerable; those who wrote down names could not escape the risk of losing those they named, and of losing those they did *not* name. This brings to light the cruel optimism of trying to make students safer by unintentionally heightening their sense of impending loss.

Refracted through the trauma of 1999, vulnerability can take on many meanings. When attached to its Latin root word *vulnus* i.e. ‘wound’ (Merriam-Webster, 2019), vulnerability gravitates towards concepts such as precarity, harm, ‘at-riskness,’ helplessness, victimization, and a concomitant need for protection and safety. Youth who are marked by vulnerability-as-risk are often considered to be part of marginal populations or groups that present higher incidences of trauma, including suicidality. In contrast, when read through its suffix -ability (i.e. ‘capable of being’), vulnerability has affinities to concepts such as courage and resilience. My curiosity centers around the ability or capacity to live with ‘wounds’ rather than the at-risk sense that is so often attached to ‘marginalized’ youth such as those perceived or identifying as LGBT2SQ+. I

am mindful of not using youth suicide as a way to ‘convince’ others that youth at the margins need to be ‘saved’ because or in spite of their alterity. No qualifier should be needed to uphold the value of the lives of youth.

I share Farley’s (2018) concern that nonnormative and minoritized children are often “marshaled to do (the) symbolic labour” and are made into “an idealized instance of political transgression” without addressing the question of “how to create conditions that would welcome the same children into a world that is hospitable to difference” (note 7, p. 127). In my vignette, there are both those we lost, and all those we *could* have lost. This disorients the framing of nonnormative and minoritized children as held to do the work named above, because we (the students in 1999) were *all* framed as vulnerable to suicidality, thus we were *all* called upon to do the symbolic labour of living inside trauma. While we were not given the tools to address the conditions or systems that made us vulnerable, we were entrusted with the work of naming and therefore ‘saving’ others and ourselves.

As I look back to 1999, I continue to struggle with the cruel optimism of trying to address the trauma of children by magnetizing discussions of vulnerability to the at-riskness of ‘Othered’ children and youth. I proceed cautiously as I venture into this terrain. To help with this task, I am attentive to Brunila and Rossi (2018) who state that “it is crucial to recognize the fault lines of the power relations related to the ethos of vulnerability,” (p. 293). In this case, they are referring to the *neoliberal* ethos of vulnerability that ascribes “societal problems as individual psycho-emotional deficiencies” (p. 290). The workings of the ethos of vulnerability enable “the formation of a compelling strand of regulative and productive power that permeates policy and practices, encompassing *subjects that can be known and spoken about* [emphasis added]” (p. 289). I follow the glow of vulnerability to see whether “new discourses” or “subject positions”

might become possible (p. 293), especially those that might subvert, or engage queerly, with the ethos of vulnerability in education.

Embedded in the history and ongoing projects of public education are various iterations of these understandings and desires, including the paradox of the perpetuation of vulnerability-trauma-precarity in/through education operating in tandem with the desire to redress or prevent vulnerability-trauma-precarity in/through education. The (re)production of conditions of harm or risk at the site of education is entangled with the desire for education to ‘rescue’ children and to ‘settle the future by learning from the past’ (see Lear, 2006 as cited in Farley, 2009). These contradictions resurface the concept of cruel optimism, for instance, as it emerges in my desire to draw from 1999 to ‘save’ my students now that I am an educator, and to ‘settle’ the future by enacting my educative imaginary e.g. of inclusion, well-being, reconciliation, and renewal through education.

Revisiting historical or ongoing trauma in its many forms confronts educators in particular—in ways that vary according to our histories and experiences—to the vulnerability of teaching and learning from ‘difficult knowledge’ (see Britzman, 2000; Farley, 2009; Tupper, 2014; Zembylas, 2014). The possibility of (re)traumatizing those engaged in teaching or learning about trauma tempers hopes to enhance courage and capacity by addressing painful experiences. How does one increase vulnerability-as-ability without also risking to increase vulnerability-as-wounding, especially in the context of education where we are mandated to ensure the safety of children and youth in our care? On this topic, Zembylas (2014) connects Farley’s (2009) point on “having to tolerate the loss of certainty in the very effort to know” (p. 543) to the “surprising affective force of difficult knowledge and its signification” (Zembylas, 2014, p. 395). Tolerating disillusionment and uncertainty as a mode of meaning-making, as described in Farley (2009),

asks me to embody the affective force of difficult knowledge, and embrace the dialectic of vulnerability as both risk and as capacity. By extension, this is what I am asking of my work as an educator and emerging scholar, all of which are haunted by the spectre of trauma from 1999.

To make sense of this uncertainty and haunting vis-à-vis suicidality, I pause to examine handouts recently published and distributed in schools by EdCan Network and Dalhousie University (Kutcher, Wei & Baxter, 2019a and 2019b). In the handout entitled “3 Myths Dispelled about Student Suicide Prevention,” the authors (2019a) state that there is no evidence in support of suicide prevention programs promoted by the ‘business of suicide prevention’ as either preventing suicide or being harmless. What is more, they argue that according to current research, some programs such as Signs of Suicide (SOS) even increased suicide rates. The *Facts of Education* series handout concludes that:

As schools may be caught between the wish to do something helpful and the sophisticated marketing of products and programs that take advantage of this intent, it is necessary that school staff think critically before they apply any suicide prevention intervention. (Kutcher, Wei & Baxter, 2019a)

In this context, the advice contained on the handout that educators base our responses on ‘what the research says’ points to having to tolerate uncertainty i.e. the impasse of data showing either inconclusive findings or worse, increased harm and suicide rates as a result of programs and products intended to do the opposite. The second handout entitled “Suicide Prevention: 6 Questions School Leaders Should Ask” (Kutcher, Wei & Baxter, 2019b) points away from suicidality and towards mental health literacy and school climate as ways of ‘doing something’ (Kutcher, Wei, & Baxter, 2019b) to confront the difficult knowledge and trauma of student suicide.

Taken together, these two publications both disorient and re-orient the ‘action orientation’ usually expected of educators in regards to “the highly emotional topic” of suicide prevention and suicide events (2019b). ‘Doing something’ thus becomes the imperative of ‘doing something *else*’ e.g. developing “school staff’s capacities to identify, triage, refer, and support students who have a mental illness” (2019b). The action orientation is removed from the terrains of suicide and moved into the ‘elsewhere’ of mental health literacy. The apparent tension between vulnerability-as-risk and vulnerability-as-capacity dissolves as the latter is transferred away from suicidality. That is, vulnerability-as-risk (e.g. suicidality and trauma) is held by vulnerability-as-ability that addresses and tends to mental ‘illness’ and mental health competencies in/through education. From this point of view, there is no ‘resolution’ of the difficult knowledge and experience of traumatic events, other than learning to re-orient towards mental health, well-being and caring.

### ***Difficult knowledge.***

Zembylas (2014) points to difficult knowledge as a “key concept to denote the affective and epistemological challenges in teaching and learning *about/from* social and historical traumas” (emphasis added, p. 391). That is, difficult knowledge signifies ‘representations’ and ‘encounters’ with social and historical traumas both in curriculum and pedagogy (Pitt and Britzman, 2003 as cited in Zembylas, 2014, p. 392). Learning *about* versus learning *from* trauma is articulated as two distinct ‘learning moves’ (see Britzman, 1998 as cited in Zembylas, 2014). Yet in the context of suicidality in particular, such learning moves carry the cruel optimism and possibility of increasing harm, as argued above (see Kutcher, Wei & Baxter, 2019a and 2019b). Met with this ethical impasse, and recalling my experience of 1999, I am interested in a third ‘learning move’ that I describe as the ability of learning *inside* trauma—not just *about* or *from*

trauma. Circumventing the first two moves of learning, this third ‘learning move’ surfaces a new understanding of vulnerability as the capacity of inhabiting and embodying difficult knowledge *experientially*. ‘Affective communities’ (Gandhi, 2006 as cited in Zembylas, 2014) such as my high school community in 1999 lived and learned *inside* trauma. The resilience at the heart of those who carry and move through trauma at the site of education, and elsewhere, flips the narrative of at-riskness or victimization into a counter-story of *survivance* and endurance. Being able to learn inside trauma, i.e. the ability to be wounded, does not resolve the traumatic events; it is a way of being *inside* and learning within an experience ‘difficult knowledge’ or traumatic event.

Learning *from* or *about* the trauma of 1999 can never ‘settle’ its meaning, which far exceeds conceptual or emotional understandings (see Simon, 2011a as cited in Zembylas, 2014, p. 393). Learning *inside* 1999 through this project forces me to turn towards the ways that it is embodied (i.e. re-membered) inside me. This has enabled me to reorient vulnerability away from loss and towards the ability or capacity to live inside/with trauma. Recast as resilience, vulnerability holds the potentiality of meeting trauma queerly as an ideality, even an action, that circumvents the “profound helplessness and loss” or sense of ‘aloneness’ of trauma (Britzman, 2000, p. 202). This hints at the relationality and support required to embody vulnerability in this way.

## Facing the Place Where the Light Enters

I did not mean for this to be about me. This was certainly, definitely not supposed to be about ‘fixing’ mine or anyone else’s trauma. Yet I am caught in a web that cannot release the *I* from me, or trauma from this thesis-story. A story of wounds unhealed, reopened, healing. The story of my sixteen year-old self. Of going to counselling for the first time, a month shy of the twenty-year mark of the last death by suicide at my high school... while completing my thesis on the wounds of education. None of this was planned. *Ceci n’est pas une autoethnographie*.

Trauma: a wound, a gap between body and mind, between now and then, between me and the others who were there alongside me, and those whom I hoped would have been there *for me*. Trauma tricks me into thinking I am alone in the holding, and yet I am held by others who, like me, have been wounded, and by the web that holds us all (I hope). Trauma is a holding in the body (the body holding?) that defies intellectualization, that can literally make my upper back seize in pain when I talk about it. Somatics leads to therapy, to holding my sixteen year-old self.

Today I went where she would have gone: to the metaphysical store filled with goddess statues, tarot cards, gems, and so on. In my hometown, when I was sixteen, the metaphysical store was called *Passage*. There was nothing else like it in Moncton in the 90s. The glow of the candle I bought today at the metaphysical store shines in my peripheral vision as I write this. The illusion that I could somehow escape myself, and not encounter this trauma again, is being burned away. I glance at the flicker of fire, and notice the back of my somatic counselor’s business card where a Rumi quote reads: *A wound is the place where the light enters you*.



### **Encounter(s) with relationality.**

Despite intending otherwise, ‘doing the next thing’ keeps turning me back towards *I* and returning to the ‘speaking’ or ‘voice’ that Clough (2009) describes here:

Following theoretical perspectives that were influencing cultural studies and which would come to be influenced by post-structuralism and deconstruction—queer theory, feminist theory, postcolonial theory and critical race theory—qualitative methodologists joined in the installation of the ‘other’ of western discourse as a subject of writing and narration. In imagining a subject coming to speak for herself in the invention of new genres of expression, among them auto-ethnography and performance ethnography, these critical qualitative methodologists, however, *risked returning methodology to the speaking or the voice of a conscious subject*—that is an uncritical return to aspects of phenomenology. (emphasis added, p. 47)

In the context of this thesis, there is a double meaning to being “a subject in crisis, a ‘fractured I’ who confronts, in an encounter, a signal of what I was ‘not yet thinking’ (Sourabichvili, 2012, p. 209)” (Jackson, 2017, p. 672). In this project, the subject that is in onto-epistemological crisis is also the subject that is confronting historical-affective crisis; this throws my post qualitative (post human) intentions to the wayside and re-centers the *I* that dwells in me as I confront 1999. The ‘in-crisis I’ and ‘fractured I’ echoes the ‘dilemmas of representation’ that Britzman has explored over the years, by which ‘representation’ is “always insufficient and can never match the absences and consequences of trauma” (Zembylas, 2014, p. 409). These dilemmas of (partial) representation reverberate within my fractured vignette on the trauma of 1999, as described in “Turning (my) back to 1999.” I as a ‘conscious subject’ cannot possibly capture the absences or

the ‘unmatchable’ in my representation of trauma. Nor have I found a way to escape the *I* that is itself fractured and partial, as is the ‘voice’ of my vignettes.

Just as the elsewhere of mental health literacy can move us out of the dilemmas of addressing trauma directly and unsafely, another *elsewhere* might help dislodge the hold of the *I*. Gabrielle Roth’s words (shared during a *5Rhythms* dance workshop I attended in Montréal in 2011) come to mind: *I am not in my body. My body is in me*. I bring this up here because the ‘I/me’ in her dance prompt *exceeds* the body while also being a part of it. Perhaps there is no need to escape the *I* or to choose between mind and embodied knowing. Maybe ‘I’ can be reframed in relation to something greater than myself.

What might vulnerability do to the *I* of the vignettes? Can it make room for a “double-sided, material-linguistic status of sense, ‘resonating in the body as well as the brain’ (MacLure, 2013, p. 661)” (Sommerville, 2016, p. 1171)? What if the *I* is recast as an encounter *with* vulnerability, including the vulnerability of others? My questions insert themselves in the image of a web: each intersection, a meeting of threads; each thread, a strand of interconnected stories. In this case, the stories are centered around 1999, and the intersections point to a shared experience of living inside and with the wounds of trauma. Holding this image in mind, *I* becomes a web of relationality that expands out from the ‘conscious (wounded) subject’ and includes the bodies and various temporalities of multiple ‘subjects.’

On relationality and transformation, in the context of thinking with Indigenous and Métis scholars, I have written elsewhere that:

Rubén A. Gaztambide-Fernández (2012) calls upon us “to imagine and pursue modes of human relationality that might constitute forms of resistance to, as well as healing from, the colonality of present conditions” (p. 42). This element of

relationality also emerges in the wisdom of Métis scholar Kathy Hodgson Smith (1997), who shares that “To be in good relation (...) requires us to know one another, to acknowledge our relation now and historically to each other, to all things living and nonliving, especially to the earth that sustains us physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually” (quoted in Haig-Brown, 2009, p. 13). Relationality is likewise present in Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson’s (2014) eloquent statement that “We cannot just think, write or imagine our way to a decolonized future. Answers on how to re-build and how to resurge are therefore derived from a web of consensual relationships that is infused with movement (kinetic) through lived experience and embodiment. Intellectual knowledge is not enough on its own. Neither is spiritual knowledge or emotional knowledge. All kinds of knowledge are important and necessary in a communal and emergent balance” (p. 16). (Mazerolle, 2017, pp. 8-9)

I share this excerpt to think again with the concept of relationality because it exceeds the humanist *I*, attends to movement and the more-than-human world, and is not beholden to the mind/body split of most Euro-centric thought. Relationality can move onto-epistemology out of the neoliberal ethos of vulnerability (referenced earlier) that ascribes “societal problems as individual psycho-emotional deficiencies” (Brunila & Rossi, 2018, p. 290). Relational vulnerability by extension defocalizes from individual ‘deficiencies’ to examine more holistically what might be out of balance, and interconnected pathways for addressing this differently than by pathologizing those who are impacted.

Although I do not and cannot claim to speak for others, ‘my’ vulnerable voice and body are not split from the web of relationality that I inhabit. I invite the notion of the web into the *I*

with which I write and think, seeking to shake its meaning loose from the uncritical ‘conventional humanist’ *I*. On “bourgeois educational structures,” bell hooks (1994) writes that structures of education seemingly “denigrate notions of wholeness and uphold the idea of a mind/body split, one that promotes and supports compartmentalization” (p. 16). In resistance to such fracturing, both the *I* and the concepts at play in this thesis try on notions of vulnerability as a way of engaging as ‘wholly’ as possible in the webbing of this work on trauma in the realm of education. Applying this relational aspiration to vulnerability, I now turn *mutual vulnerability*.

### ***Mutual vulnerability.***

“Let’s face it. We’re undone by each other. And if we’re not, we’re missing something” (Butler, 2004, p. 23). Responding to Butler’s quote, Zembylas (2014) comments that her words highlight “how our affects, such as grief, show the strong entanglements between our psychic lives and the social and political consequences of those affects that often interrupt the self-centered stories we tell” (p. 401). By sketching a “process of interruption” (p. 401) through grief or other encounters with suffering, Butler decenters the socio-political *I* that affectively *feels* alone as well as the *I* that understands itself as separate onto-epistemologically. Therefore, as Zembylas (2014) suggests, “[g]rief and loss can potentially create networks of social and political affect that constitute a collective responsibility for each other’s life” and a sense of our “mutual vulnerability” (p. 404). By thinking deeply on/with trauma, and engaging with its somatic remnants through counselling, a ‘network’ or web of relationality has become visible. The narrative of ‘aloneness’ has been interrupted as I realize that my story is bound to a network of mutual vulnerability. Undone and redone in this way, *I* is restoried—perhaps even restored—as inter-being and entangled with others and their vulnerability.

Mutual vulnerability as an “ethical encounter” directs our attention towards how some lives are (considered) ‘more grievable’ than others, and that not all ‘acts’ are ‘permissible’ for public grieving (Butler, 2004, p. 37). As was my experience in 1999, death by suicide is rarely ‘permissible for public grieving,’ which means that its grief is usually experienced as private. This is not meant to say that grieving suicide deaths *should* be made public, but rather is intended to point out that in the absence of shared public rituals, the network of mutual vulnerability becomes compartmentalized. Looking back at 1999, the entanglement of vulnerability becomes apparent; thousands experienced their version of the same events. It is important to note here, explicitly, that the concept of shared or mutual vulnerabilities “acknowledges that there are asymmetries of trauma, responsibility, and injustice” (Zembylas, 2014, 405). Attuning to the asymmetries in the web nonetheless allows me to connect my story to the lives of others. In turn, this interrupts my ‘self-centered’ (and compartmentalized) story of suffering the trauma of 1999 alone. The details of our stories are less interesting to me than the realization of our mutual vulnerability as the capacity of being undone by, and undoing, each other and our stories.

The action orientation proposed by Zembylas (2014), theorizing with Butler, comes back into view: “In her use of vulnerability, Butler is after a social and political theory that renarrates grief as a point of departure to do justice to the lives of others” (p. 401). Grief not for grieving, but for *restorying*, gives me hope that we can redirect the charge of past trauma to ‘do justice’ to others. As a point of departure for pedagogical work, vulnerability, which is always already mutual vulnerability or shared vulnerability, becomes a third way, a ‘learning move’ for living inside trauma at the site of education. The hope is that this can be done ethically, in service to ourselves and each other.

## Hope

### Redux

Decades later, the wounds of 1999 reopen as my rural community loses a youth to death by suicide. The fear of what could come next, of more death arising in the aftermath of a suicide event, arose instantly in me. Yet, just as quickly, the fear was replaced with a sense of duty, a call to action that I gave myself, to respond *somehow* better than those who were entrusted to guide us (yet did not seem to know how) almost twenty years ago.

Faced with crisis, several concentric circles of responses began: calling on support, consulting mental health professionals, visiting families, talking with staff... Always in the background is the question, What if these are the *wrong* actions?

*How do I better help my students? What do I need to learn?*

I posed this question to a youth mental health specialist. He answered me only after first restating my question ontologically—reorienting me towards who/how I am rather than what I know:

*Radical self-acceptance*

To embody this is to accept my judgements, history, failings, disorientation, interruptions, ‘deviance’ from the ‘norm,’ as well as my ever-changing place in the intersecting webs of relationality that I inhabit. It means looking at 1999, even as I resist, even though I refused, even if it undoes me. [It also means looking at *myself*, the *I* that I am trying to refuse in

my not so 'post human' project on 1999.] Radical self-acceptance implies *unlearning* thought patterns and affective dispositions that get in the way of self-compassion and kindness towards oneself, and therefore others. Radical self-acceptance guards the promise that I can love myself unconditionally. It is the action of striving towards such an optimistic state.

### ***De nouveau.***

This story of education begins again and again with (at) hope: to wish, to dream, to aspire, to intend, to work towards, to desire, to seek, to pray for... something *else*, something that is *not yet* actualized. Hope that this moment of curricular ‘renewal’ signifies the reparation, restoration, resurgence, reconciliation, revitalization, reinhabitation, reclaiming, resistance, and resilience necessary to redefine education as a site of healing transformation; a re-valuing of that which had been devalued to the point of being dehumanized. My hope-filled re-storying of education situates it as a contested site and scene of possibility and difference (i.e. difference as in change or transformation, and as in diversity).

What is released in the long string of words attached by *re-*, a prefix originating from Latin, used with the meaning ‘again’ to indicate repetition, or with the meaning ‘back’ to indicate backward motion (Merriam-Webster, 2018)? Taken in all at once, as in one deep inhale, these *re*-bound words bring us again and again back to backward. In this repetition, coming back to ‘*de nouveau*’ (French for ‘again,’ literally translating as ‘of new’), I return to the object of my desire: hope that education can change the world, heal the wounds, repair the damage, ‘save’ the child, bring in the new.

Farley (2009) offers a theory of education exploring “what is hopeful about the capacity to tolerate the disillusionment of both learning from and living in difficult times,” in particular “when the knowledge at stake refers to cultural devastation in history” (p. 537). In this sense, hope becomes a radical project whose ground is disillusionment rather than assurances or certainty. Restorative endeavours that seek to repair trauma in/through education are also the “work of introducing a child to a world that fails” (p. 537). Vulnerability as the capacity to hope radically, despite the failings of history, engages a pedagogy that is itself “marked by the very



trauma it attempts to work through” (p. 538). These markings of trauma, etched in ways of knowing and learning about/from/inside trauma, are also carried over time within institutions—as places, memories, practices, and/or inherited experiences. In the realm of education, trauma seeps through these many layers and remains imbricated even in educative projects that hope to resolve it.

On what grounds does hope stand, if it is grounded at all? Can hope be anchored in a web instead of on any solid ground, even if the web is broken? What is held in the cruel optimism of hope that contains so much loss and suffering? Adrienne Rich’s (1981) poetry surfaces again:

Anger and tenderness: the spider’s genius  
to spin and weave from the same action  
from her own body, anywhere —  
even from a broken web.

Pitt and Britzman (2003) write that poetry is:

a useful metaphor for inquiry in that the evocative qualities that language conveys resist interpretation, and this struggle is an important aspect of experiencing the strange demands of the poem. There is, in the reading of a poem, a felt tension between idea and affect and the questions about the very nature of representation and understanding. There is a gap between experiencing the poem and recounting its meaning. (p. 757)

If I linger here, it is because there is rich possibility in the interstice, in the space that resists understanding and makes its ‘strange demands.’ Indeed, a poem is a useful metaphor for the

inquiring work of this thesis, and the poetry of Adrienne Rich somehow captures my questions particularly well. Can the ‘broken web’ of education catch history and bodies that it has ‘failed?’ Can it ‘spin and weave’ hope from vulnerability to repair trauma in education?

Drawing from Lear (2006), Farley (2009) cautions that the desire of education to learn from the past, which is intended to settle the future (p. 545), is attached to the risk of “repeating the very conditions of power” that enabled violence or trauma located throughout history (p. 546). Conditions of power (such as those tied to settler colonialism, heteropatriarchy, racism, etc) run deep in the enactment of education and curriculum. Without an awareness and broader, systemic understanding of such conditions, it is easy to default to the neoliberal ethos of vulnerability mentioned earlier that attributes fault to individuals (see Brunila & Rossi, 2018). This same ethos backs up the ‘business of suicide prevention’ that is selling suicide prevention programs and products that perpetuate risk rather than abate it (Kutcher, Wei & Baxter, 2019a). In 1999, this ethos meant asking individuals to list other individuals, without asking what could change around us to create a greater sense of safety or support. Refusing to lose hope amidst these conditions becomes a daring, radical act to which I now turn.

### ***Radical hope.***

Learning from a different ethos of vulnerability, one that might not repeat trauma or harm, requires different grounds for hope. To arrive at this place, I am curious to draw again from Muñoz (2009), whose theory of queer futurity is “attentive to the past for the purposes of critiquing the present” (p. 8). The moment in which we stand may very well become fractured, shaky, unstable if we adopt this queer stance. This connects to Lear’s (2006) concept of radical hope, which “unlike the wish to rescue ourselves (and history) through reason, confronts teachers and students with uncertainty as the very grounds of meaning-making” (Farley, 2009, p. 551).

Radical hope is built on disillusionment and devastation, and has the capacity to live with and learn from them. In this sense, radical hope embodies vulnerability, both as capacity and as at-riskness. The provocation for educators is that “if history references breakdown as a possibility we all must live with (and indeed some more than others), what could it mean for education to live with—and indeed represent—this ‘difficult knowledge?’ What might Lear’s study teach us about the vulnerabilities of trying to learn from ‘difficult knowledge?’” (p. 546). Behind these questions is the assumption that education, and educators, do not *already* live and learn *inside* or *with* trauma. Even if rooted in the difficult knowledge or experiences of the past, there is a haunting of trauma that we already must contend with as educators. Education *is* a site of trauma, historically and otherwise. How might this critique of education be used to reinvest hope with queer futurity? A new formulation arises as I reflect: What might we learn from the vulnerability of trying to build radical hope on the site of education?

The work of doing (e.g. thinking, writing, feeling) this thesis is revealing new questions as my project unfolds. I place my new lines of inquiry in resonance with Britzman’s question of how to make trauma pedagogical; more specifically, how “pedagogical encounters with trauma can offer hope and reparation rather than being stuck in despair and the work of memorializing loss” (Zembylas, 2014, p. 394). The ambivalence or ‘both/and’ of hope and despair are “at the heart of difficult knowledge” and thus, argues Zembylas (2014), “curriculum and pedagogy should be able to accommodate ambivalent feelings” (p. 394). To work with trauma pedagogically asks us to be willing to *feel* sadness, grief, even hopelessness in the very attempt to transform these feelings. It also asks us to do this affective, embodied work with no assurances that we will be able to repair trauma, all the while living with the very real possibility of re-traumatizing those who are engaged in this effort to learn and restore a hopeful future.

From the vantage point of the loss of certainty that comes with the effort to know about/from/inside trauma, radical hope modulates the “affective force of difficult knowledge” (Farley, 2009 as cited in Zembylas, 2014, p. 395). Radical hope can be used as a pedagogical intervention that actively “resists epistemological certainty,” which “challenges teachers and learners to consider how pedagogy and learning can be touched by uncertainty, disruption and traumatic experiences” (Zembylas, 2014, p. 404). What I argue is that education, and therefore teachers and learners, are already ‘touched’ by the latter. And that it is more so a matter of turning to face this challenge and reclaim uncertainty as a necessary pedagogical pathway to hope.

If the alchemy of vulnerability and radical hope creates the capacity to live with trauma in the form of uncertainty, disillusionment, devastation, or difficult knowledge, and if we consider that education is a site that is marked by trauma, how does education reconcile introducing the child to a ‘world that fails’ when its central desire is to *not* fail kids, and for kids not to fail? Events such as those at a school in 1999 reveal the ways that education can *be* the ‘world that fails’ children despite the (cruel) optimism that invests learning and schools as ensuring the success of children in the future.

Although painfully broken by the events of 1999, and even though they are irreconcilable to each other, the educative narrative of futurity survives trauma. It keeps the ‘child’ and their future alive. The desired futurity of the ‘child’ moves education ‘forward’ and gives meaning to schools, whose educative missions invest hope in the ‘innocence’ and ‘growth’ of children (Farley, 2009; Stockton, 2009). There is so much to unpack here, namely: Who *is* the ‘child’ at the center of vulnerability, radical hope, trauma and education? If we recall some of the ‘conditions of power’ and tensions that are built into a structure such as education—one that

seems unable to escape its own colonial, scientific-rational, and neoliberal makings—concepts begin to unravel. For instance, ‘innocence of the child’ is a category deeply informed and delineated by colonization and racism, wherein some children are included, and Others are constructed as ‘non-children’ (see Bruhm, 2012; Bernstein, 2011; Faulkner, 2011; Ferguson, 2001; Levander, 2006; Walcott, 2017; as cited in Farley, 2018, p. 18). My question repeats itself: Who is the ‘child’ that education places at the center of its mandates and missions, who is painted as vulnerable and hope-filled? As I will explore in the next section, the question turns itself back on the one asking, that is, on the adults looking back at the ‘child’ in education.

## **The (Queer) Child**

### **Running Through / Going Around / Looking Away**

A childhood friend recently reminded me that she never runs, yet one morning in the Spring of 1999, she was running late—which is also never the case—so she ran, literally, through the small thick of woods separating our high school from the community college parking lot.

Like her, I used this small unpaved trail nearly every morning that I attended high school. Unlike her, I no longer remember the details of that morning... Somehow, I avoided the small forest that day in April, possibly driving to school instead of walking my usual path that meandered along neighborhood streets, through the college parking lot, and onto the winding forest path leading to my high school.

Another high school alumna recalls not looking up that morning as they walked through the back woods to school, intuiting that they should not gaze up into the trees.

All three of us did not look at death that morning, yet we each carry a strong sense of what we did not see. Running through, driving around, looking away; all metaphors for not seeing the child that ended their life in a very public way.

## **Ghostings.**

The deaths of children at the site of education profoundly haunts those who turn to face the spectre-filled trauma directly, and those who cannot choose to look away. On the back cover of the *Secret Path* it is written: “Chanie Wenjack haunts us. His story is Canada’s story. We are not the country we think we are. History will be re-written. All of the Residential Schools will be pulled apart and studied. The next hundred years are going to be painful and unsettling as we meet Chanie Wenjack and thousands like him - as we find out about ourselves, about all of us...” (Downie & Lemire, 2016). To encounter children such as Chanie, or the young person that I did not see in the forest in the Spring of 1999, provokes a ghosting, a doubling where we might meet *ourselves* as well as our expectations of the child in the realm of education. Learning to face such children with vulnerability and radical hope involves having to look attentively, and uncomfortably, at the concept of the ‘child’ itself.

Stockton’s (2009) pursuit of the “[e]stranging, broadening, darkening forms of the child-as-idea” (p. 3) is disorienting and uncomfortable in its unravelling of the concept of the child. “What a child ‘is’ is a darkening question. The question of the child makes us climb inside a cloud (...) leading us, in moments, to cloudiness and ghostliness surrounding children as figures in time” (p. 2). The gay child, and the ghostly gay child especially, “shows us how the figure of the child does not fit children” (p. 6). The ‘cloud’ in which I travel to explore this ‘darkening question’ is heavy with the complexities of looking back at the ghostliness of children who did not ‘grow out’ of childhood and follow ‘developmental’ expectations. To be clear, the (queer) child that I examine here is not the ‘empirical child of development psychology,’ which is a construct projected from “modernity, colonialism, racism, neoliberalism, anxiety, and maleness (Boldt & Salvio, 2006; Britzman, 2009; Buck-Morss, 1975; Burman, 2017a; Cannella & Viruru,

2004; Farley & Garlen, 2016; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015; Langford, 2010; O’Loughlin & Johnson, 2010; Silin, 1995; Sonu & Benson, 2016; Walkerdine, 1993)” (Farley, 2018, p. 12).

Rather, my inquiry orients me towards the (queer) child as a “site of epistemological, ontological, and ethical complexity” (Britzman, 2009, p. 42 as cited in Farley, 2018, p. 12). By eclipsing the construct of the developmental child, the (queer) child allows us to look elsewhere than at the individual biographies, development, deviance or deficiencies of children who encounter trauma. Thus, alongside Farley’s (2018) *Children Beyond Pathology*, the child figures I explore:

find themselves pulled into debates about the meaning of development, belonging, relationality, and existence [...]. They show up in literary, clinical, theoretical, and historical narratives, bumping up against ideas about what it is like to be a child, and what a child should be like. They confront readers with tangles of history that resurface in unexpected ways and that return us to the surprising vulnerability of being born into the world. (p. 16)

The youth who died by suicide in 1999 painfully fracture the idea of the child as ever-growing towards the stage of adulthood. Instead of being caught in their stories, which are not mine to tell, I turn towards the ways that my encounters with them have (dis)oriented my idea of the child. Partly to indicate its disorienting force, I precede the ‘child’ with ‘(queer),’ wherein the brackets hold back and contain queer/ness, while queer/ness pushes up (sideways) against the brackets.

The (queer) child is a concept that welcomes “contradictory and elusive meanings as the complex ground of childhood beyond pathology;” what is more, the “child figure may return us to precisely these vulnerabilities, particularly as they emerge in encounters with representations



of childhood disrupting the metronome of linear time” (Farley, 2018, pp. 7-8). In Farley’s (2018) view, the concept of the child can engage, dislodge, improvise and welcome new meaning through research (pp. 7-8). All of this foregrounds Stockton’s (2009) concept of ‘growing sideways,’ which alongside the concept of the (queer) child, can be seen as a disorientation device that forces us to look differently at the child, and at the ‘adults-looking-back.’ The concepts of ‘growing sideways’ and of ‘adults looking back’ fuel the bifurcations taken in the next sections.

### ***Growing sideways.***

Stockton’s (2009) concept of growing sideways is exemplified by the ‘ghostly gay child’ whose ‘irregular growth’ involves “odd lingerings, wayward paths, and fertile delays.” It is a concept that helps us think with “new conceptualizations of the child” who circumscribes “growth” and “being itself” (Farley, 2018, p. 4). The (queer) child does both, as in the figure of the ghostly child who ceases to grow and be entirely. Returning to one’s childhood to look at such figures can be seen through a lens that Farley (2018) uses in her work; that is, “‘work done with children’ (Winnicott, 1971a, p. 8),” which “refers to the analytic work that adults and children do together, but also *the analytic work that adults do with their own childhoods to resignify inherited legacies and meanings*” (emphasis added, Farley, 2018, p. 19).

The analytic work done with my (queer) childhood, through vignettes and their theorization, happens along oblique, non-linear lines that move in ways not unlike the literary children who “leap off ladders and into queer places: rabbit holes, islands of misfits, and secret portals” (Strong-Wilson, Yoder & Phipps, 2014 as cited in Farley, 2018, p. 13). With Stockton (2009) and Farley (2018), who read literary children as “fictional irritants to the normative frames of development” (Farley, 2018, p. 13), I see the incision of my story of trauma as creating

friction in the narrative of this thesis, provoking delays, interruptions, and repeatedly turning things upside down. The affective force of trauma (that I had not tended to in almost twenty years) has at times acutely impacted my body and mind, making it difficult to sit with it, or sit down to think and write, messing with my sleep, and throwing off-course any attempts to write a post qualitative piece free of the humanist *I*. I have leaned into the discomfort as safely as I could, so as to loosen the tightness of my trauma-story, trying to listen for different ways of moving through this work.

In a similar way, the (queer) child is never simply “‘on their way’ (Rose, 1992, p. 13)” and their growth “is out-of-step with linear trajectories of development” (Farley, 2018, p. 129). The “belated quality of queer futurity,” whose “mistiming is itself queer” (p. 129), points to queer childhood as “a time that ‘has never been present’ as such, and does not spawn seamlessly forth into a future made after its image” (Stockton, 2009, p. 15). If queer appears in parentheses more often than not in this thesis, it is as a gesture towards the mistiming, belatedness, or ‘almost there’ of the (queer) child. Bracketed by an adult-looking-back, the punctuation marks (queerly) attach meaning to the concept of the child. This gesture is also intended as a way of holding space for the (queer) child, by carving out a sideways interlude with the curves.

The (queer) child as a concept or figure is “of course, not a singular child” (Stockton, 2009). Like its literary iterations who tumble into rabbit holes, the (queer) child and their sideways growth shows us that the “normative is strange and strangeness is the norm,” as opposed to reinforcing the “pervasive norm of childhood innocence” (Farley, 2018, p. 13). In educative spaces such as BC today, there is movement towards ‘normalizing’ SOGI diversity, which previously would have been deemed as ‘deviant’ from norms centering the ‘innocence’ of e.g. hetero- and cis- experiences and identities.

The ideological underpinnings of education, including educational research, remain deeply entrenched in modernity; thus, the (queer) child that education seeks to educate is imbued and faced with the endurance of modernity. Tethered to the rise of scientific psychology, modernity envisions the child as a “miniature specimen” that can be held as confirmation of its enlightenment project toward reason (Walkerdine, 1993 & Burman, 2017a as cited in Farley, 2018, p. 9). The creation of the ‘innocent child’ relies on ‘Othered’ (queer) children who do not fit the social construction of a linear, developmental, and empirical child. In a historical sense, Walkerdine (1993) notes that the “developmental ideal of progress secured the power of the European middle class” by separating its ‘child’ from “the conditions of unfreedom experienced by racialized and poor children,” all the while relying on this separation to affirm its distinct place (as cited in Farley, 2018, p. 9). In parallel, colonial discourses on “protection and innocence” presume a “settler child” who is “not already implicated in or impacted by colonial legacies of violence” (Farley, 2018, p. 18). In its enduring coloniality and modernity, education’s adoption of a ‘singular settler child’ relies on the separateness of the ‘Other’—even as it tries to make room for (queer) children, e.g. through new SOGI policies. By not ‘fitting’ into education, even when education seeks to ‘include’ them, (queer) children show us fissures, cracks, loopholes, and other manner of irritants that unravel the myth that education ‘grows’ all children forward and upward. They help us unravel modernity’s selective ‘innocence’ of (some) children.

Arising at the turn of the 20th century, in particular through the work of Ellen Key, “the notion of childhood innocence soothed anxieties and affirmed adulthood as an achievement of reason (Burman, 2017a)” (Farley, 2018, p. 1). Thus, the “invention of childhood” as a “modern concept” (p. 1) was symbolically birthed as an “antidote to the stress of modern existence (Benzaquén, 2004, p. 46)” (Farley, 2018, p. 5). The queer child, who does not fit the notion of

childhood innocence, inverts the anxiety-soothing function (and fiction) of the singular, modern, normative child. The queer child helps us see that it is not a given that (queer) children will assuage our fears and unease. Removed of its ‘function’ of appeasing adult anxieties, childhood is thus stripped of the expectation that it would *not* include stress, or that trauma is an exception. This echoes Berlant’s (2011) notion of “crisis ordinairness,” whereby crisis is part of ordinary, everyday occurrences and is not necessarily a “scene of exception” (p. 10). By extension, education might be renamed as a scene of crisis, not as a value judgement but instead in acknowledgment that trauma is part of its very fabric.

The sideways growth of the (queer) child illuminates, spins and weaves the ‘broken webs’ of education and childhood. The (queer) child forces us to look at relationality, both in the sense of “dynamics of power and privilege that position children unequally in relation to adults, to each other, and to the very category of childhood itself” (Farley, 2018, p. 12), and in the sense of extending our relational understanding outward beyond our ‘self.’ On this Farley (2018) writes:

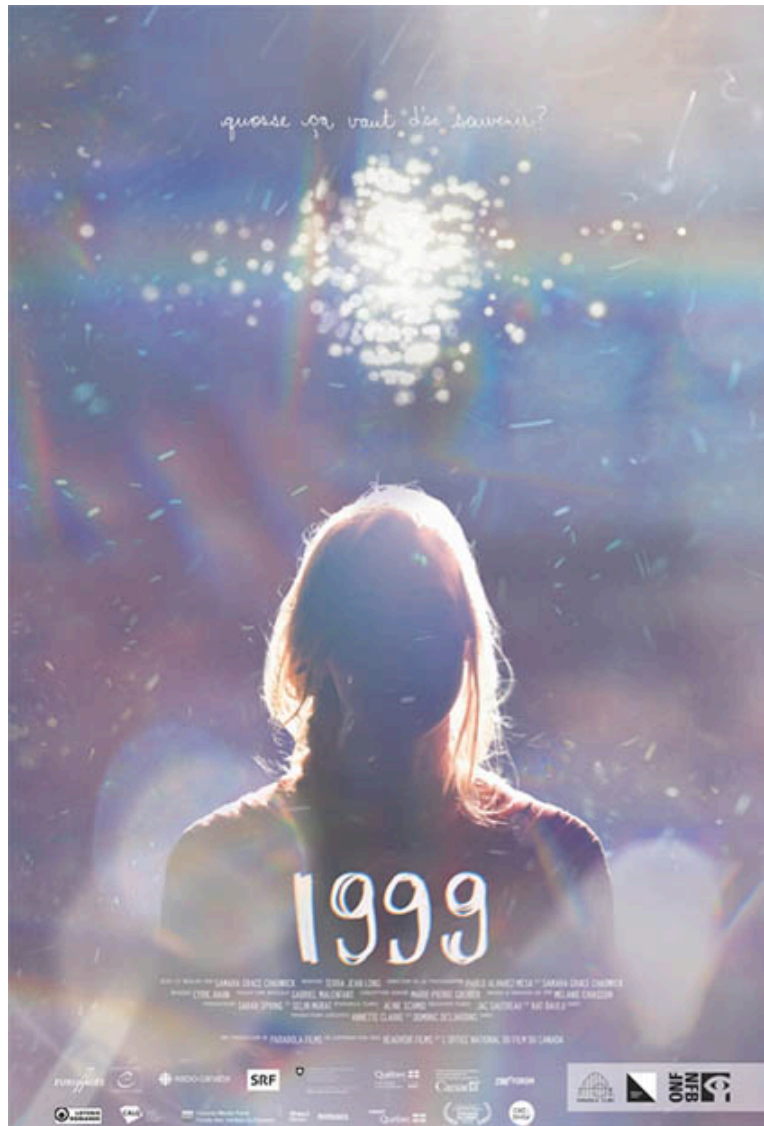
Reconceptualist scholars decenter the child as the heart of early childhood education insofar as this little figure has come to signify modern ideals built on colonial legacies of violence exploiting people, land, and relationships. They rather underscore the relational qualities of becoming in a world that is ‘bigger than us (humans) and about more than our (human) concerns’ (Taylor, Blaise, & Giugni, 2013, p. 48). (p. 10)

If we look queerly, the (queer) child catches the ‘more-than’ of being human and the ideality of a world that is ‘bigger than us.’ The (queer) child attunes us to the modernist inheritance that

drives education, flips our gaze back towards our (adult) selves, and helps us notice what is missing and what has always been in the web of education.

The act of looking back at the sideways growth of the (queer) child—looking from the vantage point of one who dwells in the category of “children-no-longer” (Britzman, 2015, p. 143 as cited in Farley, 2018, p. 3)—propels the sideways growth of this thesis, filled with its own ‘odd lingerings, wayward paths, and fertile delays.’ Invoking Stockton (2009), Farley (2018) adds that the “queer child figure unmoors normative conceptions of growth,” embodying “disturbance, and not reproduction, as the ground of childhood and being itself” (p. 15). The sideways growth of the (queer) child turns ‘looking’ on its head and directs our gaze not towards the future, but to the act and concept of ‘adults looking back.’

Wish you were here



**Image 1:** Poster for *1999* by Samara Grace Chadwick (2018)

[Used with permission]

When I look at the poster for the 2018 documentary film *1999*, my gaze moves between the prismatic light and shadows as they intersect with the silhouette, letters and numbers. But this is not what I *see*. The image that forms, although I cannot actually see it, is her face. As an image on the poster, she is hidden in the play of light, “1999” inscribed over her chest. Because I know this person, her features and the sound of her voice, even laughter, appear in my mind and replace what I am looking at—not unlike a simulacrum. She is what I see when I look away from the play of light and the obscured image.

The imprint of 1999 on my heart brings me back to a visceral image of being in the closet with Ellen Degeneres, a thought that passed through my head frequently around that time. The closet in which I ‘found’ myself with Ellen was the small one in my family home’s narrow hallway, leading to the kitchen, living room, front entrance and/or staircase depending on which way you were going. Being in the closet with Ellen made me feel very uneasy, definitely unsure.

Hiding in plain sight. In the least used closet of our family home growing up, a bit out of the way, although we all passed by it several times per day. With Ellen. Who in 1997, came out into the public light as gay. And who was put back in a closet, career-wise, when her show was cancelled in 1998. By 1999, the image of Ellen and I hiding, unseen, in the closet of my family home glowed in my imagination, hauntingly yet hopefully, because at least I was not in there alone.

### **Out of field.**

The inscription on top of the *1999* film poster (see Image 1) translates as *What is it worth to remember?* The question is written in Chiac and is worth a brief socio-linguistic detour. Chiac is an iteration of Acadian French that has English, and some Mi'kmaw, influences. Acadian French/*Chiac* is my mother tongue and the common parlance of those who attend(ed) the high school *Polyvalente Mathieu-Martin*. Similar albeit distinct from *Franglais*, Larendeau (2016) explains that “it is not a uniform language, idiom or dialect, but rather a specific set of variable, unstabilized discursive behaviours [...and] not a language in the usual sense of the word” (para. #3). He also adds that “chiac is an idiom, a practice, a behavior (and a problem) peculiar to francophones. And the more that its French dimension is recognized, the more chiac is seen to be a discursive interlect, a system of discourse” (para. #5). The (queer) interlect that is Chiac grows sideways from French, converging with other languages in its surroundings. It is a contested site of transference and ‘unstabilized’ discursive practice out of which grows the question, *quosse ça vaut d’souvenir?*

In an article on the film *1999*, Mullen (2018) writes that “Chiac offers unique emotional intonations one might not find in straightforward English or French” (para. #4). The in-between space of Chiac offers ways of expressing what is similarly liminal, hard to pin down, even unnameable in ‘normal’ French or English. Mullen (2018) quotes film director Chadwick, who articulates her choice to have participants of *1999* speak Chiac instead of ‘proper’ French or Québécois “as an actual gesture, since the whole film is about language and finding the words, this language blends two things that are seen as opposites in Canada,” (as quoted in Mullen, 2018, para. #6). Chiac deconstructs linguistic norms and reframes what Acadians (who speak Chiac) can say, and how. On this, Chadwick adds: “The spirit of the Acadians is so embodied in



the language. They have this fluidity, affection, and playfulness. That was something I wanted to celebrate” (in Mullen, 2018, para. #6). The liminality and fluidity of Chiac is part of what queers this discursive system. It pushes up against the standards and boundaries of dominant languages in an act of resistance and *survivance*. Yet it is also tightly woven into what it resists, as it historically comes out of the fabric of dominant French language and culture.

To remember in French (and Acadian French) is *se souvenir* or *se rappeler*. Both translations include the self-reflexive *se* (in the first person, it would be *me souvenir*, and so on depending on *who* is remembering), which is akin to ‘myself.’ The act of looking back in French (Acadian) does not hide the person doing the remembering and the retelling. Farley (2018) shares Walkerdine’s (1993) argument that “the language we use to describe, theorize, and represent childhood has material effects” that impact the “lived lives” of children; therefore, “the implication is that we examine the stories we tell for what they can and cannot say, with attention to the ways in which both told and untold stories impact how children are represented and received” (p. 8). Writing and reading entirely in English to create this project creates an entirely different framework and frame of reference as I tell my (partial) story of 1999. Viewing *1999* in Acadian French affected me viscerally in a way that my English-language encounters with the topic do not. Walkerdine’s (1993) idea that “childhood is constituted by the stories adults tell” (as cited in Farley, 2018, p. 8) means that the (queer) language with which we tell these stories modulates what is said, and what defies or is *beyond* words.

Borrowing from Deleuze and Guattari, Mazzei and Jackson (2012) conceive of a ‘voice without organs’ to indicate a “move toward a voice that is not linked directly to a speaking subject but rather one that is constituted in the intersection of images, intertitles, out-of-field noises, and other elements” (p. 750). To my eye, this describes the ‘voice’ of the film poster. I

know that voice personally from *before* and from outside the ‘field’ of the poster. It is a sound that I can conjure from memory without it being actually attached to what is there in the visual field. This connects to what “Deleuze refers to [as] sound that does not have a relation to what is seen in the visual element of the film” but instead “as having an out-of-field source” (Mazzei & Jackson, 2012, p. 748). The out-of-field, in this case being the act of *me souvenir*, “fills the visual not-seen with a specific presence” (Deleuze, 1985/1989, p. 226 as cited in Mazzei & Jackson, 2012, p. 749). The vignette as an out-of-field makes the following appear: my friend’s face and laughter, Ellen in my closet, the song “Wish You Were Here” by Pink Floyd<sup>2</sup>, Chiac words and sounds, and my sixteen-year old self. Just as vulnerability, hope, and the (queer) child are relational, so is the ‘intersection’ of remembering, which includes the out-of-field adult looking back at the (queer) child.

### ***Adults looking back.***

If the (queer) child is who adults are not and never were, as Stockton (2009) illustrates, “it is the act of adults looking back” (p. 5). Childhood as a relational concept “makes the very thought of adulthood possible” (Farley, 2018, p. 2) and both concepts converge in the act of looking back. Of course, as Farley (2018) maintains, and Britzman (2015a) argues, “childhood

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<sup>2</sup> Footage of hundreds of students defiantly singing “Wish You Were Here” together had to be excluded from the final cut of the film *1999*. On music in the film, Mullen (2018) shares: “The film evokes the distinct cultural identity of its setting through haunting covers of popular songs from the 1990s performed by Chiac artists. [...] The most haunting number, however, is one Chadwick withholds: the climactic cover of Pink Floyd’s ‘Wish You Were Here.’ Chadwick admits that the unexpectedly high royalty fee nullified any chance of using the song, but in a film about absence, the loss of voice is chilling. ‘Wish You Were Here’ is essential to *1999* because Chadwick assembles her peers to watch a video of the song played by three classmates. One of them committed suicide shortly after they performed the song at school and were reprimanded for singing in English to voice their pain” (para. #7).

looks different to those who are children-no-longer” (as cited in Farley, 2018, p. 143). When children-no-longer look back at childhood, it can bring into relief the many ways that the (queer) child cannot be contained and rather insistently makes us look back at our adult selves. Doing so can reveal the ways that we have constructed the (queer) child, including in the realm of education and trauma.

Farley (2018) brings our attention to the ‘child’ as a concept that holds not only social and political functions, but also as serving “emotional purposes and investments” (p. 12). Citing Helen Penn (2014), Farley (2018) shares that the child is both “symbolically central to our culture and psychologically crucial to our sense of self” (p. 12). Queerly, the notion of the child can be seen as a “placeholder for lost wishes and regrets” (p. 12), and therefore a placeholder for the cruel optimism of ‘second chances’ (see Britzman, 2009). The ‘ghostly’ child who dies at the site of education is made to carry such lost wishes and regrets, and haunts the out-of-field hope that ‘future’ children receive the ‘second chance’ that they did not. It is the adult looking back who invests such things in this (queer) figure, who projects personal memories onto the child “in the hope of securing ‘a positive continuation of the remembered child’ that wards off the return of painful experiences’ (Chang-Kredl & Wilkie, 2016, p. 314)” (Farley, 2018, p. 12). The danger is perhaps in the unknowing or unaware transference of such investments onto the children adults teach. As Farley (2018) shares, for Chang-Kredl and Wilkie (2006), “the question is how to disentangle teachers’ ‘inner experiences of childhood’ from the children they teach (p. 318),” in the hope “that such disentanglements can transform teacher memories from sources of ‘bias’ and ‘distraction’ into points of ‘guidance’ and ‘insight’ (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003, p. 5)” (p. 3). Again, whether as those we teach or as the figure of the child, the concept of the (queer) child

begs us to look sideways, backwards, and upside down at the actions of our adult-looking-back selves.

## Restor(y)ing Vulnerability, Hope, and the (Queer) Child

*Adults keep saying,  
'We owe it to the young people to give them hope,'  
but I don't want your hope.  
I don't want you to be hopeful.  
I want you to panic.  
I want you to feel the fear I feel everyday,  
and then I want you to act.*  
—Greta Thunberg<sup>3</sup>

To turn and face that which haunts us, as educators, to examine (some of) the wounds of education, is a deeply vulnerable act. Without the guarantee of a safety net to hold us, yet filled with the hope that we might catch those who fall, attending to trauma requires an ontology of radical hope, one that Lear (2006) attaches to the “capacity to live with the possibility of breakdown” (as cited in Farley, 2009, p. 546). Without this capacity, we risk re-traumatizing ourselves and ‘freeze’ into inaction. The cruel optimism of mutual vulnerability mixed with radical hope invokes queerness as an “ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future” (Muñoz, 2009, p. 1), one that faces trauma and loss at the same time as it

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<sup>3</sup> Excerpt of an edited version of a speech given by 16-year old youth Greta Thunberg (2019) on climate change at Davos in January 2019, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/jan/25/our-house-is-on-fire-greta-thunberg16-urges-leaders-to-act-on-climate>

attempts to build new educative imaginaries, yet does not ignore the extended crisis of the “overwhelmingly present moment” (Berlant, 2011, p. 47). St. Pierre (2017) asks, “How devastating does a crisis in our historical moment (e.g. climate change, World War II) have to be to shatter the foundations on which we rely for authority so we can move toward *difference*?” (emphasis original, p. 41). Restor(y)ing our world requires difference to be rooted in other, new foundations. And, as Greta Thunberg unequivocally asks of adults-looking-back, this demands action.

How do we recover from this *overwhelmingly present moment* and the *extended crises* fuelled by settler colonialism, neoliberalism, and other injustices? How does the educational system, the educational ideal, my educational *story*, recover? What *is* recovery? A process of healing, an ability, an action of finding the pieces and putting them back together? Getting something *back* that was taken away? To re-cover also means to cover *again*, so how do I avoid draping the same clichés over the wounds? In the relational web that is human and more-than-human in which we all dwell, how do we care for each other without covering up what needs to be turned towards and faced? How do we catch those who have been cut, or who cut themselves, out of the web? If the heart is not heard, how can we ask it to bear the weight of history, of trauma, of shame? How do we stay vulnerable and open to whatever courage (*coeur*-age) and heart are required to hold hope in one hand and despair in the other? Surely, we need each other for this. We need hope... But Greta Thunberg does not want our hope.

This section was not anticipated, but in queer synchronicity Greta Thunberg showed up to ‘glow’ on the world stage and flipped the narrative of vulnerability, hope, and the (queer) child that I was storying as an adult-looking-back-and-writing-a-thesis. Adults such as myself turn to Greta Thunberg as an ultimate representative of hope. Yet while it is relatively ‘easy’ to project

hope (and my other concepts) onto her and her activist work, she defiantly reminds the adults to look at themselves for answers, not at her or other children, and to act—in this case, on the difficult knowledge and extended crisis of climate change. Her unflinching instructions urge adults to adopt an action orientation, reminding me of Zembylas (2014) who also aims to bring “ethical and political transformation into the terrain of learning and acting in the face of difficult knowledge” (p. 400). Thunberg’s now global action of a weekly School Strike for Climate refuses and challenges the “neoliberal picture of education” that excludes “any consideration of the ‘strengths and competence of *the child in the present*,’ that is, ‘beyond preparing the child to be ‘ready’ for the future’” (Pacini-Ketchabaw, Nxumalo, Kocher, Elliot, & Sanchez, 2015, p. xiv as cited in Farley, 2018, p. 11). The act of children looking forward at climate change brings them queerly in the present; their voices and actions disorient the stories adults tell, including those about hope, education, the child, or the mutual vulnerability, and for some trauma, of climate change.

### **Children Looking Forward**

Greta Thunberg and (queer, including neurodiverse/nonnormative) children like her disrupt narratives of change and futurity by showing us that “[i]n the promise of newness held in the child’s future resides the adult’s stalwart wish to not change at all” (Farley, 2018, p. 14). These (queer) children invoke their futurity not by claiming themselves to be a “privileged emblem” of the future (Edelman, 2004 as cited in Farley, 2018, p. 14), but by radically calling into question their futurity. In this way, they embody critiques of Edelman that he presumes “a privileged child already endowed with futurity” (Dyer, 2017, p. 13 as cited in Farley, 2018, p. 14). The future-endowed child sits in sharp contrast to children striking for action on climate change, or children who do not get to live on. The sideways growth of such children does not

“bespeak continuance” (Stockton, 2009, p. 13) and rejects the ‘reproductive futurism’ invested in the ‘image of the child’ (Edelman, 2004 as cited in Stockton, 2009, p. 13). Through their lived experiences as children who do not grow out of childhood, or who return futurity to the immediacy of the ongoing climate crisis, they refuse being an “emblem of the child as future” whose effect is of “ensnar[ing] us’ into stagnant terms of existence” (Edelman, 2004, p. 30 as cited in Farley, 2018, p. 14). The call of the (queer) child is for an incomplete, indeterminate transformation: “To have any chance of avoiding that extreme danger emissions must drop rapidly—so that by the time we will be in our mid- and late-20s we are living in a transformed world” (Thunberg, Taylor, Neubauer, Gantois, De Wever, Charlier, Gillibrand, & Villasenor, 2019, para. #5). This (queer) child is not meant to appease our modern anxieties, as is the role of the (modern) child, but to fan the flames of our anxieties—as per Thunberg’s quote shared in the epigraph to this section—so that we see ourselves as deeply implicated in the foundations that need to be shattered, to paraphrase St. Pierre (2017, p. 41), and that we act.

### **Weaving from a Broken web**

Before turning to my “Wonderings,” offered in lieu of a finite, consumable conclusion in the final section, I return to the spider metaphor to help make sense of the ‘broken web’ of my project of restorying the wounds of education. Like Deleuze’s spider, “there is no finishing the web” as “the spider is only interested in ‘making, undoing, and redoing’ (Deleuze, 2007, p. 31)” (Jackson, 2017, p. 672). This thesis was many times made, undone and redone, beginning and beginning again. Writing-reading-thinking as a process of ‘spinning and weaving’ from a broken web, to echo Rich (1981), has oriented me towards an action orientation of remedial work, mending gaps, and trying to get myself out of the places where I got stuck. Its ‘web’ never being complete means that the weaving endures, its work exceeding the temporality and ‘scene of



constraint’ that is my thesis. To guide me in and out of this ‘scene of constraint,’ I have invoked theories and post qualitative inquiry to contain and break open the (cruel) optimism of arriving somewhere *else*, and *doing* something else.

As Jackson (2017) writes, “any work with concepts instead of method involves a pursuit of the outside, experimenting with (...) strategies that may be insufficient but that nonetheless link up to take us somewhere” and “do something” (p. 673). As I leaned into the work of restorying trauma and the concepts of vulnerability, hope, and the (queer) child, I did so trusting that what was glowing in my peripheral vision pointed to an out-of-field where renewal and transformation were possible. This hope gravitated my inquiry towards theories, methodology, and ontology that could support experimental writing and thinking reaching outside of the field of conventional humanist qualitative methodology. Writing that feels “its way towards something that might satisfy as beginning exploration” (Sommerville, 2016, p. 1171) remains elusive. There is so much that cannot be captured by the conceptual and theoretical categories (St. Pierre, 2017) that I have chosen to support this project. To work with the demands of writing a thesis, I have used concepts, theories, and methodological practices that can *gesture towards* the out-of-field.

The confusion of the ‘posts’ (St. Pierre, 2011), the unknowability of the decolonial (Tuck & Yang, 2012), and painful somatic encounters with trauma, to name just those, all compound the ‘shock to thought’ that is an examination of losing children and youth at the site of education. While reconciliation gave me the courage to push inquiry into these difficult terrains, it is also what created the first ‘aporias and impasses’ that unravelled my educative imaginary...

Entering into my thesis, and the “stuck places of social research” (Lather, 2006, p. 48), from the position of epistemological doubt set the tone for the *way* I chose to do work that

arrives too late (by almost two decades), and too early i.e. before I can fully grasp or articulate its significance. On this, I love what Lyotard (1979/1984) says of the work of the postmodern artist or writer, who:

...are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what *will have been done*. Hence the fact that work and text have the character of an *event*; hence also, they always come too late for their author, or, what amounts to the same thing, their being put into work, their realization (*mise en oeuvre*) always begins too soon. (as cited in St. Pierre, 2015, p. 81)

As I catch up to myself, to my work's *mise en oeuvre*, to its own cruel optimism of being rooted in a traumatized past yearning for futurity and restoration, I recognize that I need more time to take in the 'event' of this work and text. Yet the 'shocks to thought' and affective force of the encounters with vulnerability, hope and the (queer) child also push me to action. Jackson (2017) alludes to the 'violence of encounters' that arise from thinking and creating in a way that is open to everything being transformed, "so that the images we rely on to 'make sense' are destroyed to make way for the new. Including ourselves" (Jackson, 2017, p. 670). Where does this leave my 'self,' and what might this mean for my ongoing practice as an emerging educator, scholar and educational leader? In the final turning of this project, I orient back to my relational self as the weaver of a broken web.

### **Wonderings<sup>4</sup>**

I began this research (again) by wondering *where the course of education runs, when it is not the education I had in mind?* Expressing the uncertainty of standing on the fractured, tension-

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<sup>4</sup> I borrow this term from Somerville (2016), who uses it as a heading in *lieu* of what might otherwise be called the conclusion of her paper.

filled ground of education, I paraphrased James Baldwin (1962) to ask *if nothing can be changed until it is faced, if it can be changed at all, how does one face this ‘mess’ or ‘wreck’ of a seemingly always already ruined endeavor?* I earnestly pondered *what happens when encounters with curriculum and theory unravel one’s ‘nexus of desire’ (Berlant, 2011) and break apart the idealist pedagogical heart?*

What I have attempted to do with this thesis is to put three concepts to work, curious to do so by experimenting with practices of post qualitative inquiry. To pursue this work, I have lingered inside literature on each concept, been dizzied from theoretical, epistemological, and ontological encounters, and moved sideways along methodological pathways that grow into at times obscure, irritating, and difficult terrains—or refuse to grow altogether. To listen attentively to the demands of vulnerability, hope and the (queer) child has meant ‘doing the next thing’ even as that involved ‘beginning and beginning again,’ embracing the groundlessness of *not knowing*, and following the ‘glow’ of data to the out-of-field of 1999.

The cruel optimism of hoping for another world, one that does not reproduce harm and trauma, inspired me to dive into an exploration of the ‘damage that was done’ and the ‘treasures that prevail’ in education. As written earlier, even though cruel optimism may ultimately threaten (my) well-being, our attachments provide a “sense of what it means to keep on living on and to look forward to being in the world” (Berlant, 2011, p. 21). Thus I plunged queerly into a mode of inquiry that aspires to a radical transformation of what we do to and for each other and the more-than-human world. I have in no way settled the desires, aspirations or the questions of this thesis, such as the guiding question posed in the beginning (again and again): *How might the concepts of vulnerability, hope, and the child queer thinking about what education is and does, especially in relation to trauma?* Bringing disorientation, queerness, and cruel optimism in conversation

with my three concepts, while gesturing towards post qualitative inquiry, cannot and does not intend to settle meanings. It does attempt however, to take on as fully as possible each concept to see not only what they *do next*, but what *I-we* do next.

As an emerging educator, scholar and educational leader who has dived deeply and fully into the realm of trauma in education, I resurface with a clear sense that the next step is to focus now on ‘the treasures that prevail’ (Rich, 1981). One of them being those who are here, attending to the human and more-than-human world by affirming our capacity to build courage and care for each other, especially amidst the injustices and uncertainty of the world. As I come up for air after months spent in the shadows of this work, the waters are more calm not around me, but inside myself. The ‘treasures’ of vulnerability-as-strength, hope-as-radical-action, and the (queer)-child-as-guide, have lit the way as I looked deeply at (my own) trauma. They have also given me a way of restorying (my) wounds of education such that my (dis)orientation has changed, including to the time and place where I stand. The futurity that education invests in the child is flipped as my (and our) *own* futurity; the (queer) child changes *our* futures, because our encounters with them change *us*, asking us to *be* and *act* differently (as does Greta Thunberg). Yet as educators, we are still constrained by modes of being, thinking and doing that can recreate harm, especially if we do not take the time to sit with uncertainty, discomfort, and our own stories. I have tried, in a small way, to practice being, thinking and doing things differently. I have attempted to restory/restore vulnerability, hope, and the child. Whether I am ending up exactly where I started, i.e. at my educative imaginary, is possible. But I will let such wonderings drift gently as I finally let this work breathe and enter into the rhythm of stillness as I prepare for the next steps.

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## APPENDIX

This thesis deals with trauma, including trauma arising from youth who die of suicide. My deepest condolences go out to families and friends of those lost in this way. I have tried to write and act with care as I engage with my own grief around this topic.

Please take good care of yourself if you need extra support. Some self care resources are listed below.

If you or someone you know is in crisis or considering suicide, please contact a crisis responder in your area such as:

*Crisis Centre BC*

1-800-784-2433 / <https://crisiscentre.bc.ca>

*Canada Suicide Prevention Service*

1-833-456-4566 / <http://www.crisisservicescanada.ca>

Urban Ink's (2017) *Children of God* study guide shares the following information on self care:

The caring professions have found that witnessing trauma and becoming invested in overwhelming emotionally stories can impact our health, well-being, and energy; if we don't engage in self care. Self care is important after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic situation; it can help us reduce the stress of processing the event.

**Some self care strategies include:**

- Exercise
- Adequate sleep
- Eating healthy
- Mindfulness techniques (meditation or yoga)
- Speak with a counselor, or someone you trust

Our communities also play a role in our self care. Having people around us that we trust, to help us debrief, laugh, and give us comfort; these are important parts of self care. It is also possible that witnessing and understanding the injustices in our communities and societies can lead to overwhelming emotions. Self care can also be found in taking action on the issues that are causing us stress. Working towards a better world can inspire hope within us when trauma events leave us feeling hopeless.

**Resources:**

- 24 Hour National Residential School Survivors Crisis Line: 1-866-925-4419
- How clinicians practice self care [Link no longer active on PsychCentral website]
- A list of resources on self care for activists and people invested in social change [Link no longer active on Guerilla Feminism website]

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