"*AS IF BY ACCIDENT*."
NURTURING COGNITIVE SKILLS IN THE U.S. AND FINLAND: AN INTERCULTURAL EXPLORATION OF TWO TELEVISED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

By

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ABSTRACT

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This study is an intercultural exploration of programming for early learners in the televised learning environments in America and Finland. It aims to demonstrate that what is observable in schools and classrooms – pedagogical philosophy, instructional strategy, cognitive target and underlying cultural allowances and provisions which forward learning – is also evident in the brief space of the televised learning program. My thesis adheres to the broader theory of opportunity to learn (OTL), which suggests that formal learning is contingent upon student engagement, which is constrained by limited classroom and content coverage time (Schmidt et al., 2001, 2011; Schmidt & Maier, 2009). My interpretive approach demonstrates how OTL operates through cultural and social systems by example of the televised programs selected for study; and shows how these programs provide multiple encounters with cognitive content that reinforce and reproduce culturally preferred cognitive capabilities. I derive the proposed cognitive targets through qualitative analysis of problem-solving scenarios in one episode of each of the selected programs. The two programs present the occasion to **1)** identify the cognitive skills targeted in the episodes studied; **2)** to characterize the instructional strategies applied to reinforce the dominant cognitive task; **3)** and to consider the underlying sociocultural assumptions in these two national settings that inform the pedagogical approach to shaping naturally developing, cognitive proclivities distinctively targeted in the two episodes. Findings suggest that Finnish play-based instructional strategies support the dynamics of children's play space and heighten self-awareness,

a central component of metacognition, by example of the problem-solving scenarios of the early learning program, *Sana-Arkku*. I suggest that the play-based deductive teaching strategies in these scenarios employ a challenge course intended to strengthen learners' self-control. In contrast, the lesson from the problem-solving scenarios of the U.S. early learning program, *Between the Lions,* is cooperative work and cooperative inquiry. The teamwork approach in the problem-solving strategies of the characters Click, Cliff Hanger and Opposite Bunny emphasizes group projects in a K12 public education which expects prosocial skills, in particular, benevolence. While this pedagogical approach may have a strategic advantage in promoting democratic goals, it may present a strategic weakness for achieving academic excellence. The American focus in this comparative analysis raises the following vital question; what – in terms of cognitive development – the costs and benefits of this prosocial emphasis on group work may be to the individual learner. The implications for both the classroom and the televised learning spaces are clear: first is the need to design and test the effectiveness of metacognitively enriched exercises for classroom instruction aimed at enhancing individual cognitive development and, based on positive outcomes, to design, produce and test the effectiveness of metacognitively enriched children's educational television programs across early learning student demographics. Positive outcomes would warrant policy revision in the recommended pedagogical approach in K12 classrooms, and a re-visitation of key legislation governing the level and type of cognitive content required in children's educational television programming. This research has sought to find the missing element in the U.S. televised children's learning experience, which could be helpful, specifically, to the academic achievement of low-income early learners; I believe that missing element is the effective promotion of metacognitive development.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

The purpose of this exploratory intercultural study is to address a gap in educational research, which has almost exclusively sought school-level and classroom-level explanations for the success of Finland's students while giving comparably less attention to such other important determinants of student learning as home and community environment. My focus is on early learners in Finland and the U.S. and, within the U.S., specifically on students in low-income urban school districts. My hypothesis is that, with respect to the extracurricular home and community environment, study of children's educational television programs recognized for their effectiveness in these two national settings, may reveal significant differences in national approaches to public school early education. My original research design was to test this hypothesis through a straightforward comparative quantitative analysis of vocabulary in two educational programs for early learners: the U.S. program, *Between the Lions* (*BTL*), and the Finnish program, *Sana-Arkku*. However, during my preliminary trip to Finland and the first days of my seven-week field research period there, it became clear to me that such a quantitative comparison would amount to merely tallying apples and oranges; that the genealogies of these different fruits lay in cultural substrata that shape the present sociocultural forms and functions of early education. Consequently, I shifted my study from quantitative comparison to exploration and description of the qualitative differences between U.S. and Finnish approaches to early learning pedagogy, instructional strategies and targeted cognitive skills, as these are reflected in the televised learning environments of *Between the Lions* and *Sana-Arkku*.

Because these two educational television productions are creative, artful approaches to early education, their programming choices – such as the use of human actors, puppets or animation, decisions about music or the manner of representing parents, siblings or peers – reflect

accepted theatrical, cinematic and televised program conventions while also providing evidence about cultural norms and expectations. These are givens that characterize international adaptations of successful television programs – *Sesame Street* being a prime example – in which cultural variations and curricular emphases are necessary departures from original programmatic formulations. The 'simple' translation of the words 'sesame' and 'street' should serve to remind us of the deeply intertwined genealogies of language and culture: in Canada, *Sesame Street* is known as *Sesame Park*; in Germany, *Sesamstrasse*; in The Netherlands, *Sesamstraat*; in Norway, *Sesam Stasjon*; in China, *Zhima Jie* (Fisch et al., 1999). Similarly, the creative choices apparent in the original educational programs produced in other nations can be regarded as providing glimpses into the sociological climate of their educational environments, while the cognitive emphasis of a nationally successful televised learning program may be assumed to characterize what is regarded as essential to a nation's academic enterprise. The distinguishing question of my study is: what can we learn about a nation's approach to early education from a single episode of a televised learning program, given its relatively short duration? More specifically, can we detect through careful analysis of one episode the pedagogical philosophy, instructional strategy, cognitive target, and the underlying cultural allowances and provisions that support preferred cognitive skills?

My analysis explores the televised learning environments of two distinct Western settings, the United States and Finland. The first part of the analysis is a consideration of *Between the Lions* (*BTL*), episode one of season nine, parts 901.1, "Night Shift," and 901.2, "Under Construction." I will give close study to three characters who appear in "Under Construction": "Click," the anthropomorphized puppet computer mouse; and the two animated characters, "Opposite Bunny" and "Cliff Hanger." These characters demonstrate problem-solving strategies or approaches to logic and reasoning which reveal what, I will argue, is the principle cognitive message of the

episode: the instructional strategy of these characters is facilitated through group work aimed at a specific end, and the task to be achieved requires prosocial skills. Later, I will direct attention to the three problem-solving scenarios of the first episode of the Finnish educational program, *Sana-Arkku* (*Word Chest*), which, I will argue, promotes metacognitive skills.

The two programs present the occasion to **1)** identify the particular cognitive skills targeted in the episodes studied; **2)** to characterize the instructional strategies applied to reinforce the dominant cognitive task; **3)** and to consider the underlying sociocultural assumptions in these two very different national settings that inform the pedagogical approach to shaping the specific naturally developing cognitive capabilities targeted in the episodes analyzed. My assertions will require a macro consideration of shadow education, which exemplifies a systems approach to teaching and learning, as well as a micro discussion of prosocial and metacognitive behaviors and skills relevant to my analysis. I will suggest that both these sets of skills arise at the intersection of pedagogy and culture. That discussion will examine leading scholarly explanations of the concepts of prosocial and metacognitive behaviors, and identify which particular prosocial and metacognitive skills are emphasized by each educational program, and suggest why. I will attempt to illuminate how the problem-solving scenarios of *Between the Lions* and *Sana-Arkku* target and enhance, respectively, prosocial and metacognitive abilities, and consequently support the formal learning goals of the American and Finnish early education establishments, which reflect the sociocultural fabric of each national setting. I will also consider benevolence and empathy as contributing to larger sociocultural goals in the American setting, and carefully distinguish these from altruism and sympathy.

My aim is to re-conceptualize the notion of learning environment by formally acknowledging the two principle teaching spaces for many children, the classroom and the

increasingly expanding multiplatform space of the TV experience. I suggest that if we were to more effectively expand the learning environment to include televised content students would experience increased, and more timely, cognitive engagement, resulting in better utilization of school-time resources. Differences in how time is spent at home may be one of the elements distinguishing successful from less successful students; and if student achievement is limited by the restrictive nature of formal schooling (Schmidt & Maier, 2009; Kennedy, 2005; Ravitch, 2001; Berry & Blassingame, 1982; Kirst & Wirt, 2009), and if television and other media function as surrogate afterschool caregiver for increasingly more low-income American children, then there is incentive to develop programming which works purposefully to support curriculum and to foster the cognitive skills requisite to academic success.

The opportunity to learn (OTL) concept has been refined to show that formal learning is a contingency of student engagement, and that engagement is constrained by schooling time. Schmidt & Maier's (2009) original conceptualization of OTL builds from the much earlier work of Carroll, Bloom and others, and attempts to explain aptitude as a contingency of school time. Schmidt and Maier (2009) present a hybrid framework which fuses the many earlier explanations of students' OTL (ibid). Their contribution is the notion of content exposure. It is a conceptual framework that examines whether US students have had the opportunity for sufficient engagement with content, or learning opportunities, given the "tremendous variability in what is taught," "the lack of coherence in U.S. curricula resulting in repetitive curricula that are often "'slow moving,'" and "that U.S. content coverage" in several subject areas "is not consistent with that of much of the rest of the world in terms of rigor of the learning opportunities" (Schmidt & Maier, 2009, p. 551). I extend Schmidt and Maier's (2009) framework with research findings which illuminate the capability of the televised learning environment to supplement core educational values and

practices toward development of a culturally relevant cognitive attribute. OTL has been repurposed in this study, though its substance remains intact.

There is unrealized potential to enhance children's OTL in the far-reaching capacity of television broadcasts, webcasts and other telecommunication media, and to readily extend educational content across student sub-populations by age, grade, race, language and SES. This study attempts to expand the explanatory framework of OTL as intended for the classroom (Schmidt & Maier, 2009) to include this wealth of electronic resources. Schmidt et al. (2001) suggest that a significant factor related to low performance is the manner in which coverage time is allotted to curricular content. Televised formats are, in some ways, at greater advantage than the school in terms of their freedom to innovate and experiment. Because of this freedom children's educational television may be regarded as a laboratory for examining how to potentially maximize students' OTL. Research shows that many home, neighborhood and school level barriers often militate against acquisition of learning by low income children (Duncan & Murnane, 2011). Irrespective of income, most children watch much television (Chernin & Linebarger, 2005; Moses, 2008; Shapiro, 2013), but "low income and minority children watch more television than white, non-poor children" (Kumanyika & Grier, 2006, p. 187) and "tend to have mothers with lower levels of education" (Bavelier et al., 2010, p. 695).

Statement of the Problem

Television, as an increasingly multiplatform technological medium, is omnipresent in American culture; its potential as an instructional medium (Linebarger et al., 2004) is demonstrated by its known effectiveness, including its good, its bad and its ugly influences on viewers (Bavelier et al., 2010). It has been shown that television has a powerful impact on children's social (Neuman, 1995), and cognitive development (Schmidt & Anderson, 2007; Bavelier et al., 2010); other studies

link early literacy and acquisition of basic academic skills to certain children's television shows such as *Dora the Explorer*, *Blues Clues*, and *Clifford the Big Red Dog* (Bavelier et al., 2010), as well as to "infant-directed media" and "technological applications" (ibid, p. 693). Bavelier and colleagues (2010) explain more generally that "Children encounter technology constantly at home and in school. Television, DVDs, video games, the Internet, and smart phones all play a formative role in children's development" (ibid, p. 692). Indeed, "'who we are' is shaped by our experiences" and "This fact is particularly relevant in the case of children, both because children are at the forefront of the technological revolution" "and because the developing brain is more malleable in response to experience than is the adult brain" (ibid).

Early in the history of media studies, investigators considered whether television rendered positive or negative effects on viewers' "reading abilities and achievement" (Moses, 2008, p. 80). More recently, research has explored the impacts of particular children's educational television programs on literacy development (Bavelier et al., 2010). My research is based on the established fact that public school students are increasingly minority and poor, and that access to socially mobilizing learning resources has become ever more linked to class status (Neuman, 2006). I will consider further below television's potential as an equalizing factor under these circumstances, but it seems necessary to first briefly review what we know about the origins, history and educational impact of the structural socioeconomic inequities so clearly evident in the record of our public school academic achievement outcomes, as well as the history of the educational reform efforts that have been undertaken to resolve this problem.

There is recognition throughout the research community of the debilitating relationship between low-income conditions and schooling (Baker-Henningham & Boo, 2010). Findings in Cambodia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Madagascar, Mozambique (Naudeau et al., 2011), and America

(Duncan & Murnane, 2011) verify that cognitive delays begin early and are functions of both socioeconomic status and cognitive stimulation. At the lower end of the spectrum of SES there are many events and conditions which disfigure the institution of parenting: mothers and, arguably, fathers often suffer varying degrees of depression, divided attention, or diminished self-concept due to job loss (Ananat et al., 2011a); chronic unemployment (Ananat et al., 2011b; Corcoran & Chaudry, 1997); spousal loss or dissatisfaction; or educational attainments which relegate one to the lower rungs of the social ladder. And though lower SES circumstances are typically described in these ways, it is simply the case that wherever parents' relationship to social or cultural capital is tenuous childhood and cognitive development are consequently undermined.

Burdick-Will et al. (2011) enlist the most compelling evidence from experimental, quasi-experimental and observational studies linking disadvantaged neighborhoods to student under-performance. Several characterizations of neighborhood effect are introduced including those described by the *Index of Neighborhood Concentrated Disadvantage,* which presents a weighted average of six census-tract items: "share of residents who receive welfare, share who are poor, share who are unemployed, share with female-headed households, share that are African American, and share that are under eighteen years old" (ibid, p. 259). Other studies differentiate neighborhood effect by the quality of local schools and teachers, the status of adults and peers, the relative presence of danger, and the degree of poverty. Overall, these studies conclude that some aspects of neighborhoods affect student achievement. The Coleman Report (1966) initiated a trail of experimental studies investigating the claim that schooling outcomes were attributable to neighborhood quality. Harding and colleagues' (2003) experimentally based study found differences in drop-out rates between adolescents living in low versus lower-poverty districts (Burdick-Will et al., 2011). Brooks-Gunn et al. (1993) reported that the relative presence of

disadvantaged neighbors, compared with the relative presence of affluent neighbors, is strongly predictive of children's test scores (Burdick-Will et al., 2011).

Plotnick and colleagues (1996) found that sibling effects are tied to high school completion. The work of Sampson (2008) provides compelling data about neighborhood effect, showing that lower-poverty census-tract items directly relate to lower verbal test scores, and roughly equal the effect of missing one or two years of schooling (Duncan & Murnane, 2011). Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum (2000) bring new light to discussions about the adverse effects of urban compared to suburban schools. Finally, Goering et al. (2003) discovered that students in distressed neighborhoods, whose families wanted to live in less economically distressed areas, showed academic improvements. At the same time, these and other studies support the idea that, although neighborhoods can be limiting, individual students can achieve amidst adverse circumstances owing, perhaps, to higher aspirations within the family. From this perspective, Burdick-Will et al. (2011) concluded with the question: "why and for whom [do] neighborhood environments seem to matter?" (ibid, p. 264).

In my opinion, the state of our knowledge has advanced beyond the recognition that neighborhood environments "seem" to matter, to the established fact that they *do* matter; that where they possess social, cultural, financial and political capital they largely produce academic achievement, and where they lack this capital they mostly manufacture underachievement. In other words, neighborhood environment matters to *all* children (in answer to Burdick-Will's "for whom?"), and (in answer to Burdick-Will's "why?") we understand the causal relationship between available environmental capital resources and academic achievement. Individual exceptions to this general causal relationship – specifically, low achievement amid high capital resource and high achievement amid low capital resource – can be largely attributed to the human

"wild card" of, respectively, negative or positive socioemotional attachment between child and parent, or child and other significant adult. The bottom line remains philosophical: to whom does the child ultimately *belong* and ultimately *depend* on, to whom is the child ultimately *accountable*, and who *protects* children. Answering these fundamental questions would begin to resolve the impasse over the question of the legitimate authority of the educational process, an insoluble puzzle to Revolutionary era Federalists and Republicans. Modern America is even farther from a resolution to the question, as it has become a multicultural pastiche lacking a shared sociocultural tradition, in which philosophical questions are scattered by the prism of politics into a spectrum of possible answers. The long and short is simply that there is no single culprit behind academic achievement or underachievement; and that the absence of meaningful participation of any one variable represents potential fatalities to children's overall success in the educational enterprise. In these ways, early educational outcomes are not only narratives of a home but also critical histories of a society.

Research Questions

In my analysis below of the televised learning environments of two distinct Western settings, the United States and Finland, I will first consider *Between the Lions* (BTL), episode one of season nine, parts 901.1, "Night Shift," and 901.2, "Under Construction." I will give close study to three characters who appear in "Under Construction": "Click," the anthropomorphized puppet computer mouse; and the two animated characters, "Opposite Bunny" and "Cliff Hanger." These characters demonstrate problem-solving strategies or approaches to logic and reasoning which reveal what, I will argue, is the principle cognitive message of the episode. The instructional strategy of these characters is facilitated through group work aimed at a specific end, and the task to be achieved requires prosocial skills. I will then direct attention to the three problem-solving

scenarios of the first episode of the Finnish educational program *Sana-Arkku* (*Word Chest*), and demonstrate this episode's distinct emphasis on metacognitive skills.

The two programs present the occasion to **1)** identify the particular cognitive skills targeted in the episodes studied; **2)** to characterize the instructional strategies applied to reinforce the dominant cognitive task; **3)** and to consider the underlying sociocultural assumptions in these two very different national settings that inform the pedagogical approach to shaping the specific, naturally developing, cognitive proclivities targeted in the episodes analyzed.

Cognitive skills are foundational to academic abilities and have far-reaching consequences for learning and performance. Problem-solving and decision-making abilities depend upon development of such cognitive skills as attention, memory, logic and reasoning, and auditory and visual processing (LearningRx, 2015), metacognition and prosocial skills. A particular televised learning environment may emphasize the cognitive skills deemed most important for academic and life success within that environment. It is my argument that the Finnish televised learning environment, by example of *Sana-Arkku*, seeks to optimize metacognitive abilities, or self-awareness, while the American approach, as evidenced by *Between the Lions*, is aimed at enhancing socioemotional, prosocial abilities, or benevolence. These two different emphases, arising from distinct sociocultural environments, position learners differently for the tasks of problem-solving and decision-making.

I address the following questions: W*hich skills are emphasized in each episode? Why might these skills be emphasized?* Afterward, I examine leading scholarly treatments of the cognitive skills I have identified in each episode. Ultimately, I will attempt to illuminate how the problem-solving scenarios of *Between the Lions* and *Sana-Arkku* seem to target and enhance, respectively, prosocial and metacognitive abilities, and consequently support the formal learning goals of the

American and Finnish early educational establishments. I will also consider the prosocial skills of benevolence and empathy as contributing to larger cultural goals in the American setting, and carefully distinguish them from altruism and sympathy.

The rather abbreviated space of a children's televised learning program serves as a preliminary road map into a nation's early educational system. Today's educational scholars are increasingly interested in learning and understanding the winning educational strategies of top-scoring environments in terms of professional development, school leadership and teacher preparation, or with respect to curriculum and the presumed roles of teachers and students in the overall learning process. Indeed, international educational tours are in large part driven to satisfy a curiosity about how or why a given educational setting does what it does to ensure certain positive educative outcomes, and what elements, if any, among these strategies might be adaptable to other settings. One of my goals here is to demonstrate that what is observable in schools and classrooms is also evident in the televised learning environment, which should be regarded as a legitimate destination in educational travel.

Why Finland?: "as if by accident"

> Pre-school education shall create a foundation for learning to read and write. The basis for the beginnings of literacy is that children have heard and listened, they have been heard, they have spoken and been spoken to, people have discussed with them, and that they have asked questions and received answers. In such an environment, children will develop their vocabulary and literacy **as if by accident**. Children's earlier experiences and skills form the basis for the process of learning to read and write in pre-school education. These different skills and knowledge, including possible literacy already learnt before pre-school education, shall be taken into account by providing an open learning environment, which allows each child to grasp written language in accordance with his or her own abilities. The material shall consist of diverse texts, which pro-vide opportunities to read alone and together with other children or adults. (National Board of Education, 2000, p. 11)

The decision to include Finland in this intercultural consideration is based in large part on its impressive ranking among western OECD nations; its publically financed educational system

is internationally lauded. Finland's early education system has been credited for the astounding success of its students. The "vast majority of Finnish first graders (7-year-olds in their first year of school) are reading mid-way through their first grade year, suggesting" "strong grounding in language and pre-literacy skills" "before they enter school" (Mead, 2008, para 9). Pre-literacy skills, according to "theories of reading development," arise "before children go to school"; this may be characterized as the emergent literacy phase (Kamhi & Catts, 2012, p. 25), and the skills acquired at this early stage are highly predictive of future academic achievement (Lonigan et al., 2000). The authors explain that "children growing up in literate cultures" "From birth until the beginning of formal education" "accumulate knowledge about letters, words, and books," and precisely "How much literacy knowledge children acquire during this period depends on how much exposure they have to literacy artifacts and events" (Kamhi & Catts, 2012, p. 25). At the same time, the learner's attitudinal disposition, orientation to the demands of the learning process, and academic proclivities begin with cognitive readiness. Cognitive readiness describes academics as well as preparations in the executive functions, including self-regulatory skills (Bierman et al. 2009). My argument rests on the assumption that pre-literacy skills rely on preschool education, in a wider system of educative events designed toward bolstering cognitive capabilities. The Finnish National Board of Education earlier stated that "Preschool education shall create a foundation for learning to read and write" and that "such an environment" should foster development of "vocabulary and literacy as if by accident" (National Board of Education, 2000, p. 11). It is arguably the wider system of educative events, which *shadows* formal learning, that strengthens cognitive development "as if by accident" (ibid). My thesis takes its start here.

Finland's rise to distinction from earlier sizable achievement gaps in the 1970s and early 1980s is an accomplishment ascribed to decentralization of educational governance along with

high-quality rigorous teacher preparation (Darling-Hammond, 2010). These two reform strategies garner most press coverage for the radically positive outcomes of "99% of students now successfully complete compulsory basic education, and about 90% complete upper secondary school. Two-thirds of these graduates enroll in universities or professionally oriented polytechnic schools" (ibid, p. 165); but other factors appear to play a contributing role. Pasi Sahlberg's (2011a) perspective on the shared Finnish educational ethos gives attention to what is possibly the most potent feature of the Finnish educational model. What I describe as ethos, Sahlberg expresses as collaboration among national political leaders, industry, unions, parents and school councils. Collaboration underlies the theoretical concept of "'educational configuration,'" a late-nineteenth-century portrayal of American urban areas, formulated by Cubberly and Cremin (Franklin, 2003, p. 158), which describes a similar pooling of social, economic, political, and cultural resources systematically applied to education. Finland's educational approach is also relatable to a form of integrated governance (Wong et al., 2007) described as mayoral control, in which the local educational system is formally ensconced within the city's wider system of accountabilities. The 1990s brought the mayoral model in the U.S., in which urban schools were redefined as municipal systems (Kirst & Wirt, 2009).

In a universe of governance strategies, the mayoral model counts among the more controversial forms, and not surprisingly. Control of any form at all is a fickle business in the land of liberty, where the matters of *mine*, *yours* and *ours* are in constant dispute, and where arriving at a consensus point of "We" is a rare democratic accomplishment. Nonetheless, mayoral control is the choice of educational governance in the major US cities of Boston (1991), Chicago (1995), Philadelphia (2000), and New York (2002). Its problematic history must be acknowledged. Some have charged the notion of its implementation as naive given varying congruence between city and

school district boundaries (Kirst & Wirt, 2009). Others cite mayoral subjectivity, or personal agendas, or presence or absence of interest in leading district reform as limiting the probability that mayoral control can solve the challenges facing education (Wong et. al, 2007). Cuban and Usdan outline a rationale for why mayoral control of educational systems represents a reasonable option for urban school reform, providing a cogent treatment of the level of influence mayoral governance brings to the task of operating public schools. First, mayoral control is positioned to coordinate "urban school governance to existing political structures (including the business community)" and to provide "enhanced coordination with city-provided offerings in recreation, the arts and medical and social services" (Kirst & Wirt, 2009, p. 160). Second, mayoral oversight "will make urban school systems more effective by aligning goals, curriculum, rewards and sanctions, professional development of teachers and principals, and classroom instruction to academic achievement" (ibid). Finally, "when noneducators who lead urban districts are connected openly to existing state and local political structures, the chances of improving and sustaining students' academic achievement will increase" (ibid).

The history of mayoral governance has been marked by legacies of widespread corruption both at the local and municipal levels, accompanied by interest group politics and social disorder, and a reputation as the breeding ground for bad teachers, union wars and backroom deals (Kirst & Wirt, 2009; Hess, 2008). The Progressive era's solution to control the "principal institutional enabler of … corruption," meaning "large school boards representing narrow constituencies," seems to continuously reassert itself more as a check on human political behavior than as a critique of urbanism (Cibulka, 2001, p.16). The character of fiscal management stands as either the stumbling block or the basis for effective, transparent and responsible mayoral governance. Yet the complex entanglements of the office can also be seen as a promising source of manifold

resources and capacities and an ability to mobilize within city and state, between states and even internationally. And if positive student outcomes could indeed be the result of the leverage that can be exerted by *external educational agencies* (Jackson, 2014a) to enhance the student learning process, then the Finnish standard of educational outcomes might be within the grasp of the troubled landscape of American urban school districts.

Finland's triumphs in education reflect both top-down and bottom-up participation by all involved in the core educational enterprise (Sahlberg, 2011a), including the arguably quite significant contribution of Finnish educational television, whose messaging seems calculated to introduce and reinforce information at the most receptive stages of cognitive development. I question whether it is at all realistic to conceive of teachers as the sole contributors to children's learning processes. My own perspective is that teachers form but one thread in the student's academic web; that the essential mechanical strength of the academic process depends on school, community-wide involvement, and immediate home and neighborhood support; on the interest, guidance and support of higher levels of representative government; and on consistent and robust input from capable external educational agencies, especially when central support is weak. Yet, in the relative absence of central support, it becomes the charge of the wider system of caregivers, government, and external educational agencies to compensate wherever home, community, and a history of neglect have resulted in inequities (Anderson, 1988; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Delpit, 2006; Berry & Blassingame, 1982; Sugrue, 2005; Hirsch et al., 1987; Tozer et al., 2006; Tozer et al., 1995). This study endeavors to supplement scholarly accounts of both the American and Finnish educational systems, and help balance the "'greedy reductionism'" driving research that excludes other rationales from consideration of student outcomes (Walsh, 1997, p. 122). My immediate objective as an educational policy scholar is to demonstrate the significance of

children's educational television as one of the principle modern equalizers of educational opportunity, and highlight effective strategies which increase academic responsiveness to critical topics at developmental periods pivotal to early academic advancement.

In the course of my initial discussion of *Between the Lions* I will make occasional reference to insights gleaned from the Finnish portion of my study. My field period in Finland played a significant role in how I decided to approach the examination of *BTL*, a program which has received due attention from the scholarly community, whose assessments have been quite positive (Bakst, 2000; Linebarger, 2000, 2006; Linebarger et al., 2004; Strickland & Rath, 2000; St. Clair, & Schwetz, 2003; Rath, 2002; Prince et al., 2002; Moses, 2008; OR DVD). Parenting books that have been spun off from the series are further testimony to its effectiveness as a televised intervention (Rath & Kennedy, 2004). And though its success seemed largely restricted to "European American children from lower-middle-class to middle-class families with access to many types of media: books, computers, cable television" (Linebarger et al., 2004, p. 306), these results are unsurprising. *Between the Lions* operates inside of, rather than outside of, a socio-economic bubble (Alvaredo et al., 2013; Piketty, 2014; Duncan & Murnane, 2011). The problematic relationship between a program's impact and its viewership (Moses, 2008) is also a contingency of children's relative at-risk status. As a commonsense solution to a dilemma found in both the classroom (Schmidt et al., 2011; Schmidt & Maier, 2009) and in educational television, the creators of *BTL* assume that the intensity of content presentation is strongly related to success in improving outcomes among the harder-to-reach child communities (Linebarger, 2006).

My goal in this study is to highlight the intended cognitive skill in each national setting by example of a Finnish and American children's educational/learning television program. Confirmation of any link between the cognitive lessons of an episode of *Sana-Arkku*, for example,

and Finnish students' higher performance tendencies may have significant implications for early learning approaches used by parents and early childhood practitioners in the U.S. and other nations in the Western world. Similarly, verification of any link between the cognitive lessons of an episode of *Between the Lions* and improved academic performance might also bring to light further explanations for what lies at the crux of US educational underperformance. It seems equally plausible to me, however, that the pedagogical positions assumed by these early educational settings intend cognitive behaviors viewed as important for life beyond the classroom and serving broader cultural purposes.

The Problem of Comparison

It is appropriate at this point to provide some consideration of my reasons for adjusting my research approach to a qualitative exploratory analysis rather than a quantitative comparative study of two televised learning programs originating in two separate national settings. I had completed data collection on vocabulary use and, in particular, on word exposure, in my selected U.S. learning program before my field study period in Finland but, while preparing in Finland to collect similar data on my selected Finnish learning program, it rapidly dawned on me that the two data sets would not be meaningfully comparable; the two programs appeared to pursue entirely – qualitatively – different approaches to language learning. With this distinction suddenly obvious to me I realized that these two programs designed for preschoolers might yield more substantive information about pedagogy and cognition through qualitative analysis than through any quantitative comparison. This became exceedingly interesting to me and, with graduate training in anthropology and field experience, piqued my curiosity as to what relatively profound sociocultural insights could be discerned in these artful televised approaches to pedagogy. Answering this question meant redirecting my study from a premise of knowns to be quantified, to one of unknowns to be explored

and analyzed. But not compared: it is a danger in any work describing two of anything for author or reader to slip into the natural human mental habit of comparison.

I have no explicit or implicit intention in this exercise to rank the two educational settings according to any scale, nor do I mean to suggest anything normative about either. My aim is to understand the sociocultural predispositions underlying the pedagogical approaches to specific cognitive targets insofar as these predispositions are discernible in a televised learning program in each of two national settings; i.e., to provide at least some preliminary answer to the question of why *this* particular approach serves *this* particular purpose in *this* particular place.

Although Finland's international educational ranking has recently declined from earlier levels, it remains, nevertheless, a flagship of the West as compared to other national performance rankings. The performance of American urban low-income students is *on average* quite low. For present purposes the American urban low-income student represents the opposite extreme from Finnish student performance. Of course, I am not suggesting any relationship whatsoever between Finnish and American student populations, which are fundamentally different in ways that suggest there might be limits to *Finnish Lessons* (Sahlberg, 2011a). At first appearance this is quite true and certainly at national levels of analysis this is especially the case, where little can be seen beyond tendencies, patterns and possibilities. National performance ratings are based on statistical averages, which are the least precise modes of central tendency, and these averages thinly rather than thickly describe phenomena, providing only a sum of all scores in a given distribution sample divided by the total number of scores in the sample. Nonetheless it bears stating that the essential function of averages is to announce, rather than to explain phenomena. For these reasons I remain loyal to the possibility that other factors, in addition to, e.g., teacher quality, may constitute the

principle determinants of student performance, since averages generally mask other causal factors that are collapsed into the data set.

Finnish students learn in classrooms facilitated by highly trained college and graduate instructors from *"Lilly* to the commencing," as Milton might have described it in 1644 (Sizer, 1964, p. 55), or from youth to maturity; in other words, from preschool through the end of compulsory education, 9th grade. "All teachers in Finnish primary, middle, and high schools must hold a master's degree; preschool and kindergarten teachers must hold a bachelor's degree. There are no alternative ways to receive a teacher's credential in Finland; the university degree constitutes a license to teach" (Sahlberg, 2011c, p. 35). Certainly, "Another important element of Finnish research-based teacher education is practical training in schools. Over the five-year program, candidates advance from basic teaching practice, to advanced practice, and then to final practice. During each of these phases, students observe lessons by experienced teachers, practice teaching while being observed by supervisory teachers, and deliver independent lessons to different groups of pupils while being evaluated by supervising teachers and department of teacher education professors and lecturers" (Sahlberg, 2011c, p. 35-36). Further, "A key characteristic of Finnish teachers' work environment is that they are autonomous, trusted, and respected professionals. Unlike nations that have bureaucratic accountability systems that make teachers feel threatened, over controlled, and undervalued, teaching in Finland is a very sophisticated profession, in which teachers feel they can truly exercise the knowledge and skills they have learned in the university" (ibid, p. 36). What's more, "There is no formal teacher evaluation. Teachers receive feedback from their principal and the school staff itself" (ibid); and "Although Finnish teachers' work consists primarily of classroom teaching, many of their duties lie outside of class. Formally, teachers' working time in Finland consists of classroom teaching, preparation

for class, and two hours a week planning schoolwork with colleagues. From an international perspective, Finnish teachers devote less time to teaching than do teachers in many other nations. For example, a typical middle school teacher in Finland teaches just under 600 hours annually. In the United States, by contrast, a teacher at the same level typically devotes 1,080 hours to teaching annually" (ibid, p. 37). On the other hand, the local nature of basic American public education funding, still based in large part on real estate tax assessments within school districts, practically guarantees funding inequity across those districts. From inequity in funding flow the many other inequities in infrastructure, educational materials, administrator and teacher competence, etc. American students' classroom encounters, from material availabilities and safety to teacher quality are variables further exacerbated by the varying capabilities of its district school systems, and by the style of state political culture (Cibulka, 2001), and ultimately by SES.

Many Finnish children navigate different streets as they circle between school and home. Whether snow dusted, or tree lined *katu* (streets), many Finnish children's line of sight between school bell and doorbell is safe and invites playfulness. If too young, perhaps they wait for grandma, grandpa, mom or dad to scoop them up and drop them off at hobby time where they join children of all ages engaged in sports, board games, writing-time, arts and other activities inside community centers or at parks (PC). At the end of the school day, from around 14:00 (2pm), until nearly 17:00 (5pm), these activities constitute a thick layer of Finnish childhood's cultural mindscape. After this period children reemerge onto the city streets waiting for metro or bus, or in a curious etch-a-sketch of child culture, they can be observed scrimmaging about, propelling scooters, with one leg alternately thrusting or dangling behind, reminiscent of a Charles Schultz illustration, or riding ten-speed bikes, or skipping or walking along. My experience raised into

relief what is mere fiction for many American urban low income children, the idea of young lives *as they ought to be*.

My very particular life experiences among poorly resourced childhoods and my relative competency in, and knowledge of, scholarship on at-risk children enabled me to detect the deep societal implications of a setting in which unaccompanied and carefree minors were readily observable; my preparation enabled me to extrapolate a lower societal incidence of crime implied by frequent observation of children and teens giggling or waiting patiently for metro or *bussi* (bus); it allowed me to be struck, moved and at times driven to tears by the sounds of children appearing with or without adult accompaniment, with exuberant shouts, shrieks, and yelps, as I passed by one playground and the next on the way to my flat at Töölo Towers, or heard or observed in arbitrary walks around Helsinki proper; it enabled me to notice and experience the unbothered state of mind exhibited by children walking about with no visible psychological encumbrances of being on constant alert for the lurking pedophile, the bully, the violent and senseless recruitment strategies of the scouting gang member, or the latent concern for the homeless rider whose occasional outbursts suggested that this might be the day he/she snaps at whoever is nearby; the serenity of mind present to arriving at Point B without worry or concern for being followed by one wishing to rob you of innocence.

Children living in fearful and anxious circumstances have other than classroom lessons or play on their minds; many are keenly aware that their day-to-day life is under siege; that their parent(s), if available, are often defenseless. These children inhabit a very different psychological space; theirs is one in which it is realized quite early that mom and dad, mom or dad, mom and boyfriend(s), mom or significant other, grandma, uncle or aunt are di**s**empowered to defend or secure their safety; to wall off bullets, or to shield them from the inescapably contentious space of

race and its historically hollowed-out social capital. Their parents are often unequipped or unavailable to support early academic development, or under-resourced in supplementing learning experiences. These are children who seem to have had little choice but to take matters into their own hands. They live in a world in which child mortality rates of developing countries are perhaps rivaled only by their own teen mortality rates. Many are eminently aware that their days may be numbered (Mitchell, 2014); that their walk to and from home, to and from school, to and from the corner store, is through a war zone. They are the unarmed child soldiers of the developed world. So yes, it is true that Finnish childhoods are different from some American childhoods. But of course, I am describing children of different societies and not children of different species; any differences to be found are socioeconomic, political, and historical. These are not *different kids*; these are kids with a *different degree of stuff*. This socioeconomic, political, and historical *stuff* includes the relative quality of schools and pedagogy.

With few exceptions Finnish early learners are white; American urban low-income learners are children of color, most often black. Finland is largely a homogenous society. The American urban low-income landscape has been black, poor, and segregated nearly since the post-Reconstruction era, making these circumstances homogenous as well. In the American setting, the urban low-income child's demographic characterization would perhaps be more appropriately described as segregated, rather than homogenous. Segregation is a term that describes a sociopolitical and socioeconomic process through which human populations are purposefully separated from each other, typically by race, religion or ethnicity. American blacks have a unique relationship to this term. Generations of black children have been shaped by various forms of "residential segregation" (Douglas, 2005, p. 123), "recreational activities" (ibid, p. 145), "school playground[s]" (ibid), and/or school "building[s]" (ibid, p. 143). Tensions regarding access have

deep and gnarled roots in American slave history, much of which began to be dealt with only as recently as Plessy versus Ferguson (1896) and Brown v. Board of Education (1954). Thus it comes as little surprise to find that "late nineteenth and early twentieth century" school administrators would plant into the grounds of school yards "separate American flags" to remind young white students of *who they are* and young black students of *who they are not* (ibid, p. 3; ibid, p. 143). In actuality, "school administrators assigned black and white children to separate classrooms within the same school building" (ibid, 2005, p. 3) well into the 1970s, and many would argue that such incidents still regularly occur (Clotfelter et al., 2002; Clotfelter et al., 2006; Rich, 2012).

"In much of the North" and "particularly in the lower Midwest, black children would remain excluded from the public schools until the 1850s and, in some instances, the late 1860s" (Douglas, 2005, p. 31). This was not the case everywhere, as "in many northern communities, particularly in New England, black children gained access to public schools during the 1820s and 1830s, although initially on a racially segregated basis" (ibid). "In the mid-Atlantic states of New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York, blacks gained admission to public schools much sooner than in the Midwest but on an almost exclusively segregated basis" (ibid, p. 38). Still, "generalizations about black education in the antebellum North are difficult" (ibid, p. 41), though it can be safely stated that "most northern black children" were "excluded from schools with white children during the antebellum era, in the northern communities that did provide schooling for black children, those schools were typically inferior to their white counterparts" (ibid, p. 44). Let it be said that "many blacks preferred separate schools if given the choice" (ibid, p. 48); "Many blacks believed, with good cause, that black teachers would be more nurturing of their children" (ibid, p. 49); "But most northern school districts during the antebellum era refused to hire black teachers for any type of school – integrated or segregated" (ibid). The black community was not silent nor immobilized

by these issues, as the "antebellum era witnessed considerable black activism in northern communities in support of the hiring of black teachers. Boycotts were staged" and "petitions" "and litigation" were used "to pursue their goals" (ibid, p. 50). In fact, "One of the most significant school desegregation battles of the antebellum era took place in Rochester, New York, home to Frederick Douglas" (ibid, p. 51), while "The most significant challenge to school desegregation in the antebellum North took place in Boston" (ibid, p. 52).

The narrative of America's segregated history is much older and considerably more complicated and nuanced than there is room to fully describe. The topic of segregation has been interrogated and critiqued (Bell et al., 1978; Massey, 1993; Orfield & Lee, 2005; Edelman & Jones, 2004) more than it is possible to respectfully credit within the limiting context of the present exercise. Nonetheless an abridged treatment has been necessary to explain how the concept of homogeneity describes a social rather than biological construct; it refers more so to social, cultural and national capital than to race or ethnicity; it references the freedom to play (play-actual), and develop higher cognitive functions; it points to a level of cohesion possible through culturally informed political and societal provisions available to parenting and childhood so that childhood looms larger than mere play and is a lived reality (play-lived); it characterizes a memorandum of understanding among parents, teachers, principals, politicians, the wider business community and the children's televised learning community, so that learning (play-learned) happens through intentional assignment of teachable moments during children's play activities in the reality of childhood or by dramatization in the televised learning environment. Homogeneity reflects a core set of cultural values in some ways produced in-utero, through the vessel of play (play-culture).

Finnish children and their educational outcomes, apart from all other typically cited school level explanations, are arguably distinguishable by the level of their available cognitive resources;

not exclusively by teacher, classroom, and school level resources, but by the societal and cultural space allocated to childhood which enables the cultivation of *cognitive capital*. Cognitive capital, or cognitive assets as the case may be, does not refer to "a mental ability or an academic performance skill; rather it is the self-directive process by which learners transform their mental abilities into academic skills" (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 65). But self-direction begins from social and civic opportunities.

The Finnish and urban low-income American childhoods could easily be cast as binaries, a Straussian idea which my visits to *Suomenlinna Toy Museo* helped bring into greater prominence. It is simply the case that cognitive skills are precursors of academic abilities and develop through the effects of cognitively enriching activities. In the end, a fairly low-hanging claim could be that Finnish cognitive advantages and performance tendencies are linked to early cognitive enrichments. It could be just as easily argued that the cognitive enrichments of American urban low-income learners are considerably fewer due to deep-seated structural inequity which, in the US, privileges some children and marginalizes others in access to critical educational resources. In fact, what seemingly emerges into relief is the societal bifurcation of childhoods, so that some childhoods are enriched, while others are not. However, these insights are not new. Less obvious are the sociocultural origins of certain cognitive skills and ultimately behaviors, and the service they render to their particular settings. So, my research motivation is to understand rather than to evaluate; it is definitively explorative, and decidedly not comparative.

Art as Life

Five euros later, after a fifteen-minute ferry ride and a trek up a steep, narrow dirt road hugged by bushes and tree branches I would come to learn about Finnish childhood from the history of dolls and toys. The Suomenlinna Toy Museum houses a sizable collection of dolls and

toys including, "inter alia, Steiff & Hermann plush toys representing the classical European toy traditions," which helped to animate the somewhat nebulous construct of childhood (Suomenlinna Toy Museum, p. 1). This place elicited the spirit of childhood for me. The space itself spoke, arousing playful memories and producing visuals of the many relics of my own remembrance of childhood past, from the many personalities of Barbie, to the fewer changes of Ken; monopoly games, Hungry-Hungry Hippo and Easy Bake Oven. I remembered the occasional frustration of discovering the single plastic Barbie shoe, wondering in a fury, under which couch cushion the other might be found. Leomuseo ("Little Museum," another name for Suomenlinna Toy Museum) chose as its exhibit space the basement of the house, or what was in my own experience, the *child's-den*. Soon enough I reemerged from thoughtful and adoring memories of my own early life and forged ahead with a tour facilitated by a museum catalogue carefully coordinated between description and object. It is an old-world approach to museum exhibit, armoire after armoire of dolls, toys and trinkets which endeavor to *tell the tale* of how societal evolution communicates through doll, costume, toys and materials. From commercially produced rag dolls introduced first in the 1850s (Doll Artist History, 2014), to dolls and toys produced from the plastic scraps of World War II materials (ibid), to the German "'Nacktfrosch'" porcelain dolls crafted to suit some children's childhoods (Suomenlinna Toy Museum, p. 2), and wooden materials produced in service to others (Suomenlinna Toy Museum). The story of dolls and toys is a narrative of social process, economics, politics and childhood's silent struggle for recognition. For me, the tour starts by establishing how "Up to the beginning of the 19th century, children were regarded as small, but incomplete adults," "dressed in small adults' clothes, and thus it is not surprising that almost all dolls" up to this time "were "'grown-up'" as well" (ibid, p. 7).

Into "the 19th century grown-up dolls were replaced by idealistic baby dolls with innocent angelic faces" (Suomenlinna Toy Museum, p. 7). This shift in childhood conceptions, doll making and the wider Western toy making world was ultimately brought about by the philosophical impact of Jean Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau forced reanalysis of thinking about earlier phases of development. Rousseau viewed childhood as a distinct period, space and phase of development and ultimately "a period so valuable that the parents should pay attention to it" (ibid). His impact has been decisive for students, scholars and advocates of childhood, so much so that philosophical discussions on the matter could perhaps be tagged before (B.R.), or after (A.R.) Rousseau. The impression left by Rousseau led to the replacement of "The grown-up doll from the earlier centuries" with "the realistic baby doll. For the first time in history, the children themselves were reflected in the dolls" (ibid). Because of Rousseau, "The 20th century can well be referred to as the century of the child" (ibid). The trickle-down effect touched all areas of child interest from industries which market to children to the agencies which serve them. "New trends emerged in the field of education" (ibid), in particular, the early educational ideas of Maria Montessori, "based on children's self-reliance and independence" (ibid). Here in this "new psychological approach" the child would be "changed [in] the image of dolls forever" (ibid). It is the curious perspective of antique doll history – from the 19th century grown-up child to 20th century realism which would have children more nearly portrayed as they are – that enabled me to recognize that some childhoods are appropriately equipped for particular stages of development, and others are not.

Potātoes, Potătoes…Tomātoes, Tomătoes: Homogeneity, an Exercise in Semantics

I examine the idea of homogeneity. The legitimacy of my thesis depends in large part on the success of this exercise. Human children are biologically homogenous but heterogeneous in terms of their sociocultural environments. Finnish children are, for all appearances, unlike

American children and seem most dissimilar from US children of urban low-income circumstances. Finnish children are secured within a web of "high national social capital, including state interventions in social welfare, public health and caring of children (especially those with special needs)" (Sahlberg, 2010, p. 50). U.S. children reflect households of unprecedented diversity in ethnicity, religion, SES, etc., although most American children in urban low-income settings are ethnic minority. The stark difference between these two student populations begs the question of cross application. Indeed, what lessons can be learned from this intercultural study, and can they be applied to the U.S. context? What saliency can the example of the Finnish child's early life bring to America's child from urban low-income circumstances? These questions nuance my analysis of *Sana-Arkku* and help explain why *Between the Lions* is necessarily different. The two programs seem to differ in their cognitive targets, so the instructional strategies prompting these cognitive objects necessarily vary. The underlying difference is not in the nature of children but in the nature of their circumstances: I will apply the concept of homogeneity to indicate a positive cohesion of social, cultural and national capital that provides children the opportunity to build naturally developing cognitive assets through the *freedom to play*.

I interrogate the idea of children's freedom to play, in the course of which I address a bifurcation of the cultural reality of childhood which can result in the division of cognitive capital. The matter at hand is access. At bottom, my analysis suggests that Finnish children experience childhood more fully than American urban low-income children; and, consequently, that the task of *Between the Lions* is to build cognition and deliver learning while compensating for socio-historical, sociopolitical and socioeconomic conditions which strip certain child populations of the right to play. In the end, the televised learning environment, by example of *BTL*, performs a critical leveling function for society in offering a safe space to develop the critical cognitive resources

necessary for success in the academic enterprise. Finnish childhoods and American urban low-income childhoods ultimately render an instructive dichotomy. To make this point I will draw on my field journal and materials from a trip to Suomenlinna Toy Museum, where a collection of 19th and 20th century antique toys and dolls provide an invaluable framework for deeper interrogation of what childhood is and is not, and how society mediates its allowances.

Rousseau's influence effectively shifted conceptions of childhood in numerous fields, certainly in education and child psychology. The highly contested and multifarious fields concerned with child welfare, child development, and early education are also indebted to other thinkers from Locke to Fröbel, to Regio Emilian practices. But it is the insights of Rousseau which eventually created a shift in childhood study. What seems clear is that American children generally, and those of low income status specifically, experience an abbreviated childhood, which I find illustrated in the style and craftsmanship of dolls from the nineteenth through the twentieth century. From this vantage, it becomes possible to visualize society's attitude toward this curious childhood phase of development by how it portrays its expectations, norms and values through dolls, and displays how *art, however commercialized, becomes instructive of life*. In fact, *Between the Lions* and *Sana-Arkku*, like many another socio-cultural artifact, depict – both knowingly and reflexively – a recent period in social history in a manner analogous to that observable in the history of dolls. What becomes clear is that the programs considered in this analysis perform a similar societal function; it is possible to track national conceptions of childhood by observing the different emphases on instructional and cognitive strategies between the two programs, whether edging closer to or farther from Rousseau's influence.

Rationale for Study

My thesis acknowledges television as a cultural medium with the potential to reinforce culturally preferred instructional strategies and cognitive skills. The two programs under study, *Between the Lions* and *Sana-Arkku*, present the occasion to identify the particular cognitive skills targeted in the episodes studied; to characterize the instructional strategies applied to reinforce the dominant cognitive task; and to consider the underlying sociocultural assumptions in these two very different national settings that inform the pedagogical approach to shaping the specific, naturally developing, cognitive inclinations targeted in the episodes analyzed. At this time in US history the two most immediate and therefore effective learning spaces are the school room and the increasingly multiplatform medium of TV; I regard children's educational television as among the more powerful of the capable educational agencies external to the public school system which, if carefully coordinated to support development of cognitive skills, can have a positive impact on student achievement.

In this study I consider television as another mechanism, besides the easy target of teacher quality, which can contribute to academic success. In comparison of U.S. academic calendars and school days to other national settings, the Finnish school year and school days are shorter (Sahlberg 2011a). The idea of less instructional time and better results seems at first counterintuitive. However, the emphasis on content coverage time (Schmidt & Maier, 2009; Schmidt et al., 2011), makes possible the reformulation of instruction and instructional time from a static, classroom-based and immobile conception into a more dynamic and exportable construct. Here again, the central feat of the Finnish education model may well be the teacher, not solely as agent of the classroom but also as facilitator of childhood society. Findings from this study may help validate the existence of a type of *educative society* (Husèn, 1968; Hughes & Tight, 1995; Antikainen,

1996) or educative culture. By educative culture I mean to suggest a culture in which children's OTL is optimized through cultural and social systems, with many agencies, including television, providing multiple encounters with cognitive information. Further, children's educational television may point to one of the many ways instruction is effectively dispersed throughout Finnish society, contributing to Finland's virtual elimination of between-school science achievement difference in 2006, with variance measuring only 5% as compared to other OECD nations with between-school differences of around 33% (Darling Hammond, 2009); and to lower variation in achievement across all students as compared to all other OECD nations (ibid). The Finnish National Board of Education states that "Pre-school education shall create a foundation for learning to read and write" and that "such an environment" should foster development of "literacy as if by accident" (National Board of Education 2000, p. 11). Together, these descriptors may point to a more subtle system of education dispersed through Finnish society and its capable educational agencies.

The analysis will proceed with episode 901.1/901.2 of *Between the Lions*. Next, I will move toward analyzing the first episode of *Sana-Arkku*. Each follows with literature reviews in support of the claim that their respective cognitive targets are prosocial skill development, in *BTL*, and metacognitive development, in *Sana-Arkku*. Specifically, I will introduce the idea that benevolence, rather than altruism is the relevant prosocial behavioral skill and, therefore, the dominant cognitive skill targeted by *BTL*'s instructional strategy of cooperative inquiry. In the end, the lesson is social reliance, and the instructional strategy is cooperative work. Child viewers seem to experience modeled behaviors which strongly hint at the idea of learning by doing *together*, rather than learning by doing *alone*. These are also the social pre-conditions of American classroom learning, and conditions which simultaneously hold strong implication for the

performance conditions of various levels of the labor market. My conclusions are not quite so far reaching. The American social setting is vastly diverse with virtually every human difference represented within it. Diversity is both the American strength and its longstanding challenge. From this vantage, the watershed overturning of Plessy versus Ferguson (1896), passage of Brown v. Board of Education (1954) and The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009) can be seen as a heroic grappling with hardline issues that have been a point of great vexation in US society. American public education is challenged to manufacture the democratic ideal of equality amidst hot-bed domestic dilemmas, deep social inequities and growing ethnic and religious pluralism. Sameness or oneness is not an American aspiration; a far more important national goal is to achieve empathetic coherence in a setting woven from difference. However, there is unequal opportunity to acquire these prosocial skills.

In the matter of *Sana-Arkku*, it seems that self-awareness is the dominant metacognitive skill targeted by play-based teaching and learning strategies. Metacognition is formally defined as "the awareness of and knowledge about one's own thinking" (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 65). In the biological realm, metacognition arises exclusively in the human brain, and is analogous to proprioception, the complex internal sensory capacity that informs a biological organism of the status of its physiological systems, from digestion to musculature. Importantly, metacognition is neither a skill nor a form of knowledge, but both (Pintrich, 2002); it is an endowment of abilities with form and function. As regards knowledge, metacognition refers to "general strategies that might be used for different tasks" (ibid, p. 219); it demonstrates facility within "conditions under which these strategies might be used, knowledge of the extent to which the strategies are effective, and knowledge of self" (ibid); and possession of these skills suggests an awareness of one's own "strengths and weaknesses pertaining to the task" (ibid). With reference to function, metacognition

"involve[s] the monitoring, control, and regulation of cognition" (ibid). The act of problem-solving requires presence of mind within the problem solver, the relative absence of which undermines the thought processes involved in solution finding.

I forward the suggestion that Finnish play-based teaching and learning, in combination with aspects of Finnish culture, and as exemplified by the problem-solving scenarios of *Sana-Arkku*, cultivates and heightens the metacognitive ability of self-awareness. My claim arises from a nearly seven week field period in Finland during which I had occasion to engage multiple levels of culture, and come to know a cultural phenomenon referred to as aloneness. It will be my argument that aloneness is a behavioral manifestation of a cultivated lifelong practice, reinforced in childhood by play-based philosophy and practice, and arising from broader Finnish cultural tradition. The unambiguous educational outcome of cultural process and educational practice is the culturally valued ability to competently self-regulate, and to be able to do so quite early in life. Mental processing, whether purposed toward reading skill development, science or math, or other content areas, is greatly aided by the ability to reason through information logically. In general, cognitive skills refer to the abilities to gain meaning and knowledge from experience and information. However, the process of data gathering presumes presence to the task of data procurement. Nevertheless, cognitive skills are not restricted to attentional skills, information learning or retrieval, but apply to all mental functions including intellectual innovation: all are critical skills which forward actual learning, or data synthesis.

The theoretical perspective of socio-constructivism foregrounds agency and regards children as negotiators of their own learning experiences. It characterizes literacy socialization as joint-collaborations between children and their learning environments. However, my analysis will bring to the surface how American and Finnish children's opportunity to engage their respective

learning environments are poles apart; and their opportunity to cultivate cognitive skills, and access cognitive capital, are strikingly at variance. The sociological circumstances surrounding the learning environments of *BTL*'s lower-income viewers are riddled with dysfunctional elements which the program seems to actively work to counteract. By contrast, the Finnish childhood and its cognitive developmental path is far less obstructed by concerns for access to social, cultural and national capital. The absence of these issues becomes apparent in *Sana-Arkku*'s shorter programmatic time span as compared to *BTL*'s, and in differences of instructional delivery and cognitive outcomes.

The decision to explore the televised learning environments of two distinct national contexts has provided unique insights into the early educational practices and the relative constraints presented by the national settings of the U.S. and Finland. My study proposes that the intended outcomes of educational practice are linked to national stances on, and degrees of fulfillment of, the promise of childhood. And from this perspective, my discussion of these particular early educational televised environments may be considered a *defense of childhood*.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

The following sections proceed from macro to micro considerations. I begin with a discussion of Shadow Education, which describes a systemic approach to education, integrating formal and informal institutions of learning. I turn then to a treatment of the prosocial and metacognitive behaviors which my analysis has identified, and I suggest that these distinct pedagogical emphases are rooted in the soil of established sociocultural preferences. For this reason, a study delineated (Yin, 2009) by the identification of the cognitive assets brought to the task of problem-solving in one episode from each of two children's educational television programs produced in two different national settings, became a more fundamental consideration of the sociocultural underpinnings of two Western educational television environments.

Shadow Education

Shadow education, a private tutorial industry reflecting a consolidated approach to academic preparation, is found in many countries, but especially in top-scoring Asian settings. Shadow education is evidence for how achievement is generated *en masse*, and signals a societal and cultural *decision* rather than a mere *inclination* toward higher-performance. The difference is key. Decisions are determinations arrived at after consideration, debate, critique. And when scaled to the level of society, decisions are often made within the context of governments and interest groups and with an eye to culture and tradition. They often emerge from some degree of resistance, tension and compromise. By contrast, inclination is a passive term implying tendency, or propensity; it is suggestive of a particular disposition of mind or character, or biological trait. Shadow education provides confirmation for how infrastructural salience between public and private sectors, coupled to cultural expectations of hard work, sacrifice, practice and discipline operate to reinforce traditional values, and materialize as achievement; shadow education is an

articulation of culture and reflects cultural decisions reproduced through education. The mere existence of a consolidated approach which weds formal and informal education during after-school time demonstrates the purposeful and systematic nature of achievement, and reveals a mechanism for widely manufacturing it. My suggestion here is not that we impose Asian or Finnish models or values onto American models or values. Rather, my objective is to show how successful academic environments are forged from traditional cultural approaches. My own lasting impression from the lessons of Chinese, Korean and Japanese shadow education, and from the Finnish play-based learning philosophy is that the *answer is never far from where one is standing*.

More scholarly attention should be directed to consideration of a consolidated approach that unites formal and informal education. The evidence is all too clear that what separates higher-income Asian students from their lower-income counterparts is precisely what separates higher-scoring American students from their lower-scoring counterparts: help. A growing body of international scholarship suggests that the elevated performance outcomes among the top-scoring Asian countries are largely attributable to intensive student engagement with the tutorial services provided by shadow education (Stevenson & Baker, 1992), the set of educational activities occurring outside formal schooling, and also called supplementary education (Lee, 2010). It is designed to enhance the formal school career and to provide a leg-up in attending university. It is quite possibly the efforts of this industry, from elementary to high school, which helps Chinese, Korean and Japanese students to navigate *weeder topics,* such as fractions, for example. American researchers agree that fractions represent a level of difficulty sufficient to thwart the academic process for American students (Schmidt, 2006). Fractions are typically introduced into third grade curriculum for Chinese, Korean, Japanese and American students. All else being equal, formal schooling between American, and many Asian settings is similar. Students start school at the same

time (Son, 2011). Elementary and secondary schooling involves the same number of years (ibid). School weeks share 7 to 10 hour days (ibid). However, distinction arises as we examine how students' after-school time is spent.

For American children, the afterschool period might be filled with athletic activities, television watching, "traditional before- and after-school programs, summer camps, tutoring and mentoring programs, cultural and arts activities, clubs, and lessons" (Halpern et al., 2000, p. 10; Halpern, 2002); but also non-academic activities or, perhaps, engaging in *nothing at all*, simply hanging out. On the other hand, top-scoring environments like Korea, Japan, and China provide very different after school activities for their higher income students. In a study examining Korean university students' pre-university exposure to extra-curricular English instruction, Lee (2010) provides insights into tutorial and other private supplementary institutions prevalent during the elementary and middle school years. The study demonstrates that higher achievers tend to take more private education than the students in the lower achieving end of the spectrum. "In other words, the higher their achievement, the more money they had available to spend on private education. The students belonging to the top 10% of their school performance have the highest rate of participation in private education" (ibid, p. 70). "Thus, private education provides not only supplementary education but may also help students obtain better and more successful results on school or other entrance examinations" (ibid). Other scholars confirm that private tutoring or private education is widely available in this country (ibid). The Korean National Statistical Office reports that "75.1% of primary and secondary school students took a type of private instruction outside of school in 2008" (ibid). Japanese students also benefit from supplementary education, known as juku (Stevenson & Baker, 1992; Bray, 1999; Mori & Baker, 2010; Baker et al., 2001; Aurini & Davies, 2004).

Stevenson and Baker (1992) explain shadow education as characteristic of educational systems with allocation processes, which feature a higher density of testing and, according to this thinking, require "tight linkages between" "elementary and secondary schooling and future educational opportunities, occupations, or general social status" (ibid, 1640). The authors provide a glimpse into Taiwan, where graduates of elite universities have significant advantages in the labor market, resulting from preparation for post-secondary entrance examinations received through shadow education (Stevenson & Baker, 1992). In Japan, shadow-education is available during the secondary school years, and to the period immediate to high school (ibid). Secondary school activities consist of "after-school and weekend preparation activities such as private cram schools, correspondence courses, and practice examinations" (ibid, p. 1643). Practice examinations in particular prepare students "for examinations" along with "purchase [of] workbooks with questions from previous examinations" and "practice tests that are administered and graded by private companies" (ibid). "In Hong Kong," post-collegial "hiring and pay rates are partly dependent on their performance on secondary-school-certificate examinations, and shadow education takes the form of tutoring and after-school classes to prepare students for the examinations" (ibid, p. 1640). The pursuit of lifelong job security and financial reward is only intensified by "The dominance of examinations" "and the concentration of allocation at one time point" (ibid, p. 1642). The high priority of academic success in top-scoring Asian settings is indicated by the aggregate revenue of the shadow education business sector, which was "870 billion yen (in U.S. currency, approximately $7 billion) in 1986" (ibid, p. 1643). This brief discussion of shadow education in Asian nations is intended to demonstrate the "national consequences resulting from large-scale use of structured, supervised, outside-school learning in the form of tutoring, review sessions, proprietary cram schools, and related practices" that work

together “to increase students' mastery of academic subjects” (Baker et al, 2001, p. 1). It also “represents a deeper theoretical issue concerning the incorporation of schooling into the social structure of modern societies throughout the world” (ibid).

Many “cross-cultural studies for the past two decades,” have considered American and Asian students’ mathematical attainments because of Asian kids’ persistent “outperform[ance] of American children in almost every category of mathematical knowledge” (Zhou et al. 2006, p. 438-439). Zhou et al. (2006) summarize the principle factors theorized to contribute to this “‘learning gap’” including: “differences in number-word systems”; “school organization”; “content and organization of mathematics curricula”; and “culture” (ibid, p. 439). Watanabe (2001, 2006 cited in Son, 2011) found that both Korean and American students are formally introduced to fractions at grade three and yet, Asian students might benefit from earlier incorporation of certain gateway concepts to fractions (Son, 2011). Together, the early introduction of lead-in concepts, the very real existence of intensive supplementary education, and the cultural expectation to take advantage of every academic resource offered by private industry, all help to demystify the causes of exemplary Asian performance in mathematics, and why these students, for example, tend not to be stifled by the weeder topic of fractions.

All in all, the dividing line in the US between children’s educational process and society’s responsibility to that process has impressively thinned since the 1950s, post-Brown v Board. By the 1990s NAEP administration arose from the controversial Bush era No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, and performs a “national and state assessment” conducted “at least once every two years in reading and mathematics in grades 4 and 8” (NCES, 2014). NCLB required of “Any state that wishes to receive a Title I grant…an assurance that beginning in the 2002-2003 school year…participat[ion] in the biennial state-level National Assessment of Educational Progress

(NAEP) in reading and mathematics at grades 4 and 8" (ibid). Elements of NCLB which distinguished it from previous legislation: 1) all students were expected to reach state level proficiency goals (Sunderman & Orfield, 2006); 2) state participation in assisting schools and districts to meet goals (ibid); and 3) "all states must end at the same place, regardless of where they start" (ibid, p. 534). The stringent focus on testing and accountability, data collection and teacher qualifications outlined in this policy forced development of instruments and the production of short-term results. The tremendous price paid by students and schools during the era of NCLB may be incalculable, though the costs related to change often are. NCLB benefitted from a long-standing trend toward state involvement, which started with the 1965 ESEA. Momentum built throughout the 1970s and 1980s from state legislative response to educational challenges, in particular a widespread loss of confidence in local decision makers. However, disagreement over local versus central authority, whether federal or state, reaches back to the period following "ratification of the U.S Constitution" (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009, p. 1). The good news is that today, educators and administrators have a clearer understanding of how students compare across districts and across the nation, and whether they meet grade level expectations. The bad news is that we still have a long way to go.

In light of all the above considerations – the limiting effects of low SES; the positive effects of shadow, or supplementary, instruction, notably in high-achieving Asian nations; and the recent socio-historical setting of US public education reform – I hope to contribute here to clarifying television's educational potential and its role in society. My goal is to persuade that all things social, as with all things physical, are parts of an indivisible whole, and that television, in its many permutations – whether used in its traditional format or its ever more user-friendly online variations – is a cultural medium; it has effects capable of uniting or disuniting, or of working

more purposefully to enhance social process and individual development. It has the power to stifle or advance cognitive development, to affect behaviors, hopes, dreams, prejudices, and ill-will; to promote or counter inter-ethnic conflict and misunderstanding; to help or hinder the building of minds.

Scholarship is split on the effectiveness and consequences of televised learning (Moses, 2008), and those who share in the more negative interpretations of television tend to draw from the explanatory framework of displacement theory. Displacement theory begins from the premise that children could be engaged in other intellectually stimulating activities instead of watching television (Neuman, 1995). The theory suggests that technology generally "has no intrinsic value per se, but instead has value only with respect to the activities it displaces" (Bavelier et al., 2010, p. 694), and in this case television replaces "more intellectually valuable activities" and, in fact, lowers levels of cognitive functioning (Wright et al., 2001, p. 1349). Indeed, there seems a resounding consensus among displacement theorists that television diminishes positive habits of mind and subtracts from schooling (Koolstra et al., 1996; Salomon, 1984), with adherents found among American and international scholars (Koolstra et al., 1996; Salomon, 1984; Armstrong & Chung, 2000). I prefer the view that there is no "one road to literacy" and that "using television to expand children's learning and literacy" "lies not in the technology, but in our hands" (Neuman, 1995, p. xiv).

Displacement theory deserves to be closely interrogated and subjected to counterarguments. The idea that television somehow irrevocably inhibits children's intellectual growth suggests that all children possess the same intellectual alternatives to television. It seems rather apparent that generally negative experiences usually yield negative results, and positive experiences usually yield positive outcomes. The reality is that a host of variables can have a

negative impact on educational achievement: abusive, ineffectual or overindulgent parenting; deleterious household, neighborhood and community culture; limiting curriculum and rigid pedagogy; policy and reform detached from practice; indecisive reform; stringent systems of accountability; school-wide approaches, and teacher- versus student-centered practice; teacher quality by content knowledge, or by teacher-student relatability in terms of students' cultural, socio-historical and political positioning.

All these matters, along with the extensive literature on teacher quality, represent the many conditions of schooling linked directly to a student's inability to advance through the educational enterprise. Some assert quite strongly that "if students had good teachers rather than merely average teachers for four or five years in a row, "'the increased learning would be sufficient to close entirely the average gap between a typical low-income student receiving a free or reduced-price lunch and the average student who is not receiving free or reduced-price lunches.' In other words, it would eliminate the achievement gap that this nation has struggled to overcome for decades" (Moe, 2011, p. 4). My point is a reminder that individual success in learning is, usually, unbreakably linked to many positive educative influences both within and outside the classroom, and that these positive influences are far less available to the life processes of children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Some view childhood and cognitive development as the charge of the home, the neighborhood, the community, or *the village*; others view the path toward positive academic outcomes as paved by social, cultural and financial capital; still others advocate a boot-strap philosophy in which academic advancement is achieved purely through personal responsibility and motivation. While grains of truth are scattered among these various philosophical views, our intensely politicized present moment raises doubt as to whether there can be readily forthcoming

consensus on public education. Even so, the widespread adoption of any general standards bodes well for the future of children's educational television, which can reach into virtually every home in the nation (Moses, 2008).

An Argument for Bandwidth

It may seem ironic, from the point of view expressed in this paper, that some scholars claim a relationship between violence on television and violent behaviors (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner et al., 2002; Huston & Wright, 1996; Bushman & Huesmann, 2001), and point out that television consumption has become, over time, an integral part of the daily life of American children (Moses, 2008); but I maintain that television's well known (and routinely lamented) power to demand attention is, in fact, the true measure of its educational potential. Scholars have long established that television's strength lies in its ability to impart information; and for this reason it is uniquely positioned to level the cognitive playing field. Indeed, it is, perhaps, one of the ironies of our culture that the powerful impact of television on the young is most clearly and easily demonstrated through its educational effects (Fisch & Truglio, 2014; Fisch 2014), and its capacity to socialize children to formal learning (Liebert & Sprafkin, 1988). Moses (2008) summarizes some of the "research on television and the tendency for children to model behaviors after what they have observed on the screen" (ibid, p. 68). The author points to the groundwork laid by Bandura, et al. (1963) and later research by others, establishing linkages "between actions seen on television and children's own behaviors" (ibid). It seems clear by now that television has the capacity to inform, that viewers have the ability to respond, and that the youngest viewers seem to respond most positively. The long term success and effectiveness of *Sesame Street* demonstrates this best; it is the nearly universally recognized gold standard of educational television, and the best evidence that it works is apparent through the international market in *Sesame Street* co-productions (Fisch et al., 1999). Its programmatic effectiveness spans areas such as "literacy,

prosocial behavior, mathematics skills, [and] race relations" (ibid, p. 186). "To date, 19 different adaptations of the series" have been designed with "unique characters and sets" and "at their foundations curricula that have been designed by local educators" (ibid, p. 179). I choose to think that television – which some regard as a weapon – can be refashioned into a tool that can make an impressive impact on cognitive development, especially for disadvantaged children and youth, if it is more deliberately directed.

Zimmerman and Christakis (2005) pointedly visit this notion of the "educational potential of television" and "cognitive development," and forward several cautions about existing literature, including that "Very few longitudinal studies" are "reported in the literature" about "television viewing" and "cognitive outcomes," with most being over twenty years old (ibid, p. 620). Moreover, the authors report "a consistent pattern of negative associations between television viewing before age 3 years and adverse cognitive outcomes at ages 6 and 7 years" (ibid, p. 623). But the reasons for this negative relationship are unclear, and may be related to the possibility that "the content of the television" "watch[ed] is deleterious to…cognitive development" (ibid) rather than television itself. To be sure, "Ample data exist to suggest that more important than how much children watch is *what* they watch (e.g., what types of programs) and *how* they watch"; "certain shows have demonstrable benefits with respect to cognitive and behavioral outcomes, whereas others have been shown to promote aggression" (Christakis & Zimmerman, 2009, p. 1179). Of course, "the effects of television may" be a consequence of "different levels of parental education and cognitive ability," and others have forwarded a sociocultural perspective with evidence from "a longitudinal Swedish study report[ing] that 'high achievers' used television as a complement to school learning," while the converse was found for lower performers (Zimmerman & Christakis, 2005, p. 620).

The Federal Communication Commission (FCC) first entered into open dialogue about television's accountabilities to children with Action for Children's Television (ACT) 1969 (Kunkel, 1998). In its content ACT was fed by the cornucopia of 1950s-1960s advocacy, including social and civil rights activism and policy, Brown v Board (1954), ESEA (1965), the Coleman Report (1966), Supreme Court decisions on desegregation (1968-71), and the controversial push-back to Great Society policies; all of this contributed to produce the familiar intensity of discussions about meeting the needs of *other people's children* (Delpit, 2006). With this wind at its back, ACT lobbied for improvement of children's television (Kunkel, 1991), but the FCC-ACT settlement was a stage-managed agreement in the broad language of "goals," not strategic plans or publically accountable actions (Kunkel, 1998, p. 40). The FCC sat at anchor in its free market berth, dedicated to "promot[ing] industry self-regulation" (ibid), safely shielded by the First Amendment (Kunkel, 1998).

Maintaining this gap between regulatory "goals" and regulatory *realities* was the unstated theme in the broadcast industry's resistance to formalizing its obligations to children's learning environment (Kunkel, 1998). "An FCC staff report" attests to the resulting stagnation: "the amount of children's educational programming in 1977-78 was virtually unchanged from that of 1973-74" (ibid, p. 40). Ongoing gridlock between "'marketplace competition'" and "'governmental regulation to promote public interest'" persisted from the Carter through the Reagan administrations (ibid, p. 41). It was during the Reagan administration that children's educational television was allowed to fall into a "regulatory vacuum" lasting from 1981-89, a period which saw the "demise of children's educational programming on commercial television," which was smeared in popular commentary as the "'national disgrace'" (ibid). The Children's Television Act (CTA) 1988 represented a strong Congressional response to this quality vacuum; Reagan vetoed

the bill "on First Amendment grounds" but "This version became law when President Bush declined to veto it" (ibid, p. 42).

The Act of 1990 forwarded the radical expectation that stations serve "'the educational and informational needs of children through the licensee's overall programming, including programming specifically designed to serve such needs'" (Kunkel & Goette, 1997, p. 291). However, the "initial rules for the CTA established no uniform format for licensees' reports of their children's programming," "stipulating only that stations must submit records indicating the time, date, duration, and brief description for each program claimed toward fulfilling the children's obligation" (ibid, p. 292). Studies first conducted by Kunkel and Canepa (1994), and later by Kunkel and Goette (1997), suggest overall resistance by broadcasters to the implementation of CTA 1990, some aspects of which Kunkel (1991) outlined previously: 1) television is a business which prospers by the largest audience numbers; 2) children's programs narrow prospective audience numbers; 3) children have insignificant purchasing power for advertised products, whereas adults have appreciable buying power; 4) education programs cost more to produce, given curriculum development and expenses related to program testing (ibid).

In addition to these fundamental dilemmas was the exogenous factor of how to define childhood, a question which, in the grand scheme, was quite inappropriately left to the FCC to resolve. Three definitions of children were embedded in various FCC policy guidelines: the first derived from indecency regulation which protected children through safe-harbor rules for kids under 18 (Kunkel, 1998); the second appeared in advertising restrictions on targeting audiences 12 years and under (ibid); and the third lay in the recent educational programming obligations originating from policy advocacy, which designated childhood as "16 years and under" (ibid, p. 43). These various directives capped childhood at either, 12, 16 or 18 years of age. Confusion on

the definition of childhood is not unique to television broadcasting, but reflects a cross-disciplinary confusion about an indeterminate social construct. The broadcasting industry was tasked with reconciling programmatic content to age in the absence of any consistent guidance from the scholarly experts in childhood studies, who have been unable to resolve the problems of precisely defining childhood, differentiating its critical developmental stages and determining for each stage its particular cognitive and educative needs. This definitional problem was crystallized in Erikson's (1963) examination into play in his chapter on *Toys and Reasons*.

Erikson regarded the playing child as an anomaly within cultural paradigms driven by such expressions as, "whoever does not work shall not play" (Erikson, 1963, p. 214). He offers the rationale that the capitalistic paradigm fed "theories which show[ed] either that childhood play is really work – or that is does not count" (ibid). Well into the twentieth-century this perceived indefiniteness and superficiality of childhood fed the notion that a child was "nobody yet," "neither here nor there," and that "the nonsense of his play reflects it" (ibid; Jackson, 2014b, p. 7, forthcoming). Later scholars have suggested "provocatively" "that our understanding and respect for childhood might be better served if children's needs were outlawed from future professional discourse, policy recommendations, and popular psychology" (Woodhead, 1997, p. 61). The notion of need itself is in actuality, "a very credible veil for uncertainty and even disagreement about what is 'in the best interest of children'" (ibid, p. 63). Others have deliberated on its definition and how its needs and purposes can be distinguished from other stages of individual development (James et al., 1998; Jenks 1996; Kehily, 2004); and, apart from its specific needs or rights, what qualities of life it requires (Rogers, 1992). Others have questioned whether the assumption of children's separate needs are in fact valid (Woodhead, 1997). These and other questions confound the discourse on childhood and present a challenge not yet convincingly met

in any area of study. Given this status of expert opinion it is inevitable that children's television broadcasting is, and will remain for some time yet, controversial.

"Federal laws in the 1950's" which aimed to improve educational "quality and teaching," and passage of the Johnson era "Elementary and Secondary Education Act" (ESEA) (1965), were initiatives to "improve the education of [the] poor" (Kirst & Wirt, 2009, p. 51). These actions are seminal to the history of modern public education, and provide the explanatory basis for the 1980's retrenchment, when the direction of 1950s-1960s social and legislative activism was reversed as "states sought laws involving a host of mandates to provide services for all school districts" (Kirst & Wirt, 2009, p. 51; Cooper & Fusarelli, 2009). And though "the federal government has produced many laws" which serve the interests of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, these children's educational needs represent "relatively narrow interests and do not represent broad forays into K-12 education" (Manna, 2006, p. 71). The strivings and dilemmas of educational television, follow a similar path.

These and other questions and concerns have historically confounded the discourse on childhood and present a challenge not yet convincingly met in any area of study. The understanding that this question is not unique to, but is common to, the social histories of public school and public educational television, helps to establish the idea that they are partners in one public educational endeavor. Public television thus joins in the ranks of home, neighborhood, community, and cultural environmental factors, with salience to children's overall well-being and academic success.

Prosocial Behavior

My intent is to identify the different cognitive behaviors observed in the problem-solving scenarios of *Between the Lions* and *Sana-Arkku*, and to delineate the principle characteristics of their distinctively different national settings, whose sociocultural dispositions and socio-historical developments have steered public education toward specific cognitive targets and pedagogical

approaches. I will first treat the prosocial behaviors emphasized in *Between the Lions* and then consider the metacognitive abilities on which *Sana-Arkku* is focused.

The following section on prosocial behavior presents a theoretical consideration of prosocial skill development that privileges benevolent over altruistic behavior. I adopt this theoretical emphasis in support of my conclusion that benevolence is the cognitive skill targeted by the problem-solving scenarios of *Between the Lions*, season nine, episode one. Among the implications of this theoretical position are the suggestions that benevolent prosocial behavior is essential to perpetuating the democratic principles that frame American society, and that promoting such behaviors is a socio-cognitive goal of American early education. This exercise will carefully distinguish empathy from sympathy and benevolence from altruism in order to highlight the difficult task faced by the American early educational enterprise in nurturing benevolent behaviors among the youngest citizens. The related question of the nature of social action is not new and will be revisited briefly through a treatment of Smart's (1961) interpretation of Utilitarianism.

Behaviors are generally products of socialization; academic skills are outputs of the academic process; these acquired skills, of course, can also modify behaviors or create new behaviors, but the outcomes of this causal process are generally shaped by culture. And because my argument rests on the idea that the cultural medium of television can be employed to cultivate development of a rather subtle habit of mind, my study is basically a cultural treatment. It is my supposition that American culture produces a distinctive brand of prosocial behavior visible through the instructional strategies of cooperative inquiry, and that American early education aims to forge empathetic coherence within the behavioral repertoire of its diverse child populace. My

premise builds from reconsiderations of earlier anthropological work on gift-giving and is supported by insights gleaned from our understanding of the world view and practices of totemism.

There is consensus among scholars regarding the onset of prosocial tendencies (Eisenberg & Morris, 2002; Eisenberg et al., 2006; Van Lange et al., 1997; Nantel-Vivier, 2011), and that the intensity of prosocial response varies across, and is mediated by cultures, with particular distinctions found between Eastern and Western nations (Eisenberg et al., 2006). Rationales for prosocial behaviors span the gamut from genetic to cultural or religious explanations (ibid). In the main, prosocial behavior suggests interpersonal mindfulness, also described as selfless actions which benefit others (Hay, 1994). Eisenberg and colleagues (2006) classify prosocial behaviors as egoistic, practical concerns, and generally other-oriented; however, the authors have added altruism to the list as an additional subgroup. Altruism is a prosocial behavior characterized as an "'intrinsically motivated voluntary behavior intended to benefit another'" – acts motivated by concern for others or by internalized values, goals, and self-rewards rather than by the expectation of concrete or social rewards for the avoidance of punishment" (Eisenberg et al., 2006, p. 647). Eisenberg et al. (2006) elaborate on the concepts of "egoistic, other-oriented, practical concerns" and "altruism," presenting them as offshoots of empathy and sympathy (ibid, p. 646-647).

I suggest that benevolence instead of altruism is the prosocial behavioral quality observed in the problem-solving behaviors dramatized in *BTL* season nine, episode one. Benevolence has received relatively little scholarly attention (Schwartz, 2010; Haslam et al., 2009; Gärling, 1999), with consideration principally given to undergraduate populations. Few studies have foregrounded benevolence as the focal prosocial attribute of younger children (e.g., Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998; Suizzo, 2007; Padilla-Walker, 2007). With this understanding I will forward the argument that the essential particularity of what was observed in the problem-solving activities involving the

characters Click, Cliff Hanger and Bunny in episode one is prosocial in nature, and benevolent in character. Necessarily, this assertion will require further explanation, and doing so will entail a fairly lengthy discussion of altruism and benevolence.

Click, Cliff Hanger and Bunny potentially represent parts of a general instructional theme aimed to enhance benevolent, rather than altruistic qualities among young child-viewers aged 4-7. As it happens, these age groups are of particular significance to prosocial analysis as comparably less literature provides for close study of prosocial developments among young children (Eisenberg et al., 2006). Fewer US studies, as compared to non-western cross-cultural studies, have observed prosocial empathetic qualities among young children though studies confirm altruistic behaviors among toddlers, older children and adolescents (ibid). Consequently, this study proposes that the televised learning environment, by example of *Between the Lions*, and in addition to socialization and developmental changes occurring within the cognitive and self-regulatory domains (Eisenberg et al. 2006; Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998), may add an explanatory layer to why empathetic capacities peak among adolescents; and lends further support for studies which have previously found that educational television programming targeting early age groups seeks to render positive prosocial effects. Episode one situates each of these characters in cooperative scenarios in which empathy, and not necessarily sympathy, are the targeted prosocial responses enlisted by each problem-solving setting. Instead of self-gain, the typical measure of cooperative tendencies (Eisenberg et al., 2006), I observed sharing, comforting, helping and cooperative behavior as the prevalent strategies present in joint problem-solving. Incidentally, "sharing" (Hay et al., 1999), comforting, helping and cooperative behavior (Eckerman & Whitehead, 1999; Warneken & Tomasello, 2007) are each hallmark responses of empathy (Davis, 1994) and

observable among children in the first and second years of life (Warneken & Tomasello, 2006, 2007).

Empathy has been "defined as an affective response more appropriate to another's situation than one's own" (Hoffman, 2001, p. 4); empathy recognizes distress among bystanders (Hoffman, 2001), as is evident in the segment between Opposite Bunny and Elephant. There are also "times when role-taking…may take center stage" (ibid, p. 6), which is potentially exemplified by the behavioral modeling performed by Cliff Hanger, when he lightens the psychological atmosphere around problem-solving through humor-filled problem-solving displays; or Opposite Bunny as he "quickly assesses the situation, and then easily flips the blocks one at a time back in position" (Transcript 901, p. 55) modeling, among other behaviors, task-persistence; it may involve "a mismatch between an observer's and a victim's feelings" (Hoffman, 2001, p. 8). Empathy is the emotional response which signals personal accountability taken for others' welfare without concern for external reward or personal validation. By incorporating behavioral displays which encourage cooperative inquiry into the programmatic format, early training by example toward empathy may grow into a reflexive response by adolescence. The behavioral consequence of repetitive viewing during a particularly impressionable period of prosocial development is that children may be more likely to view their own inaction as possibly "causing the victim's *continuing* distress" (ibid). And from this perspective children might be more inclined to help, share, cooperate, and generally *lend a hand to*, or exercise more patience with friends or classmates whose literacy skills might require more teacher attention, or more sensitive handling during group work. Empathy has two limitations which Hoffman describes as familiarity bias and here-and-now bias (Hoffman, 2001). Familiarity bias suggests that one might be more predisposed to assist family or close friends, than strangers (ibid; Caplan & Hay, 1989), though "the research shows

that humans do help strangers" (Hoffman, 2001, p. 213); and a solution might be to picture "strangers as part of one's family" (ibid). Opposite Bunny appears to be a model of how to overcome familiarity bias; Bunny is the Good Samaritan. Opposite Bunny answers any call for help, and seems to willingly respond without hesitation to any type of literacy problem, and seemingly without bias or judgment against any human characteristic. It is also the case that empathy "could be encouraged by moral educators" (ibid) or, as the case may be, incorporated into instructional strategies in part designed to heighten prosocial awareness, such as cooperative inquiry.

Eisenberg and colleagues (2006) characterize empathy as "an affective response that stems from the apprehension or comprehension of another's emotional state or condition, and which is identical or very similar to what the other person is feeling or would be expected to feel" (ibid, p. 647). And though empathy is usually mistaken for sympathy they are not the same; they are qualitatively different. Sympathy "stems from empathy, but can derive directly from perspective taking or other cognitive processing, including retrieval of information from memory" (ibid); "It consists of feeling sorrow or concern for the distressed or needy other" (ibid). Sympathy is related to pity which is a sadness for a condition without understanding of its etiology or commitment to its reversal; it is noncommittal. Empathy anticipates deep involvement or understanding of a particular condition or set of circumstances. Sympathy is rooted in a different emotional space; instead of relatedness based on "feeling the same emotion as the other person is experiencing or is expected to experience," sympathy arises from a rule-mediated concern for others (ibid). Understanding the distinctiveness of altruism and benevolence, or the dichotomous relationship between altruism-sympathy, and benevolence-empathy, is critical to an argument founded in part upon the idea that altruism is much more hinged to long-term external regulation in the form of

incentive structures, whereas benevolence, though initially requiring external modulation, can arguably be self-regulated and self-monitored over time.

The televised experience adds to American children's distinctive experience in the development of its brand of empathy. It becomes understandable then, why cooperative inquiry instructional strategies are cumulative and articulate upward through all levels of education, and are progressively more requisite to many American and, of course, to most international work settings. Cooperative inquiry in the American setting builds an American variety of empathy which is, perhaps, extreme and appears to require extensive socialization exercises, among them classroom circulation, dialogical repartee, group discussion, jig-saw or snowballing, think-pairing, debating, group presentations, and all such strategies involving peer critique and reliance. Each problem-solving design guides the learning experience toward the enhancement of content knowledge, certainly, but also toward the refinement of cooperative learning and living skills; it is a learning approach which is socialized early.

Hoffman's theory of prosocial development provides a clear illustration of the step-by-step emergence of prosocial behavior during childhood in terms of "infants' and children's affect and cognitive sense of self-awareness and self-other differentiation in the emergence of prosocial behavior" (Eisenberg et al., 2006, p. 654). First, "newborns and infants display rudimentary empathetic responses that are manifested as "global empathy"; then "Early in the 2nd year of life, toddlers begin to make helpful advances toward a victim or distress"; and "Around the same age, they may intervene by hugging, giving physical assistance, or getting someone else to help" (ibid, p. 654-655). Importantly, Hoffman (2000) indicates that although "toddlers in this developmental period can differentiate between self and other," "they still do not distinguish well between their own and another's internal states" (Eisenberg et al., 2006, p. 655). Stern (1985), who respectfully

disagreed, "argued that young children develop a subjective self capable of recognizing the subjectivity of the other earlier than stated by Hoffman" (ibid).

According to Hoffman (2000), as children progress along the developmental arc, "Sometime during the 2nd year of life, children enter the period of *veridical empathetic distress*" (Eisenberg et al., 2006, p. 655). The author argues that "this stage marks the period in which children are increasingly aware of other people's feelings and are capable of understanding that other people's perspectives and feelings may differ from their own" (ibid). Perspective-taking thus strengthens at the tender age of two. This is a particularly remarkable insight given how this age – widely referred to as the "terrible twos" – is notorious for its "me-me" exclamations. Ironically, it is in the hot-bed of the "me-me" orientation that *we-think,* or *empathetic-think,* can be acclimatized. Finally, "by mid to late childhood, children can empathize with another person's general condition or plight" and by adolescence "capable of comprehending and responding to the plight of an entire group or class of people" (ibid).

While scholarly accounts cover an impressive expanse of human development including toddlers, older children, youth, adolescents and adults with respect to the nature of prosocial development, the "research examining prosocial behavior in young children is relatively limited" (Eisenberg et al., 2006, p. 655); but underrepresentation in the literature should not be taken to mean that the capacity for *we-cultivation* in the early years is not a developmental potential. In the final analysis, there is general agreement regarding the apparent increase in prosocial behavior over time (Durkin, 1995; Eisenberg & Fabes, 1991; Rushton, 1975; Hastings et al., 2007); and there is data to support the occurrence of "prosocial manifestations in infants, toddlers and preschoolers," in so far as there is documented evidence for the "first signs of prosociality" "within young children's behavioural repertoire" (Nantel-Vivier, 2011, p. 15). Nevertheless, "questions

remain regarding patterns in prosocial behavior development across developmental periods" (ibid, p. III). Still, there is high consensus among scholars that "Prosocial tendencies appear to increase from childhood into adolescence" (Eisenberg et al., 2006, p. 657). Simply put, "adolescents tend to be higher in prosocial behavior than children aged 7 to 12 years" (ibid), and these behaviors become nuanced over time (Caplan, 1993; Tomasello, 2009). In fact, "Viewed more generally, the extant literature appears to support the conclusion that as children get older, they exhibit more sympathy and prosocial behavior" (Eisenberg et al., 2006, p. 658). The mechanism for this intensified capacity and expression may well be connected to consecutive formal classroom training in cooperative inquiry, and developmentally targeted informal preparations experienced through the televised learning environment, by such examples as appear in *BTL*, episode one.

Benevolence

The objective of the prior section has been to elaborate on the concept of prosocial behavior; to introduce the idea that benevolence, rather than altruism is the relevant prosocial behavioral skill and, therefore, the dominant cognitive skill targeted by the instructional strategy of cooperative inquiry. Next, I treat the view that benevolence would require early and intensive socialization and thus necessitates a broader instructional approach than would ordinarily occur in the classroom. Eisenberg et al. (2006) present cross-cultural field-studies that help to detail the manner in which culture sculpts conduct and, in this case, cooperative behavior. Because my argument rests on the idea that the cultural medium of television works to cultivate development of a particular and rather subtle habit of mind, I will pursue a cultural treatment. However, the argument could just as well be leveraged in a different way, working from the much smaller scale of household social dynamics. Van Lange et al. (1997) analyze parental attachments and sibling

structure to demonstrate the manner in which these social dynamics influence the developmental trajectories of social interactions.

Van Lange et al. (1997) questioned the origins of "prosocial, individualistic and competitive" behavior (ibid, p. 733). They ask, "Where do these social value orientations come from? Could they be, at least in part, a product of early social experiences?" (ibid). The treatment begins with a clever consideration of parental attachment. The authors exhibit how children's social histories, marked by relative presence or absence of parental attachment, defined by trust and security, impact the development of social interactions. The idea follows that "children who have repeatedly experienced interactions in which parents are not very attentive to their needs are likely to develop distrust and insecurity, which may enhance self-centered orientations" (ibid, p. 734). In a similar vein, sibling structure and dynamics leave their imprint: "relative to individuals raised in small families, individuals raised in large families may have acquired greater experience with situations entailing some conflict of interest," "which produces patterns of social interaction" which may "shape individuals' social value orientations" (ibid). These factors effect "interpersonal dispositions" and sway whether interactions are conducted in "a prosocial, individualistic, or competitive manner" (ibid). Interestingly, these findings are consistent with other reports about family dynamics and prosocial behavior (Van Lange et al., 1997). The variable branch points at which parenting and sibling dynamics can influence developmental trajectories toward social interaction provide a preliminary glimpse into the prominent role culture plays in enhancing, reinforcing or exploiting targeted cognitive skills. From this perspective, I will venture to discuss some cross-cultural scholarship which imparts different lessons about child development, age-norms, and biologically predisposed notions of prosocial development.

Cultural mediation of prosocial skills has been discussed at length since the 1970s and more recent research illustrates "that societies vary greatly in the degree to which prosocial and cooperative behavior are normative, and such differences appear to affect prosocial development" (Eisenberg et al., 2006, p. 662). The authors provide overviews of multiple field studies, and present scholarship based on self-report studies and naturalistic observation. Together these accounts exhibit the tremendous malleability of behavior in their examples of prosocial skill development. Field studies in Polynesia (Graves & Grave, 1983) and Java (Mulder, 1996) describe societies in which higher incidence of cooperative and communal behaviors appears among children (Eisenberg et al., 2006). This literature is contrasted with settings where prosocial behaviors are rare (ibid; Turnbull, 1972). In some settings, prosocial responsiveness is shown to begin as early as infancy, as is the case among some Western African cultures where "infants are offered objects and then encouraged to return the gifts" "to foster sharing and exchange norms believed to bind the social group together" (Eisenberg et al., 2006, p. 662).

It is interesting that the "consequences" of exchange and its "cultural elaborations are more marked in some regions than in others" (Barnard & Spencer, 1996, p. 218). Still, "researchers consistently have found that children from traditional rural and semi-agricultural communities and from relatively traditional subcultures" "are more cooperative than children from urban or Westernized cultures" (Eisenberg et al., 2006, p. 662). And when asked to choose between the self and a peer, "Brazilian children" and "Mexican American children generally give more to the peer than do Euro-American children" (ibid, p. 663). Interestingly, "The tendency to choose more for the peer than for the self is stronger in second- than in third-generation Mexican American children" (ibid).

Eisenberg and colleagues (2006) weigh in: “More consistent cross group differences might be found when comparing Eastern and Western cultures” such as the finding that “Asian second graders (from a range of ethnic groups) were more likely than Western Caucasian children in Hong Kong to donate gifts for participating in the study to other children in the classroom who could not participate” (ibid, p. 663). Similarly, Asian “kindergarteners shared more food with a peer than had been found in a sample in the United States” and were prone “to do so spontaneously” (ibid). This line of thinking, and the evidence to support these ideas about culture, its omnipresence and power, can lead to distasteful conclusions. It raises serious questions about the idea of human originality and agency, and indeed whether human acts are at all genuine. The questions are fair and relevant for any serious consideration of the role of television in the shaping of both an especially impressionable period and a knowledge domain with particular implication for academic development. Television is a major arbiter of culture and possesses reach, and is arguably more reliable and affordable than other forms of digital media. For now, I will furnish a brief review of relevant early anthropological scholarship which might lend deeper understanding about the origin of cooperative behavior and, consequently, provide a more complete road map of a discussion about cooperative social acts in relation to benevolence.

The study of behavior, or attempts to construct typologies of family structure and dynamics, or to model sustainable practices, analyze acculturation, or define social acts are all endeavors that can be more productive when considered within the context of traditional societies. The small scale of traditional societies provides more telling observations of behavior. Family-level societies constitute highly coveted subjects for study of why humans do what they do. Family-level societies display “a broad network of relationships that loosely binds the small camps or hamlets of a region, allowing easy movement and flexible association within and between

settlements" (Johnson & Earle, 2000, p. 41). The early anthropological studies of Steward (1955) "considered them to be "'typologically unique'" (ibid). And though some anthropologists "denied the existence of the family level altogether," "Steward's analysis of the family-level Shoshone remains valid for many foraging societies" (Johnson & Earle, 2000, p. 42). The point however is not whether family-level, or village and clans, or corporate groups and big man collectivities, regional polities, simple to complex chiefdoms or even archaic states exist. The point throughout is rather that when "population density is low," and when the environment is "much richer" (ibid, p. 43); when technology is simple, consisting of "personal tools, such as the ubiquitous digging stick and bow and arrow" used "to procure and process food and raw materials" (ibid); when "social organization of production is familistic and informal" (ibid), "Political integration is minimal and not institutionalized," and "stratification is absent in any meaningful sense" (ibid, p. 44); when the notion of "sanctity is largely confined to shamanistic practices aimed at the health and well-being of the family: curative rituals, hunting, magic, and the like" (ibid); then it becomes feasible to explore comparably simpler examples of human behaviors and study more basic occurrences of social action.

Mauss's (1954/1990) seminal work in the area of gift-giving will guide this portion of the discussion. Mauss provides a foundational contribution to modern scholarly considerations of exchange and provides my initial framework of social action within the context of cooperative behavior. His ideas have been nicely summarized by Barnard (2000): "though gifts are in theory voluntary, they nevertheless stem from expectations on the part of the recipient" and perhaps the sense of obligation on the part of the giver (ibid, p. 65); "they may be free from expectation of direct return" but "there is always an element of repayment" (ibid). Mauss pronounced that "exchange is the earliest solution to the Hobbesian war of all against all" (Barnard & Spencer,

1996, p. 218); at the same time he insinuates that exchange forges relationships. He "stressed the way that actors are linked as obligated to each other" and "saw the things exchanged as bearers of social identities and relationships" (ibid, p. 220). According to Mauss, "The gift" "is not free" but rather "embedded in a system of rights and obligations which in any society make up part of the social structure" (Barnard, 2000, p. 65). At the bottom of gift giving is the act of exchange and, relatedly, the idea of reciprocity or the expectation of return.

The colonial introduction of the "money economy" enabled "items from different spheres" to "be traded against each other, using cash as an intermediate step" (Barnard & Spencer, 1996, p. 218-219). Similarly, exchange transactions between kinship groups aim to create "relationships of kinship" (ibid, p. 219). Another type of exchange involves "things that can be exchanged against each other" (ibid, p. 218) much as "In the West… promotions, academic degrees and honours of all sorts, which are given in return for merit" (ibid). On one end of the spectrum lies more individualistic and self-interested interpretations of human behavior with concern for "equivalence" and "the costs and benefits that accrue to actors" (ibid, p. 220), and on the other are social interest explanations (ibid). Malinowski and Mauss represent the opposite poles of anthropological perspectives on human interest. The authors' summative breakdown introduces more recent positions about exchange: many dispute "the idea that exchange within any given society is in fact relatively uniform"; another perspective "asserts that in most societies some exchange is more individualistic and concerned with short-term gain, while other exchange is more social and concerned with long-term cultural values and goals" (ibid, p. 220-221); another suggests that it can be "misleading to classify exchanges, as there may well be disagreement among people in a society over whether a particular transaction is more relational or utilitarian" (ibid, p. 221).

A more enquiring take describes exchange or transactions in a light that places emphasis on neither actor nor object, but considers them as superimposed. In Marx's view, "commodity exchange masks the real relation between actors and the objects they exchange" (Barnard & Spencer, 1996, p. 219). Strathern's (1988; Barnard & Spencer, 1996) perspective on Melanesian exchange seems to follow the Marxian perspective, arguing that "Melanesians do not" "conceive of objects and persons as independent entities that are involved in exchange" (ibid, p. 220). Within this context, "The person who gives does not exist prior to the giving," "but has an identity only as part of and as a result of that relationship" (ibid). Strathern's (1988; Barnard & Spencer, 1996) interpretation of Melanesian gift-giving seems nearly synonymous with the concept of totemism. Strathern's perspective on gift-giving bends the light of previous interpretations in such a way as to unveil a possible permutation of benevolent behavior at work in the social act of gift-giving. But first, rather than attempt a description of totemism, which is an intricate complex of ideas and behaviors, I will allow it to explain itself in this brief mythological account:

> an Ojibwa hunter, having 'accidentally' killed a bear, was accosted by an avenging bear who demanded an explanation. Although the Indian's apology was accepted, he remained disturbed, telling Long (1791): 'Beaver, my faith is lost, my totam is angry, I shall never be able to hunt any more (Barnard & Spencer, 1996, p. 550).

Although totemism belongs to a cosmology unfamiliar to Western capitalist societies, Strathern's reading of Melanesian exchange, taken together with the Native American conception of totemic oneness, reveals an unexpected alliance with the goal of cooperative inquiry. Sameness or oneness is not an American aspiration; a far more important national goal is to achieve empathetic coherence in a setting woven from difference. Cooperative inquiry is an instructional strategy intended to raise a feeling of empathetic accountability among students, and in broad outline seems observable in the problem-solving scenarios enacted by Click, Cliff Hanger and

Opposite Bunny in *BTL*, episode one. In other words, the instructional strategy under analysis possesses totemic properties which work to heighten prosocial qualities which would enable students from diverse backgrounds to learn with and from one another, and to develop a sense of mutual responsibility for one another. While my goal is not to prove cooperative instructional strategy is a perfect instrument, it is my objective to provide a rationale explaining why this particular instructional innovation might serve to advance broader national ends: in this case, the ideals and goals of American democracy. In the following section I discuss metacognition from the perspective of self-awareness. Finnish play-based instructional strategies support the dynamics of children's play space, which operate to heighten self-awareness, a central component of metacognition. The three problem-solving scenarios of *Sana-Arkku* will provide insights into the underlying mechanisms of play-based pedagogy and how it works to elevate metacognitive self-awareness.

Metacognition

This section presents a theoretical consideration of metacognitive development focused on self-awareness, or "knowledge about one's own thinking" (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 65). Discussion of the metacognitive domain rose to the forefront of a veritable storm of pressing conversations "During the late 1970s and early 1980s" about what underlies "students' individual differences" (ibid). What follows is a careful consideration of the metacognitive ability of self-awareness and its role in buoying-up self-control, with appropriate reference to several other links in a chain of strategies which privilege the task of problem-solving. Among other sources (Annevirta & Vauras, 2006), my discussion draws on the work of Zimmerman (2002; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011; Winne & Hadwin, 2008), which divides the student learning process into three phases: 1) Forethought Phase; 2) Performance Phase and 3) and Self-Reflection Phase. I devote particular

attention to the Forethought Phase in which task analysis and self-motivation are more prominent in the student's learning process. The Performance Phase is subdivided into two classes, self-control and self-observation, each of which connotes evaluative capabilities. Zimmerman's argument is that the Forethought and Performance Phases are not only separate, but are ordered. I propose instead that play-based activities have the effect of collapsing the two initial phases of the learning process into a single learning level which enhances problem-solving capabilities quite early in life.

"Self-awareness" is one of several terminological referents for metacognition; other terms include "metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive awareness," "self-reflection, and self-regulation" (Pintrich, 2002, p. 219). Each term refers to the ability to exercise metacognitive judgment, which is consequential for problem-solving. It will be my contention that Finland's play-centered preschool approach works to heighten metacognition and self-awareness in particular. And as "Almost all 6-year-old children (about 96%) are participating in [Finland's] preschool education" (Ojala & Talts, 2007, p. 206), which is grounded in play philosophy and pedagogy, it is arguable that a similar metacognitive development might also occur in other learning environments in which play is central. My supposition is that "In the Forest Hut with the Bats," episode one of *Sana-Arkku,* a Finnish preschool language and reading skill television program, provides numerous insights into how the play-centered approach influences metacognitive development.

It is well known that the "Finnish preschools' play-centered approach actively encourages children's language skills and literacy exposure before formal reading instruction begins at school" (Lerkannen et al., 2004, p. 796). However, it is of central importance to my study to differentiate precisely what instructive *exposures* (ibid) or strategies target particular cognitive skills. It is

important to note that the three problem-solving scenarios of episode one foreground an approach to reading literacy and reading awareness called Reading Games, which at the time of production, was unique to Finnish reading instruction (Karvonen, 2007). In fact, "the teaching of reading and writing [had] not been part of Finnish day-care practices; rather it [had] been considered a responsibility of school" (ibid, p. 142). However, the approach was nonetheless forwarded based on "two arguments for initiating literacy activities in early childhood," one of which was premised on capacity and the other on exposure (ibid). In other words, children have the capacity to learn "many skills before formal school education, as long as the learning is based on games and playing they find interesting" (ibid). And second, children will "want to learn to read" if *exposed* to "surroundings" "full of text" (ibid). The proposition is quite simple though the strategies employed to bring about reading literacy skills are elaborate and reveal compelling information about how metacognitive skills may be guided through their early development by play-based philosophy. My attention will be directed to this point.

Reading Games is based on "an action research type intervention, aimed at developing the contents and practices of early childhood and especially preschool education and at supporting children's emerging reading awareness and reading literacy skills" (Karvonen, 2007, p. 150). The goal of the game is aimed toward "*enrichment of the learning environment*" (ibid, p. 147). The idea is to saturate the environment "with plenty of opportunities to encounter normal written text at various parts of the day-care centre" (ibid) through, for example, "Word cards" "used to label different things and their designated places" (ibid). As a televised adaptation of Reading Games, *Sana-Arkku* was, at its time, a maverick approach to Finnish early childhood education. Considered within its context, the program represented push-back to a system of pedagogy which would have "[Finnish] teachers often read a story to the children" with "books in the classroom" "for teachers

to read to children [and] with no library corners or literacy centers" (Korkeamäki & Dreher, 2000, p. 358-359); and neither were there "alphabet cards posted on the wall, as in American kindergartens" (ibid, p. 359). Stated plainly, the introduction of "Word cards" represented a pedagogical statement (Karvonen, 2007, p. 147). Reading Games builds from the theoretical starting place of *explicit* reading awareness which "consist[s] of linguistic, contextual and cultural awareness" (ibid, p. 143). Reading Games is in this way retrofitted to the play-based philosophy it endeavors to animate.

Karvonen offers certain terminological qualifications about reading and linguistic awareness which become relevant to a larger and more fundamental consideration of *Sana-Arkku's* cognitive contribution to the televised learning environment. It is suggested that "Reading awareness is also associated with interest in reading and consequently with the experience of joy and excitement of reading" (Karvonen, 2007, p. 144); further, that "contextual and cultural awareness highlights supportive motivational factors and children's views of reading" (ibid). Indeed, it is this constellation of behavioral variables – "interest" and the "experience of joy and excitement" in dynamic interaction with "contextual and cultural" reinforcements, and all these in practice at the level of "the child's immediate environment" of "playing culture and activities" – which I propose as forming the subterranean metacognitive layer of the Finnish early educational system (ibid). Having stated this assessment, I must now turn from a dialogue about reading and literacy skills to consideration of pre-literacy skills: the ground in which cognitive readiness is squarely planted, and in which metacognitive development takes root.

Development of cognitive awareness includes preparation for both academic learning and such executive functions as self-regulatory skills (Bierman et al., 2009). Finland's early education pedagogical framework seems to demonstrate a systems approach to elevating executive functions,

"Support[ing] and monitor[ing] children's physical, psychological, social, cognitive, and emotional development"; it works to "Strengthen children's positive self-concept and their ability to learn skills"; it "Promote[s] children's interest in nature and an idea of their own independence and responsibility for both nature and the human-made environment" (Ojala & Talts, 2007, p. 206); and it assumes "that knowledge cannot be directly transferred to children through teaching" but that "children should themselves generate new ideas on the basis of their own previous knowledge and experience" (ibid).

Finland's early educational system falls within a general "Nordic [Early Childhood Education] ECE pedagogy" "curriculum," which has "been classified as belonging to the social pedagogical tradition which encourages play, relationship, curiosity and the desire for meaning making based on activities that value both children and educators in a co-constructing environment" (Karila, 2012, p. 588). Other European early educational settings embrace play-based pedagogy to a greater or lesser extent (Burger, 2010; Van Oers & Duijkers, 2013). Indeed "The Nordic countries' holistic approach to early childhood education resists the 'school preparation approach,'" and is grounded in the principle that "introducing formal learning standards too early in children's lives" threatens "'free development'" (Karila, 2012, p. 589). In this early educational context "The central concept in the pedagogical approach stresses the importance of a child-centred approach, in which children should be active learners; and adults, simply guides. To support the children's learning process and to guide children toward becoming conscious of their own learning process is important in everyday practice" (Ojala & Talts, 2007, p. 206). Learning happens within a wall-less pedagogical environment "based on playful and imaginative activities, including drama, fairy tales, and stories" (ibid).

Metacognition is denoted by several different terms including “metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive awareness, self-awareness, self-reflection, and self-regulation” (Pintrich, 2002, p. 219). It is formally defined as “the awareness of and knowledge about one's own thinking” (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 65). However, metacognition is neither a skill nor a form of knowledge, but both (Pintrich, 2002); it is an endowment of abilities with form and function. The knowledge component describes its form: “knowledge of general strategies that might be used for different tasks, knowledge of the conditions under which these strategies might be used, knowledge of the extent to which the strategies are effective, and knowledge of self,” with respect to knowing one’s “own strengths and weaknesses pertaining to the task” (ibid, p. 219). Self-knowledge of this sort is vital, as it enables appropriate tactical corrections when the unexpected requires one to “change” the “approach to” a given task (ibid, p. 220): it affords “situational” and “conditional” reactivity to tasks (ibid). Metacognition also represents a function “involving the monitoring, control, and regulation of cognition” (ibid, p. 219). The ability to exert a kind of metacognitive judgment enabling control and regulation of one’s own cognitive resources describes the functional compartment. The joint actions of “metacognitive control and self-regulatory” ability enable learners “to monitor, control, and regulate their cognition and learning” (ibid, p. 220). Pintrich (2002) elaborates on Flavell’s foundational discussion of metacognition in which he “suggested that metacognition included knowledge of strategy, task, and person variables” (ibid, p. 220). The author’s particularization of Flavell’s general framework served to evolve the categories by including the qualification of a “student’s knowledge of general strategies for learning and thinking” and “knowledge about the self” (ibid). Each of these categories is relevant to this discussion, as they all help to map out the actual dimensions of metacognition’s conceptual breadth.

Strategic knowledge represents a complex of strategies spanning "learning, thinking, and problem-solving" with utility "across a large number of different tasks and domains, rather than" any "one particular type of task" (Pintrich, p. 2002, p. 220). Possession of this knowledge thus possibly represents the "strategic" advantage in problem-solving (Kuhn et al., 2000, p. 497). Learning strategies are described as "rehearsal, elaboration, and organizational" (Pintrich, 2002, p. 220). Each strategy involves approaches to learning which represent various degrees of deep intellectual processing. Rehearsal is considered the least intensive learning strategy, usually involving simple repetition (Pintrich, 2002); elaboration stratagems cover "mnemonics for memory tasks," "summarizing, paraphrasing and selecting main ideas from texts" (ibid, p. 220); and organizational strategies are typified as "outlining, concept mapping, and note taking" (ibid). Thinking happens either inductively or deductively, "such as evaluating the validity of different logical statements, avoiding circularity in arguments, making appropriate inferences from different sources of data, and drawing on appropriate samples to make inferences" (ibid, p. 221). *Strategic knowledge in effect equals the plan of pursuit of a given problem.*

The relative extent of one's strategic knowledge advances or retards progression through tasks. In a similar vein, the author adds that "different tasks can be more or less difficult and may require different cognitive strategies" (Pintrich, 2002, p. 221). For these reasons, learning requires situational agility "Because not all strategies are appropriate for all situations" (ibid). Problem-solving requires judgment and knowing "what," "when" "why," "how" and, not insignificantly, *which* "cognitive 'tools'" are advantageous to a given problem-solving scenario (ibid). In describing cognitive strategies as cognitive tools, Pintrich (2002) incorporates a carpentry metaphor in advancing the idea that tools are adapted, or retrofitted, to a given task. The metaphorical structuring between the domains of cognition and carpentry creates a coherent

(Lakoff & Johnson, 2003), useful rhetorical construct which raises the often abstract notion of cognition from intangibility to tangibility. Along these lines, Mike Rose (2004) presents the everyday genius of the American worker, in an ethnography titled *The Mind at Work*.

Chapter by chapter, the author (Rose, 2004) presents the typically overlooked but cognitively demanding tasks of waiting tables, plumbing, cosmetology and carpentry, which become "portraits of cognition" (ibid, p. xx). The end result is an impressive rendering of, among other things, concrete examples of cognitive knowledge and function; the simultaneous actions of cognitive knowledge and cognitive functions; and also the intricate and fluid movements of cognition as it courses between mind and body when directed as one toward a single kinesthetic action. Perhaps Rose's work will help make the cognitive complexities of play more apparent by the example of work activities that have been similarly overlooked or oversimplified. A compilation of vignettes from Rose's book will bring greater salience to these ideas: "Jerry like other expert carpenters I observed, is able to estimate length at a glance. He can eyeball a structure for misalignment at an angle that's off, gaps, bows, sags in an assembly. He, troubleshoots the cause of problems through the look of things. He has an eye, and a touch for texture" (ibid, p. 72); and then there is Felipe, "one of Mr. Devries more competent juniors" apprentices who demonstrates something revealing about physical skills when assisting a "struggling" understudy (ibid, p. 77), that "physical skill" is "usually integrated with knowledge. His feel for the backsaw is combined with an understanding of how it works" (ibid); further, "students learn how to use a tool not only on the bench but in constrained space. Thus they learn how to maximize biomechanics" and "begin to develop the physical savvy that eventually yields the deft touch of the drywaller working overhead or the carpenter starting a nail with one hand" (ibid).

Next, Rose turns to the tools themselves and, in doing so, makes a particularly acute remark about rehearsal which stands in contrast with briefer portrayals (e.g., Pintrich, 2002). Rose (2004) describes the cognitive transformation undergone by budding carpenters when tool use and mind interact over time: "and one of the significant things that will happen to these young people over their time with [Mr. Devrie] and beyond is that their knowledge of tools, and the variations within kinds of tools – the crosscut saw, the ripsaw, the backsaw, the coping saw – will increase dramatically. They will be able to recognize these objects, name them, know what each can do," and "learn how to manipulate them effectively" (ibid, p. 78). With experience, the novice "learns about [its] force and function, design and structure" (ibid, p. 79). The processes of "Brain" "tool" and material "become a complex cybernetic system, information flowing back and forth in action" (ibid; Clark, 1997); "'At a certain point, upon a day, you almost become the work, a moving and cognitive part of the tool in your own hand'" (Rose, 2004, p. 82). Eventually, "This blend of learned facts, experiences, and procedures" makes one "capable of functioning without close supervision" (ibid, p. 64) and, by analogy, rendering the student the teacher and facilitator of their own learning progression (Share & Stanovich, 1995; Cunningham, 2006); "The use of tools over time contributes to a bodily, material physics and mechanics, to a rich knowledge of assembly and repair, and to a problem-solving orientation toward the built environment" (Rose, 2004, p. 79), and with this metacognitive development the learner crosses the threshold of passivity, and enters into the realm of self-directed (Zimmerman, 1989, 1990; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011), actively engaged learning.

The 1970s and 1980s advanced metacognition to the forefront of thinking about underlying causes of "students' individual differences" (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 65). The insight cannot be underestimated given the breadth of scholarship, intervention efforts, debates, controversies,

activism, legislative attention and financial resources devoted to closing the achievement gap (Ravitch, 1983, 2001; Berry & Blassingame, 1982; Kirst & Wirt, 2009; Cohen & Moffitt, 2009; Carnoy, 1996; Dickson & Harmon, 2011; Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2004; Pritchett, 2006). Social cognitive research is concerned with "social influences on children's development of self-regulation," and also considers how student goal setting shapes educational outcomes, "such as completing of a certain number of math homework problems" (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 65). Studies such as these led to the milestone finding that "Students who set specific and proximal goals for themselves displayed superior achievement and perceptions of personal efficacy" (ibid). Hence a search for social cause led to personal effect, "self-control" (ibid; Kendall & Wilcox, 1979; Humphrey, 1982; Normandeau & Guay, 1998; Howse et al., 2003; Tangney et al., 2004). The account above confirms that the long cognitive path to task completion, leading through attention, memory, logic and reasoning, and auditory and visual processing (LearningRx, 2015) once again begins with self-regulation. Although it is important that "self-awareness is often insufficient when a learner lacks fundamental skills" (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 65), it is probably equally true that the absence of this metacognitive ability handicaps awareness of what may in fact be lacking elsewhere in metacognition, or of how cognition might be wielded, when necessary, to compensate. Consideration of children operating with any metacognitive limits caused by personal, social or historical circumstances, for instance, requires incorporation of the critical concept of agency.

Critical theorists have contributed much to discussions of agency (DeMarrais & LeCompte, 1999), a concept which I would venture to define as closely allied in its effects to metacognition. Agency is, however, a concept with broad application, and in its most general sense suggests a personal nimbleness, despite forces acting against it. It is a litheness acquired under a very different

set of problem-solving conditions, though still problem-solving and litheness nonetheless. Its inclusion in my discussion is quite relevant, as I will shortly argue that the play space and psychological space for metacognitive development is comparably limited for urban low-income early learners. Agency, as used here, is a concept which places students in the drivers' seats of their own learning processes, and equips them to cope with, confront, and overcome the psychological scars and cognitive setbacks which accompany deep structural inequities impeding their fair and equal access to metacognitive opportunities. Therefore, my decision to enfold my argument in the considerable terminological weight of descriptors such as "enlightenment," (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 50), Zeitgeist, (Kincheloe, 2008), "emancipation" (ibid, p. 51), "immanence" (ibid, p. 53), and transformative (Hooks, 1993) is deliberate. Each term points in various directions of critical theory, cultural critique and revisionist scholarship. But each arguably circles back to a similar stance, which is the instrumental role of psychological health and psychological opportunity for productive living and life interpretations (Freire, 1970; Slater et al., 2002). The integration of all these concepts is fitting.

Zimmerman (2002) describes self-control as a strategy which selects from and involves "deployment of specific methods or strategies" including, among others, "*self-instruction*, *attention focusing*, and *task strategies*" (ibid, p. 68). These strategies make up approaches selected during Zimmerman's (2002) Forethought Phase. Self-control is positioned at phase two. However, it is arguable whether the decision to enlist *self-instruction*, *attention focusing*, and *task strategies* can reliably occur without the benefit of self-control (Baumeister et al., 1994). Self-control has been defined as a form of intelligence (Baumeister et al., 2007). From this perspective, self-control seems poised to enable the selection of strategies, but also the mobilization of necessary resources to be martialed to the task of problem-solving. My somewhat baseless insight comes from a basic

knowledge of test anxiety which is a condition that is motivating for some (Atkinson & Litwin, 1960), and arresting for far more students (Cassady & Johnson, 2002). The advantage of self-control in the case of the prepared test-taker or the less prepared but more-strategic thinker, is to free up cognitive and content level resources to forward a task. There is a psychophysiological component to test anxiety as well as a cognitive aspect. To this end, interventions unsurprisingly target self-regulatory skills.

Test taking anxieties are a useful reminder of the stabilizing role of self-control in any life situation. Without self-regulation, problem-solving situations dissolve into a chaos of fears and presumptive, but often fictive, inadequacies, mistaken impressions and paranoia, all of which introduce an utterly subversive presence to the problem-solving moment. By no coincidence are test anxiety interventions premised on helping students to "self-generate a specific psychophysiological state," called "*psychophysiological coherence,"* which acts on *"*nervous system function, emotional stability, and cognitive performance" (Bradley et al., 2010, p. 261). This study is, of course, unrelated to the very separate area of test anxieties. But the immobilizing effect of limited self-control on the problem-solving process, whether within a high or lower pressure context, works to misrepresent actual problem-solving capabilities or highlights problem-solving inabilities. Either way it decreases the learner's presence to the task of learning.

As noted above, Zimmerman divides the student learning process into three phases: 1) Forethought Phase; 2) Performance Phase and 3) Self-Reflection Phase. Forethought involves both "task analysis and self-motivation" (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 67). Task analysis is defined much as the term implies: "goal setting and strategic planning" (ibid, p. 68). On the other hand, self-motivation is a composite concept containing "students' beliefs about learning," "*self-efficacy,*" and "*intrinsic interest,*" which "refers to the students' valuing of the task skill for its own merits,"

and their "learning goal orientation," which "refers to valuing the process of learning for its own merits" (ibid). The Performance phase is divided into two classes, self-control and self-observation. Self-control is characterized as a strategy which includes self-instruction, attention focusing and task strategies. Self-observation seems vaguely related to the idea of self-evaluation, but rather than signifying rank or appraisal, it denotes a kind of "cognitive tracking of personal functioning, such as the frequency of failing to capitalize words when writing an essay" (ibid). The self-reflection phase again breaks down into two major sets of processes including self-judgment and self-reaction. There are two types of self-judgment: self-evaluation and causal-attribution. Self-evaluation bears some similarity to self-observation as it "refers to comparisons of self-observed performances against some standard, such as one's prior performance, another person's performance, or an absolute standard of performance" (ibid). Self-evaluation involves a level of cognitive tracking, but in this case comprises a measure or ranking and appraisal, as opposed to self-observation.

"Causal attribution" seeks to understand the "cause of one's errors, or successes" (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 68), and from this standpoint begins to identify both a different depth of learning experience and a different type of learner. The ability to self-reflect in such a methodical fashion signals higher-level critical thinking skills, and suggests a learning quality capable of recognizing that which stands between success and failure, correct and incorrect answers, futile versus useful investigative strategies, and to approach a perceived problem with a learner's disposition, in which ingenuity and athleticism is brought to the task as with sport and game, puzzle and riddle; or the adventure brought to sledding a steep hill, or climbing a big tree. Causal attribution is a mark of proactivity. In my view, it is several steps beyond self-evaluation and empowers the learner to attribute "a poor math score," for instance, "to controllable processes,

such as the use of the wrong solution strategy," and resort to the conclusion that perhaps "a different strategy" will lead to a different outcome (ibid), rather than to focus unduly on personal characteristics or circumstances. And whether "different strategy" is taken to mean studying deeper and longer, or working methodically to increase content knowledge, or more extensive practice periods to hone a particular skill, or knowing when to seek help (ibid), the substance of the idea is the same.

The metacognitive perspective describes "what students needed to know about themselves in order to manage their limitations during efforts to learn" (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 65). Importantly, metacognitive abilities, like prosocial abilities, skills or behaviors, can be learned. They are not "mental abilit[ies] or an academic performance skill; rather it is the self-directive process by which learners transform their mental abilities into academic skills" (ibid). It is "an activity that students do for themselves in a *proactive* way" (ibid). However, metacognition's self-directive nature and its requirement for proactivity on the part of the learner, and the fact that self-regulation is the all-in-all, "refers to self-generated thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are oriented to attaining goals" (ibid), while it also points to a precursory period and process under which these skills are cultivated. The learner equipped with metacognitive skills approaches problem-X with eyes open, considering first, what is the problem asking for; second, what content knowledge is required by the problem; third, do I know the answer, yes or no; fourth, acknowledging yes or no, and if no the learner either admits defeat or resorts to a series of problem-solving strategies based on prior experiences with trial and error. This is the line which in fact divides those who are task persistent from those who collapse under pressure; those whose learning ascent is spurred only by incentive, versus those who propel themselves through the learning process. There is consensus among scholars across theoretical perspectives, whether they are

adherents of "Piagetian models," or "Vygotskian and cultural" models, that with metacognitive "development students become more aware of their own thinking as well as more knowledgeable about cognition in general" and "act on this awareness," which improves the learning process (Pintrich, 2002, p. 219).

The thinking path laid out describes a possible example of any number of systematic actions performed by a mind operating within a self-controlled mental state. Essentially, it is the forethought phase in which a cognitive switch has been cultivated to flick on the investigative and forensic capacities otherwise disturbed under pressure. It is a mental *process* which arguably collapses Zimmerman's (2002) phases one and two so that *self-control* and *self-observation*, *task analysis* and *self-motivation* combine. And though these skills and strategies are separable in the abstract, I contend that their cultivation within the context of play is quite possibly simultaneous. Play is a cognitively enriched space that can do much with little: "trees" "used for playing hide and seek, but more often, balls, tops, boards," "any number of different kinds of sticks, darts and bats" (Barnard & Spencer, 1996, p. 424); a host of other outdoor activities including sandbox play aimed at constructing buildings, mountains or tunnels; school-yard activities on playground equipment, such as swings, seesaws, and among many other play-based activities, simple role playing (PC). Finnish play-based instructional strategies support the dynamics of children's play space and operate to heighten self-awareness, a central component of metacognition.

Children's play has been linked to learning (Bateson, 2000; Hirsch-Pasek et al., 2003; Brock et al., 2009), self-concept (Lillemyr, 2001), and more generally to child development (Singer et al., 2006). And although play is by no means a universal instructional practice, it seems to be a defining characteristic of childhood across cultures (Bateson, 2000). Moreover, its specific impact on self-regulatory abilities (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004), or the "ability to initiate, sustain,

modulate, or change the intensity or duration of feeling states in order to achieve one's goals" (Dickinson et al, 2006, p. 15), is relevant to the present discussion. Each of its cognitive associations link it to a cognitive genealogy with deep implications for achievement. Dickinson and colleagues (2006) report on the extensive research done on self-regulation in relation to the development of children's social skills and ultimately their achievement. The authors explain that effective regulatory abilities among preschoolers is linked to: positive peer and teacher associations (ibid); keener social competence among kindergarteners (ibid); and higher achievement (ibid). Ojala and Talts (2007) report findings from a recent cross-cultural study comparing the educational outcomes of Finnish and Estonian educational settings, in which both cultures rank as exceptional in terms of professional teacher competence and principles of child-centered pedagogy. Interestingly, Estonian teachers attached higher value to concrete results than did their Finnish counterparts. This pedagogical dissimilarity apparently resulted in a shift in metacognitive outcomes between these two preschool populations, with Finnish students having higher positive self-image and altruistic abilities than Estonian preschoolers. This discovery resonates with an existing literature which demonstrates that Finnish preschool teachers lay emphasis on "altruism," "self-concept, and emotions" and regard these among other prosocial attributes as "most important" (ibid, p. 209).

Play describes a "type of 'free' activity" found to be "characteristic of the young of any relevant species, who use special playful, and immediately recognizable expressions to indicate" their engagement with it (Barnard & Spencer, 1996, p. 424). Play is not the same as games. Games are characterized by "a pronounced social dimension," and usually involve "cooperation" within-group and "competition" between groups (ibid). Games in effect are at the dividing line between child and adult-like activities, as they are "no longer recognizable by the facial expressions of the

participants" but rather "by the imposition of elaborate rules" (ibid, p. 424-425). Without rules, there is no game (Barnard & Spencer, 1996), only play. And if the substance of play is metacognitive development, then the resounding question is "what of the substance of games?" The march from childhood to adulthood, from play to game, marks the incremental disposal of *childish* and "solitary play" *ways* and the serial adoption of "serious adult games," or "a framework of action within which anything that does not properly belong…is screened out as irrelevant" (ibid, p. 425). Competition is thus emphasized (ibid), and "'the framework of action'" expands to "involve non-players such as spectators" "trainers and promoters, each with their own distinctive role" (ibid). Geertz's renowned ethnography of Balinese cockfighting makes the lasting point that although "'it is only apparently cocks that are fighting…Actually, it is men'" (ibid; Geertz, 1973). By analogy, the question becomes: when is too soon to dispose of an enriched metacognitive activity; and at what point is it essential to do so? The nature of competition has received cool commentary, if not icy response from the likes of Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) and others (Sahlberg, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c).

Bourdieu's (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) rather cynical take on competition is explained with lucidity: games involves "stakes" "which are for the most part the product of the competition between players" (ibid, p. 98); spectators and participants "have an investment in the game" (ibid); and "players are taken in by the game, they oppose one another, sometimes with ferocity, only to the extent that they concur in their belief" (ibid); indeed, stakes place a player's self, ethnic or social group conception, and pending change of capital on the line; to these and all other ends, players are complicit, they "agree, by the mere fact of playing, and not by way of a "contract," that the game is worth playing (ibid); it is this dynamic "collusion" that forms the "basis of their competition" (ibid). Others have described competition with less cynicism but certainly consider

it a concept deserving caution. Sahlberg (2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c) speaks to this idea in relation to schools and educational systems generally. For Sahlberg (2010) "Competition between schools combined with test-based accountability to hold schools accountable for predetermined knowledge standards have become a common solution in educational change efforts to improve the performance of educational systems around the world" (ibid, p. 45). Bourdieu and Sahlberg's position on competition align quite well and arrive at near bulls-eye agreement about its relationship to social capital. Sahlberg asserts that an uptick in competition unsurprisingly shadows a "decline" in "family and community social capital" "in most parts of [the] developed world" (ibid).

Today's conception of competition, though modernized and higher-stakes, nevertheless elicits the familiar and spirited bids from spectators from the educational establishment who lose sight of the basic needs and humanity of the player in the mania for the game. Sahlberg (2010) recommends that emphases be shifted to cooperation instead of competition and forwards the recommendation beginning with the hard evidence of "OECD PISA surveys (OECD 2001, 2004, 2007)" which "suggests that nations that have earlier built their educational reforms on test-based accountability ideas, have experienced stagnation or decline of student learning, often accompanied by increased drop-outs, compared to some other nations that focus on creating favourable conditions for teaching and learning by promoting cooperation rather than competition in their educational systems" (ibid, p. 52). It is perhaps by no coincidence then that play-based learning philosophies and strategies would be preferred by a national setting which strongly favors cooperative orientations over competitive dispositions. Neither is it surprising that cooperative abilities would be found strongly expressed among children whose teachers follow play-based philosophy where prosocial attributes are deemed "most important" (Ojala & Talts, 2007, p. 209).

Nor does it seem pure happenstance to find in such a setting positive metacognitive outcomes, wherever national policy, culture, education and the televised learning environment act in concert to articulate a systems approach to play.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

The following section opens with a narrative about how my initial quantitative study and summer pilot period in Finland combined to shift the direction of my original research plan into a sociocultural consideration of pedagogy and cognition. Thereafter, I provide a rationale for why I chose to frame my investigation as case study, followed by a lengthy section which itemizes the various approaches adopted to safeguard my research from threats to its validity. I close with a brief discussion about the chosen methodology and its theoretical grounding, along with a rather straightforward description of my research procedures.

A Change of Plans: Courage

One of the first lessons I learned during orientation for Michigan State University's Education Policy Program – and one reiterated often by various faculty throughout my course work – was to remain open to learning, to be available to the data, to treat everything as data, and to embrace the likelihood that data will often compel a shift in one's research direction. Their basic message was that research requires courage, and I found this lesson inspiring in the abstract; later, I found it almost terrifying when I confronted it in concrete form, as I realized that my initial data was insufficiently explanatory for the international comparative study I had undertaken, and that I needed to summon every ounce of courage I could muster to radically alter my research plan. Suddenly, these faculty mentors seemed to have had special foreknowledge of my predicament.

I originally planned to study two educational television programs within the production year of 2010. My aim was to identify an American and Finnish children's educational television program targeting reading skill development among early learners, and specifically among preschool populations. My decision to select programs targeting preschool subpopulations is related to my prior academic scholarship in which I consider collaborative participation of cultural

institutions in the reading skill development among low income third grade public school students. But over time, I developed a deepened appreciation for the fact that "Much of third-graders' capability is determined by their experiences as early learners" (Jackson, 2014a, p. 156). My objective became to devote the balance of my scholarship to better understanding this early learning community.

The original study was a retrospective design, with the aim to look back at alternative explanations for why NAEP and PIRLS scores generated in the years 2010 and 2011 were as they were, and whether the televised learning environment could offer some further explanation for outcomes relating to the specific reading index of word learning. In time I would learn that there were a number of problems with this idea. For one, acquiring curricular word lists from educational agencies at any level or from assessment agencies is little more than a notion, and so I thought to turn to an examination of text books. But which textbooks? This was obviously an impracticality given that the American educational setting is not nationalized; there is no one particular textbook and consequently no uniform standard for word learning. Of course I could have easily selected a state which had signed onto Common Core State Standards, such as New York, and adopted the word terms available in the glossary of their online language arts resources; but then my study would have generated local findings rather than ones with broader implication. Finally, I turned to PBS's *Between the Lions* website, and found its curriculum complete with a word list. Of course, I was not interested in word meanings but in word exposure. The word list would suffice but now I needed the transcripts of episodes.

I learned I would have to abandon season 10 for season 9 because the producer was better positioned to forward the transcripts for season 9, along with the DVD, much faster than for season 10. This was a critical decision point because season 10 is obviously more recent than season 9,

but in the interest of time and the ready availability of the transcript, I adjusted my research plan. The good news is that seasons nine and ten were aired in 2009 and 2010. So, very shortly, I would have electronic transcripts for season nine, along with the word list from the *Between the Lions* PBS website. These events transpired while operating under the fatal assumption that the same resources would be available for the Finnish television counterpart; this proved not to be the case. Meanwhile, I set out to design a content analysis of season nine. My approach to developing my coding instrument was in broad outline, formed from viewing prior seasons' episodes, including season five. And though seasons five and nine differ in some ways, it was from this preparatory exercise that I determined that capturing word exposure was less interesting than capturing how words were being socialized within discrete literacy socialization environments. The development of the coding system for season nine was informed by this information. And by this time, I had digested semesters of literature about the universe of factors external to the classroom which impact learning, and I was better able to recognize what appeared to be explicit attempts to draw parameters around and to animate the many areas of literacy socialization that reportedly influence the learning process. I became increasingly cognizant of a possible additional function of public television, which was to *recalibrate life odds through a more purposeful use of art.*

I chose to sample the population of ten episodes from Season Nine by randomization, rather than by representative selection, to remove "researcher bias," and to "ensure that any "unknown influences" are distributed evenly within the sample" (Shenton, 2004, p. 65). "According to Bouma and Atkinson," this approach "…provides the greatest assurance that those selected are a representative sample of the larger group" (ibid). I decided to err on the side of a more blinded selection process because of the exploratory nature of this investigation and my commitment to avoid *a priori* bias. I trained myself on episode 901; I then trained my second coder on the same

video. In the end, I developed a coding schema; trained the coder; and I did not authorize proceeding with coding the randomized selection of five episodes until we reached a high degree of reliability on coding the videos. After reaching inter-rater agreement on the training episode, the coder and I set out to code a randomized selection of five videos from a total of ten. I selected every second episode from the randomized sample set to establish inter-rater reliability at 50%. The end result of using the Excel random number function were the following episodes, 901.1/901.2, 904.1/904.2, 905.1/905.2, 909.1/909.2, and 910.1/910.2, which I coded along with my undergraduate coder until we reached the necessary agreement in reliability. At the end of this process, I released the coder to the remaining episodes of Season 9.

My objective was to quantify the degree to which vocabulary learning could be mediated by a televised learning environment, specifically by *BTL*. To do so, I approximated six situations intended to foster behavioral or literacy modeling and assigned proxies which stood for these social contexts. Behavioral spaces included parent dialogue, sibling interactions, and peer interactions; literacy spaces articulated content mainly through book, poem and song. I quantified the occurrence of words within each proxy, in order to determine the degrees to which child-viewers from low-income backgrounds would have the opportunity to access particular words outside the classroom. That research design was developed to measure the opportunity to learn (OTL) theoretical framework against an educational program targeting reading skill and, ultimately, vocabulary development. One of the implications of OTL is the potential to redress both the early literacy deficit and later problematic behaviors by improving the literacy experience of children outside the classroom, and particularly within the televised learning environment.

I was sure that my work was nearly done; it was not; it had just begun. While conducting the analysis of *BTL*, I was searching for a comparable Finnish program that met my research

specifications. It was not at all a neat and tidy process, but utterly chaotic. But chaos soon became ordered with the selfless, and constant assistance of lecturers in the political science department at The University of Helsinki, and Teacher Education at University of Jyväskylä, and two high-ranking authorities in the Finnish arm of the International Reading Association. Their help transformed a painstaking process in which I was teaching myself Finnish for the express purpose of translating the complete listing of children's educational programs from the non-English portions of the Finnish National Broadcasting Company's website, in order to select the proper Finnish programmatic corollary; even more important, their help led to key meetings with producers at Yle, the Finnish national broadcasting company. In February 2014, having little else than email conversations and two telephone interactions, I traveled to Finland. And while my brief trip included watching children's television in my room at Hotel Arthur, and participating in productive discussions about potential program candidates with producers at Yle, my trip concluded without a definitive program.

By late March I received a very welcome surprise package from Yle in my MSU mail box; it was a subtitled version of episode one of *Sana-Arkku*, a program of which twenty episodes were produced. In order to establish relative uniformity between analytical units, I chose only one fourth of the programs to view, or $5/20^{th}$ of the episodes and, again, by process of randomization. By luck of the draw, the Excel random number function returned episodes 1, 4, 5, 17 and 19, which happened to include episode one. I watched it that evening; something was very different from the approach of *BTL*. And then I viewed it again, later that week, with a literacy researcher who also took it home to watch once more; then again with a children's media researcher. Among many points of difference with *BTL*, there seemed to be greater cognitive exertion. But there were other sticking points in terms of my research design. The production year of *Sana-Arkku* was 2006 as

compared to the production of year of *Between the Lions*, 2009. The program running times were completely different, from opening titles to closing credits, with *Between the Lions* being approximately 26 minutes, and *Sana-Arkku* around 10 minutes. The pedagogical techniques were different. And where, in *Sana-Arkku*, was the music? Where were the puppets? Why is the theatrical backdrop of this episode dark? However, these issues do not approach the even larger dilemma, which was that I could not apply my analytical instrument to this program because the literacy socialization approach of *Sana-Arkku* was not the same as that of *BTL*. What I observed was not comparable to the program format, nor to the apparent pedagogical approach of *Between the Lions*, though targeting nearly the same age subpopulation, and targeting reading skill development and interest among early learners. *I was stumped*.

I ran to my every mentor to seek advice on what to do. As usual, I was greeted by smiles and calm, and the unmistakable and immovable spirit of intellectual adventure which sets veteran scholars apart from juniors. I was told – not just in one – but in five separate meetings, that *this too is data*. I was reminded that data is present, *and especially when it is not*. With some difficulty, I collected myself and moved forward. And then, with refreshed sensibilities, and after repeated viewing of episode one of *Sana-Arkku*, I began to surmise that the *absence* of literacy socialization scenarios in *Sana-Arkku* signaled the *presence* of real-life household level literacy socialization opportunities available to the child-viewers in this national setting. This news was both fascinating and devastating because it meant deserting the research approach I'd begun planning in April 2013, and which I had nearly completed for the U.S. part of the comparative study. I was forced to abandon my approach after only a very few days of receiving the episode of *Sana-Arkku*. My next step was to develop open-ended questionnaires directed to children's programming producers at

Yle, to address my new problem of having more questions about Finland's televised learning environment than knowledge of it.

Sociocultural norms are usually invisible to actors operating within a particular sociocultural setting. No doubt fish only recognize the differences between water and air when caught. Norms work similarly. The decision to exclude parent characters from episode one of *Sana-Arkku*, for instance, is likely because Finnish children have parents, and not one, but usually two. Nor would it be necessary to devote programmatic time to compensate for parental literacy inadequacies within a population in which literacy is 100% (World Fact Book, 2014). It became clear that I could not explore the same literacy socialization phenomena in the Finnish production that I observed in the U.S. program; at least not in the same way. I was beginning to see that I was dealing with apples and oranges; that the sociocultural conditions informing the pedagogical environments of *Between the Lions* and *Sana-Arkku* were the difference between orchards and groves. The questions, insights and revelatory moments would not stop here. A moment of dismay stirred within me the memory of a trusted voice echoing from a block away from my childhood home: *there are never challenges, only opportunities*. My experience as a graduate student has shown me that when impracticalities disturb the research process, it is often the knee-jerk response to experience fear. But I have since learned that the scholar smiles in the face of adversity. This would begin an arduous journey through many tough decisions made in the interest of forwarding an idea that seemed always threatened by the sheer practical realities of research. My parents have repeated to me on more than one occasion: *life is about navigating puzzles, not paths*.

Preliminary observations of *Sana-Arkku*'s pedagogical environment and the behaviors elicited by its play-based pedagogical approach, awakened me to differences in the learning process; not only how learning was happening but what learning behaviors, indeed, what cognitive

outcomes this pedagogical approach aimed at. My pilot period, field experiences, and answers from questionnaires from producers at Yle also substantiated many of the insights I gathered from that seemingly "short" running time of approximately 10 minutes. I returned to *Between the Lions* with this new set of eyes, and realized that child viewers engaged in its pedagogical environment were learning to learn in another way and, incidentally, potentially developing different cognitive tendencies. My study became a quest to understand the intersection between pedagogy and culture, and to learn how, why, and what cognitive outcomes are generated by this process.

Learning belongs to the domain of thought, and academic thought, specifically, usually involves problem-solving. And although thinking and problem-solving are "closely related" there are distinctions (Sternberg, 1994, p. 409). As it is explained, "Thinking may be done for the express purpose of finding the solution to a problem" or "without having any particular problem in mind" (ibid). Problem-solving, in the same way, "sometimes, but not always, requires intense cognitive effort" (ibid). I am referring to the type of problem-solving which expects "effortful thinking" (Sternberg, 1994, p. 410). My identification of problem-solving scenarios in *Between the Lions* and *Sana-Arkku* was premised on multiple viewings of randomized selections of episodes from season nine of *BTL* and the twenty episodes of *Sana-Arkku*. Transcripts for *Sana-Arkku* were translated by a professional translation agency by the name of Fasttranslator, and then reviewed and corrected for error by the creator and the creator's fluently English-speaking daughter. In the end, the sample of episodes appeared to be directed to consistent cognitive themes. My dissertation research is a treatment of one episode of each program, and highlights their problem-solving scenarios. In the Appendices I supply brief descriptions of the four episodes of both programs excluded from my more detailed consideration. My point is to demonstrate the largely separate

cognitive tracks emergent from each respective national instructional approach. However, when occasional exceptions are found, these are mentioned.

Pilot Study

I arrived at a respectable knowledge of the broad outlines of Finland's student story through popular treatments first, and then engaged the scholarly literature. I knew what most educational scholars knew: Finland's educational system and international assessment outcomes are remarkable; school leaders are liberated to lead; teachers are excellently trained and their talents granted autonomy in their classrooms; they are trusted; parents are fully involved; the business community and political system are cooperative; and the development of their acclaimed pre-school education system (Jyväskylä Symposium, 1971; Starting Strong II, 2006; Starting Strong III, 2011) has provided for what are more generally Nordic conditions of early childhood education (Einarsdottir & Wagner, 2006). I would also come to learn about a general pedagogical emphasis on the highly valued skill of problem-solving (Välijärvi et al., 2007; Darling-Hammond & McCloskey, 2008; Laine et al., 2014). I digested this literature while bearing in mind that the "literature review is" "a means to an end, and not – as many people have been taught to think – an end in itself" (Yin, 2009, p. 14).

Upon further reading of Finland's pre- and post-WWII history (Sahlberg, 2011a) I experienced an unexpected sense of familiarity with the Finnish narrative. It is a history of marginalization by Swedish and then Russian domination over nearly eight centuries, concluding only in 1917 upon Finnish Independence as an autonomous Grand Duchy within the Russian Empire (Spirit of Cygnaeus, 2010; Simola, 2005). However, although Finland's independence from Russia arose *de jure* in 1917, it appears to have acquired *de facto* independence only through its own actions on social policy, which "consolidated the values of equality and social justice

across the social classes of Finnish society" (Sahlberg, 2011a, p. 21). Finland made other great strides toward self-definition in its educational policy initiatives, key among which was "The original 1959 proposal of the School Program Committee," which materialized in full after "further elaborat[ion] by the National Board of General Education in the early 1960s" (ibid, p. 19). Ensuing planning brought "politicians and authorities," "school practitioners and academia" to "the process of defining Finland's new school system" (ibid, p. 20). I find it most interesting, in light of Finland's present high regard for its teachers and the teaching profession, that it was "the role played by the Finnish Primary School Teachers' Association (FPSTA)" (ibid), that spearheaded the educational reform initiative "As early as 1946," when "FPSTA had expressed its support for the idea of a unified basic school system" (ibid).

These earlier events prepared the way for an ambitious nationwide rebuilding of the educational system according to the Finns' own specifications. The stages of this process included: the passage of "New legislation (1966) and a national curriculum (1970)" (Sahlberg, 2011a, p. 21); an action plan for "a wave of reform" which "was to begin in the northern regions of Finland, and reach the southern urban areas by 1978" (ibid), with "The last of the southern municipalities shift[ing] to the new comprehensive school system" by 1979 (ibid, p. 22); "Ability grouping was eventually abolished in all school subjects in 1985" to guarantee that "all students have studied according to the same curricula and syllabi" (ibid). While some "question[ed]" the claim (ibid, p. 117), most Finns agree that this national accomplishment was inspired by and based on the pedagogical works and aspirations of Uno Cygnaeus, the recognized Father of Finnish Public School (Sahlberg, 2011a; Spirit of Cygnaeus, 2010; Snapshots from History, 2006). I think it is fair to suggest that this achievement marks the full emancipation of the Finnish people from centuries of foreign domination (Siikala, 2006). Finland's long march toward s*elf-determination*,

during which the Finns preserved their cultural identity, makes the story of the Finnish educational system less the narrative of a *top-scoring* nation, and more a page in the history of *odds-busting*. I can readily relate to this archetype; and with increased knowledge of the Finnish *struggle*, Finnish *scores* began to make perfect sense to me.

My study was on a very different trajectory prior to boarding KLM Royal Dutch on February 1st 2014 for a pre-data collection trip, and then again on Lufthansa on May 4th 2014 for a nearly seven week research field period. I departed from Detroit's Wayne County Airport acutely aware of leaving behind one of America's most troubled urban school districts and poor academic achievement ratings (NAEP, 2013), and arrived on the soil of the Western world's most distinguished public school educational environment and highest performance outcomes (PISA, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). In balance, the cumulative effect of an analytically and emotionally dense field period helped to steer me from a comparably flat appreciation of the conditions of achievement into a more deeply dimensioned understanding of critical intersections between public and educational policy which provide for higher-performing academic tendencies and, perhaps above all, the evident cultural cohesion that makes Finnish education appear seamless. So, this is the setting for Finland's students and it is not only parents, but also grandparents who participate; it is not only the highly trained teachers, abbreviated school days and absence of homework, but also the presence of city-sponsored and parent-backed structured free-time during which extensive hobby-activities help to provide for the cognitive enrichments of Finnish childhood; to all of which must be added "cottage time," during which Finns gather regularly with family and/or friends, and continue to build up family and cultural memory through, among other practices, the deeply embedded tradition of sauna; "'Finland's high achievement seems to be

attributable to a whole network of interrelated factors'" including socio-historical factors (Simola, 2005, p. 456).

Within the first few days of my pilot study in Finland – and stimulated, no doubt, by my efforts to negotiate a culture I had not previously experienced in depth – I realized, with an almost visceral impact, that factors other than the formal learning environment mediate the learning process. This pivotal development required a methodology more appropriate to investigating how the goals of the educational establishment are shaped by underlying cultural dispositions. Theoretical insight led to significant modification of the research design (Yin, 2009). I abandoned my quantitative approach to content analysis, which was originally designed for the relatively simple task of testing the extent of occurrence of a particular phenomenon in two different national televised settings. The analysis became case studies of educational programming in the originally targeted two national settings. I made the decision to shift the unit of analysis from five television episodes to one episode of a program produced and aired in each national setting in order to accommodate a much intensified research question. My research moved from a very simple thesis, whose intent was to quantify the degree to which vocabulary learning can be mediated in two distinct televised learning environments, to a consideration of *why* learning is delivered in a particular fashion in each environment (Yin, 2009, p. 10). A series of theoretical insights which emerged from the Finnish research period led to the abandonment of the former question (Yin, 2009), and the consequent adoption of a qualitative approach permitting the exploration of sociocultural complexity. As Dilthey (1962) succinctly puts it: "we explain nature, man we must understand" (van Manen, 1977, p. 214).

My nearly seven-week research period in Finland was pivotal, during which numerous experiences and relationships with astute respondents oriented me to the cultural context in which

Sana-Arkku is set. It became clear that the learning approach of *Sana-Arkku* is different from that of *Between the Lions*, and that these differences seemed largely attributable to differing academic expectations shaped by two very different cultures. Much has been committed to scholarly print about how formal practice influences the classroom, but far less scholarship addresses the part played by culture (Simola, 2005; Välijärvi et al., 2007; Niemi, 2012). Of course, a full-scale consideration of culture is not possible here given the limited scope and short term of my analysis, so this treatment is not ethnography but case study; the educational data I wish to examine are intimately informed by culture and require an appropriate research methodology: the televised educational environment emerges from human experience, which is formed by the social world, whose dynamics are shaped by culture. The cohesiveness of Finnish culture is apparent in *Sana-Arkku* and easily recognizable through numerous aspects of its specific national setting, making culturally influenced relationships readily visible to observational research. I became more deliberate in my research practices upon realizing that culture and pedagogy necessarily and inseparably intersect, and I abandoned my design of strict content analysis for particular analytical purposes. Instead, my Finnish field experiences involved visits to numerous cultural institutions, events and activities (including, but not restricted to, Museo Helsingin Kaupungin; Rikhardinkatu Library; Kamppi Chapel; Ateneum; Tohtorinhatut Ylioppilaslakit; Kappeli Restaurant; Elite Restaurant; Kiasma; Arkadia; Der Dom Von Helsinki (The Cathedral of Helsinki); Kansallisteatteri; Suomenlinnan Lelumuseo; Natural History Museum), extensive observation, many lengthy conversations with participants, countless daily casual encounters with Finns from many walks of life, and daily reflective journaling.

In such a cohesive cultural setting any particular event or phenomenon, regardless of scale, asserts or implies multiple connections to related aspects of the cultural system. As Malinowski

famously observed in a different cultural setting, to study a canoe is to study a society; the materials and dimensions of the canoe reflect the constraints of the environment and the requirements of its intended purpose, while elements of its design and decoration reveal much about its makers' shared taboos and permissions, as well as the values attributed, in this instance, to the life sustaining activity of fishing. As I became oriented to Finnish culture, *Sana-Arkku* became my canoe.

If culture is a driving force in the design of Finland's early elementary education, and is perceptible in the televised learning environment; and if culture undergirds a philosophy of play credited for student academic success, then perhaps a consideration of the cultural framework within which *Between the Lions* operates, can identify the cognitive skills privileged by the American early educational community, and illuminate the instructional environment designed to cultivate these abilities. In the case of Finnish children, the early instructional environment, up through age six, is shaped by educational philosophies, learning theories and teaching practices emphasizing both free and structured play. Recognition of the importance of play is typically attributed to Piaget, though several other proponents of this philosophy have contributed to this line of thinking. Play is the early educational approach favored by child psychologists and developmentalists for its positive effects on children's kinesthetic, psychological and cognitive development, domains strongly linked to achievement. However, my field experience taught me that play is both a practice and a concept informed by culture.

Numerous early- to mid-twentieth century anthropologists and sociologists held the view that dominant forms of human behavior are traceable to societal norms and structures (Benedict, 2000; Durkheim, 1951, 1956; Mauss, 1954/1990); and that philosophical and theoretical norms develop from a similar process of selection, much as does the range of phonetic articulations in linguistic evolution. The Germanic "R," Arabic "R," Spanish "R," and Finnish "R," for instance,

have distinct relationships to the glottal muscles. While biological evolution has produced the anatomical structures and physiological processes that enable the underlying complexities of human speech – such as coordination of lip and tongue (Juel, 2006) or the limbic functions tied to higher mental tasks, such as semantic memory, (Mader, 2006) – it is the process of active cultural selection that leads to a general preference for, in this instance, the soft or hard "R." From this vantage, children's play, as a socio-emotional and cognitive training ground, is also an organ of culture. Children's natural inclinations, when legitimized and reinforced by systems of philosophy, theory and method, become an institutionalized practice of culture; and a cultural institution is a stabilized form, which, in this case, works purposefully to produce winners (Moe, 2000).

The objective of this inquiry is then to identify the instructional strategy charged with reproducing this culturally favored cognitive skill. The task thus aims to shed light on a single phenomenon which might have implications for larger scale treatments. This exercise is vitally important given the fact that some children succeed in the educational enterprise, while others do not; some children grow to become productive, employable, or entrepreneurial citizens, while others do not. Some children, by possession of foundational learning skills, are able to perform across subject areas with tremendous efficacy, and thrive despite social pressures, while others are not. In the end, it is by cultivation of the cognitive domain, in coordination with socio-emotional resources, which privileges lives lived at or above, rather than below their potentials. Play is a promising strategy, though arguably limited by urban lower socioeconomic circumstances. Play mediates cognitive development through environmental interactions. But what of the urban condition? Where does the urban low-income early learner safely play? It is a conundrum and one, at least in part, answered by the safe space of American public educational television, as evidenced by *Between the Lions*.

The literature on socioeconomics and its impact on academic performance is extensive, and reaches beyond the scope of this analysis. From basic correlations to hard statistics, the empirical literature has examined various levels of socioeconomic influence, including the home (Bradley et al., 1979; Bus et al., 1995; Leseman and Jong, 1998; Sénéchal et al., 1998; Evans et al., 2000; De Jong & Leseman, 2001), school resources (Hanushek, 1996, 1997; Greenwald et al, 1996a; Hedges et al, 1994; Hanushek, 1994; Greenwald et al., 1996b; Sirin, 2005), class size, tutoring, longer school days, instructional quality (Levin, 1988), curriculum (Carnoy et al., 2007), and teacher preparation (Boyd et al., 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007). Socioeconomic conditions have been linked to brain development and function in studies "suggest[ing] that the stress associated with socioeconomic deprivation may affect important aspects of children's cognitive control which, in turn, may influence their behavior, learning, and educational attainments" (Duncan & Murnane, 2011, p. 9). The studies cited above are the tip of the iceberg of an extensive literature describing and investigating the effects of socioeconomics on formal learning processes, and are cited to illuminate the fact that there are comparatively far fewer scholarly efforts dedicated to discovering effective remedial, compensatory strategies. This study attempts to identify a positive strategy for educational policy scholarship to pursue. My goal is not to add to the literature on the debilitating effects of unmet resource needs, or the advantages of social or cultural capital, or of the consequences of the "*socioemotional gap"* (Jackson, 2014b, forthcoming) to overall development. These factors are as transparent in popular news accounts as they are in the literature. Children require emotional and material resources to grow and learn, and fair access to the economic and political resources which enable life options and the preservation of human dignity. These matters, I hope, are obvious.

Alternatively, my objective is to identify, describe, and attempt to explain effective instructional strategies enacted in televised learning environments designed to stimulate the cognitive inclinations of children for whom the impediments to learning, especially within a subpopulation of American children, are particularly severe. Extensive scholarship has been devoted to describing and quantifying ineffectiveness, with comparably less describing effectiveness. I will conduct a case study of episode 1 of season nine of *Between the Lions*, a seven-time Daytime Emmy award-winning televised learning environment, which manages to deliver educational content, secure the attention of a most diverse body of 4-7 year old children, and fulfill its principle purpose to improve reading skills. Thereafter I will conduct a case study of episode 1 of *Sana-Arkku* (*Word Chest*). *Word Chest* also targets preschoolers (4-6 year olds), and is designed to spur reading and language interest, and cultivate its development. However this study is neither about reading or language skill development, but the instructional strategies targeting cognitive development which are also evident in the programs under study. Cognitive skills are precursory to academic skills; and thus the relative success of these respective programs is also suggestive of their capability and pedagogical manner of transmitting the building blocks of achievement. The extent to which these buildings blocks are patterned within the particular settings of America and Finland will be explored over the balance of this discussion, and represents a unique contribution to literature about *Between the Lions*, and a first academic consideration of *Sana-Arkku*.

Rationale for Qualitative Methods: Case Study

Case study is the appropriate strategy for approaching a high-level philosophical and theoretical investigation. Case study, as with single-case inquiries, could be subject to the criticism of placing "all your eggs in one basket" (Yin, 2009, p. 61). However, my study includes both a micro- and a macro-treatment. The micro-treatment highlights problem-solving scenarios, and

aims to identify the dominant instructional theme and intended cognitive outcome, occurring within an episode of season nine of *BTL*, and within the first episode of *Sana-Arkku*. I also provide a macro-consideration of shadow education as an example of a systems approach to imparting learning.

Case study relies on analytic inquiry, which expects a firm purchase on the presupposed theory underpinning the study, and on the preparatory front end of the process. At the same time, it anticipates a certain agility in analytic judgment and execution throughout the field phase, which works to balance out whatever research confirms or contradicts in light of the working position. It is an experiential rather than experimental research strategy. The aim is not to "control" the data (Yin, 2009, p. 2) or the data collection process, but to engage it, learn from it, even be transformed by it, while at the same time maintaining its essential integrity. It is not the "mechanical" (ibid, p. 71) but the systemic route; it is reflexive and intuitive (Patton, 1990). It is not at all "routinized" as with experimentation (Yin, 2009, p. 68); it is iterative; there is a behavioral and psychological expectation on the part of the researcher, who must bend to the needs and conveniences of the data; it is a research environment in which the researcher "has little or no control" and therefore must relinquish control (ibid, p. 13). The researcher listens (Yin, 2009) with every faculty from ears to empathy. Patience and "flexibility" (ibid, p. 70) are required with persons and circumstances. It requires abiding alertness to all forms of data (Yin, 2009) and the ability to read the environment as multiple forms of text, including people, places, processes and objects. Social data exist within their social universe, as physical data emerge from the physical universe, and are therefore marked by connectivity. The recognition of smaller to larger links among data points is requisite to meaning-making, from which interim analytical developments arise (Yin, 2009). The televised learning environment is a page in the larger cultural narrative context in which it occurs.

My research process placed me in close contact with my research participants quite regularly and our engagements were frequently prolonged. Under these conditions, I actively confronted and scrupulously interrogated researcher bias (Yin, 2009), and remained alert to maintaining professional distance (Fetterman, 2010), which serves the purpose of containing the research moment within an impartial observational setting. Contact requires caution but is unavoidable in social inquiry, and necessarily so. Without contact and conversation, formal and informal, availability to know and to be known by the research participant, and without thorough immersion within the setting itself, conclusions will be drawn in a vacuum. Therefore the only gatekeeper against the pitfalls of case study is oneself. Possible fatal turns in such a study occur regularly and judgment must be exercised with vigilance and with an eye to oneself. In cross-cultural contexts, words can mistakenly offend, mend or set off a cascade of occurrences which result in the nullification of a finding and generally influence the outcome of circumstances, adversely or otherwise. Words or the manner in which the research has been conducted can create understanding or irreparable misunderstanding. The researcher can deepen a national divide or build a bridge. These potential dangers substantiate why alertness to positionality is a powerful approach to both collecting and protecting data. Two adages from my childhood are *Yes, but what did you do, and what could you have done;* and, *whenever the finger points, three point back.* A basic acumen must vigilantly observe and rein in the "ego" (Yin, 2009, p. 68), guard against under-preparation, and quash any ethnocentric word or gesture before it emerges, because all of these can pierce the tender skin of the research setting. Nonetheless, without contact the research process is reducible to voyeurism rather than truth-seeking and understanding. These are the realities of social science research and the conditions which I knowingly accepted when adjusting my question from a quantitative to a qualitative approach; and I willingly undertook this change in direction

because of the growing conviction that a more profound finding, instrumental to early education, lies in the cultural substrata of two televised learning environments.

Case study stems from an essential need to "understand complex social phenomena" (Yin, 2009, p. 4). I was initially hesitant to turn to this methodology since my impression was that it was "only appropriate for the exploratory phase of an investigation" (ibid, p. 6). As it turns out, "case studies are far from being only an exploratory strategy" (ibid). However, its relevance to my steps forward was asserted almost immediately on my arrival in Helsinki. I faced a dilemma on day two, May 6th when, in a park outside my graduate flat, I sighted behaviors surrounding playful activities that I fundamentally did not understand. I witnessed an activity known as "Molkky," the Finnish variety of a French game known as "Petangue," as was later explained to me. Eventually the suspense of it all would overwhelm me; and some weeks down the road, I would ask to play. From this point (Journal, May 6, 2014) until then, I observed this activity repeatedly; it became *normal*. On this day I wrote in my journal:

> On a walk to R-Kioski (11am), en route to fill my calling card, I noticed 10 older adults, perhaps approaching retirement age, playing what appeared to be something like marbles, but with about five baseball-sized silver balls. The adults were in 2 groups of 5 on either side of the open field. Little dialogue. What is this game?
>
> Once I reached Toolo, I remembered wanting to learn more about the silver marble game I noticed adults playing. And so I inquired about this delightful activity at the reception desk. It took only moments after describing the proportioning of adults to silver balls, their genders, their rather discrete age demarcations, and rate at which silver balls were rolled from one member of a circle to another, that smiles of familiarity quickly worked to satisfy my curiosity. "Petangue," one individual exclaimed! "It's a French game actually." "There's also a Finnish version called Molkky."…And what began as a playful inquiry became, as Malinowski would have predicted, a far more substantive revelation of culture.
>
> Petangue was described much as I observed it, the participants usually older, retired males, but "children are also inclined to play this game." On the other hand, "Molkky is comparably faster paced, and of shorter duration, played by men, woman, and children of all ages, and especially enjoyed while away at cottage during summer months." I thought that given that Petangue seemed an attraction for a particular subpopulation of Finnish men, the older and retired, it seemed informed by past labor restrictions which gave preference

> to men in the workplace. Molkky was different. Molkky seemed to paint a portrait of a different Finland, where the labor market was more evenly divided between men and woman, where mothers and fathers, through maternal and paternal leave, are enabled more access to their children's early childhood development. Where country holidays ensure a certain percentage of time for family, fun and relaxation at summer cottage, for instance. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that Finns have no expression for "small talk." This insight also emerged from my nearly 45 minute conversation about Petangue. My guides explained that Petangue was much more than a game, it was an outlet adopted by a culture which, more or less, resists small talk. Both Petangue and Molkky involve the rather simple practice of pushing a large silver ball between individuals, and as this Christmas-like ornament passes from one person to another, these individuals talk; but the "talk" is not directed conversation, it is free form and arbitrary. Just thoughts.

The idea of *normal* would become a point of great vexation for me, but one which the methodology of case study is uniquely poised to address. I would encounter in formal or casual conversation the phrases "this is very Finnish" or this is "what we do," or at times when I was seeking clarification for one thing or another, the rationale would conclude in an impasse: "you know, it's normal." The occurrence of these phrases was at a frequency which defies citation and it reached my saturation point quickly. It bore no particular day, nor was it owned by any particular interaction between me and any particular person; it quite simply happened all the time. But if I was to develop any understanding about anything at all then I would have to explain a rather complex matter fairly delicately, that is to say, *your normal is not my normal and my normal is, apparently, not yours*; indeed normal is relative. Now this term is weighty enough to insert an analytical pause in this discussion. Relativism is a construct with both accepted and controversial meaning. On the controversial end of the spectrum relativism carries evaluative connotations "in terms of truth and falsehood" or "aesthetic and ethical judgments" (Barnard, 2000, p. 99). However, "Virtually all schools of anthropology entail an acceptance of at least a weak form of descriptive relativism" which is that "culture itself" "regulates the ways in which humans perceive the world" and that "cultural variability will produce different social and psychological understandings among different peoples" (ibid). "Molkky" represented the more obvious examples

of cultural differences which became progressively more subtle from day one, *or at least day two*, and ultimately made visible to me the different approaches taken to cognitive development in the televised programs under study.

Case study accommodates the research process when it calls for exploration and description (Yin, 2009) and especially when it results in explanation. Its facility in these ways is apropos for the difficult terrain of "how" and "why" and is primed for "questions [which] deal with operational links" "over time" (ibid, p. 9). The "why" requires tireless investigative technique and "draw[s] upon a wider array of documentary information, in addition to conducting" the traditional "interviews" (ibid, p. 10), along with "observation" and "artifacts" from relevant cultural institutional collections, e.g., art and history museums, and attendance at theater, folk activities, and music venues (ibid, p. 11). It is not the "hierarchical" or "preliminary" research strategy (ibid, p. 6). It belongs to no particular phase of the research process because it is in form and in technical dimension a "holistic" (ibid, p. 50) methodological instrument which I adopted for the purpose of "analyz[ing] contextual conditions in relation to" a single episode of each program (ibid, p. 46).

The grievances against case study are as legitimate as its positive attributes. Typically case study is bewailed for "the lack of rigor" (Yin, 2009, p. 14), for providing "little basis for scientific generalization," for "tak[ing] too long" and generating excessive and "unreadable documents," (ibid, p. 15); and for being conducted by researchers who "were not meant, by skill or disposition, to do such research in the first place" (ibid, p. 21). Each charge has merit, and has been contested by others in one way or another (Yin, 2009; Flyvbjerg, 2006). But its most scathing indictment is what some suggest is its inability to explain "causal relationships" (Yin, 2009, p. 16). For now, I will attempt only in brief to defend its capacity to illuminate factors which contribute to causality,

and which provide a basis for generalizability. Of course, any method at all, qualitative or quantitative, may fall short in this regard. The point I wish to convey is that absolute certainty about causality is a tall order to place on the shoulders of any methodology in the social sciences, quantitative or qualitative; there is only progress, often by small steps, in the direction of understanding.

My thesis is, in large part, an attempt to demonstrate how Finland's televised learning environment, by example of *Sana-Arkku,* plays a role in the mediation of cognitive development for Finland's students; and that it, along with other informal learning elements, begins to reduce the noise of standard error which attaches the essential explanatory power of student learning to teachers. My argument is different; the panacea for education anywhere is everything; parents, siblings, home, neighborhood, community, city, state, nation, and sociocultural process must work as one on every aspect of child development. The more missing links in this hierarchical chain of shaping and supportive forces, the more likely a child will be lost.

The idea of generalizability is problematic, if only in mistaking case study for pursuing an agenda of "statistical generalization" rather than adhering firmly to "analytic generalization" (Yin, 2009, p. 38); the two are quite distinct. My study is not positioned to infer "about a population" "on the basis of empirical data collected about a sample from" a certain "universe" of data (ibid); neither *Between the Lions* nor *Sana-Arkku* are "'sampling units'" (ibid). The goal instead is to "aim for Level Two inferences," which in the present case aim to extricate the cultural implications of cultivating specific cognitive skills among the early learning populations of two distinct Western settings (ibid, p. 39). All the same, the probability of increasing the relevancy of a particular case, that is to say "to achieve the greatest possible amount of information on a given problem or phenomenon," is usually to avoid "the typical or average case" (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 13).

In the case of *Sana-Arkku*, programming proceeds in a cumulative fashion, with each program building directionally as a televised curriculum. Therefore the final rather than the first program would present full pedagogical intention and the first, only partial. *Between the Lions* is not organized in this way and each episode functions as a free-standing product. "The show itself is modeled upon a "whole-parts-whole" teaching strategy, in which a story (the whole) is first dramatized and then broken apart and examined, so that "key word(s)" – with their individual phonemes and letters – and other show priorities can be highlighted" (Series Guide, 1998, p. 3). Season nine of *Between the Lions* does not feature the full array of characters and pedagogical variety as do other seasons and episodes. Understandably, if my study were centered explicitly in literacy and not in cognition and culture, my decision would have been inappropriate. Further, if my own hunch that each episode captures the essential instructional leaning and cognitive preference of a given national setting, then no particular episode selected from any point in the show's overall development would have a substantive advantage over any other. These reasons fed into why I selected these two analytical units.

In the final analysis, I made the decision to base my doctoral work on a single episode of each program. My reason ultimately boiled down to an early childhood adage that, I admit, drew from an argument with my mother, and of course, as usual, *I was wrong*. In conclusion, she said, *if it's right, it's right all the time; and if it's wrong, it's never right*. My pilot period gave me increasing confidence in my methodological approach. Geert explains it best: "'The Field' itself is a 'powerful disciplinary force: assertive, demanding, even coercive.' Like any such force, it can be underestimated, but it cannot be evaded. 'It is too insistent for that'" (quoted in Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 19). Several insights garnered from my pilot period in Finland helped to clarify what seemed at first abstract approaches to literacy learning in the delivery of a televised learning program. In due

course what was abstract became an everyday *normal* with cumulative study of cultural artifacts, customs, and manners and with casual observation of children's play. Repeated observation and conversation about particular cultural behaviors became, in principle, explanatory of the larger pedagogical approach taken by programs X and Y. Neither the programs nor the everyday encounters with cultural behaviors seemed to eclipse each other, an insight that returned me to the basic acknowledgement that I can be wrong; but Pluto might very well end up being a planet *again* rather than a simple ball of ice. There are tests which have been designed to help safeguard case study from this fallacy, with criteria for evaluating a given research design according to its "construct validity," "internal validity," "external validity" and its "reliability" (Yin, 2009, p. 41). Indeed, "naturalistic investigators have…preferred to use different terminology" (Shenton, 2004, p. 63) "in pursuit of a trustworthy study," such as "credibility" (internal validity), "transferability" (external validity/generalizability), "dependability" (reliability), and "confirmability" (objectivity) (ibid, p. 64).

Threats

Construct validity refers to the operational procedures used to measure the "concepts being studied" (Yin, 2009, p. 40). By measure, I mean those "sources of evidence" incorporated into the study and used to enable one to reliably interpret the concept under consideration (ibid, p. 41). For present purposes I am referring to cultural materials. When I realized that the manner in which instructional strategies were being delivered in *Sana-Arkku* reflected a subtle collaboration between pedagogical and cultural practice, it became incumbent to my research to develop greater cultural understanding. Thereafter, I made more deliberate efforts to engage Finnish culture. The idea was to perceive "how well [the] measure[s] correspond[ed] with other variables that are logically or theoretically related to the underlying construct" "purport[ed] to be measure[ed]"

(Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011, p. 112). Developments in this way forced recognition of the possibility that decisions made in the American televised learning environment, by example of *Between the Lions*, also reflected intimate interactivity between pedagogy and culture, which made it obligatory to take stock of the cultural necessities driving the decisions to employ the apparent instructional strategies.

Validity is a topic hotly debated because "Most agree that we cannot create criteria to ensure that something is 'true' or 'accurate' if we believe concepts are socially constructed" (Glesne & Peshkin, 2011, p. 49). Nonetheless, with the ultimate objective to help provide for the advancement of children with little to depend on, one's scholarship must hold some measure of reliability to hope to contribute to counterbalancing what is lacking through societal structural inequalities in homes, neighborhoods, communities, teacher quality, classrooms, school buildings and playgrounds. My work is grounded in the basic belief that research should hold more than *a grain of truth*; to the highest degree possible the work should be trustworthy (Glesne & Peshkin, 2011).

Internal validity describes the steps taken to ascertain whether "certain conditions" or certain variables are connected to or "lead to other conditions, as distinguished from spurious relationships" (Yin, 2009, p. 40). Similarly, the idea of "credibility, deals with the [same] question" in terms of "'How congruent are the findings with reality?'" which in this case refers to a search to discover the relationship between pedagogy and culture within episodes of two televised learning environments (Shenton, 2004, p. 64) Usually the mechanics of these steps involve "the development of an early familiarity with the culture" (ibid, p. 65), "pattern matching" or challenging "rival explanations" (Yin, 2009, p. 41). To meet these research goals and follow these procedures I found myself during my field study drawing from seemingly disconnected bodies of

evidence such as the study of Tove Jansson images and everyday behavioral observations. I visited the Tove Jansson exhibit precisely because it was extremely popular. Popularity is an intriguing phenomenon. People, places and things are popular for many reasons, in principle because the person, place or thing possesses a trait or characteristic which most believe deserves to be imitable; or because a person, place or thing represents an idea with which most either agree or disagree. This is information, either way: what is agreeable is culturally acceptable, and what is disagreeable is typically culturally antithetical; either position is an insight into a norm of cultural consensus.

Jansson is Finland's most celebrated artist. Why is she celebrated, I wondered? Usually cultural icons attain that status because they somehow capture the essence of a culture according to members of that culture. From this perspective, I thought, Jansson might reveal some broad outline of what was a very basic ambiguity for me to resolve if I was to make any progress at all in this study, i.e., what is "Finnish," what is "We" and what is "Normal?" I walked feverishly between paintings, sketches, cartoons, murals, photographs and models for six hours with my laptop in hand. I saw connections, patterns (Yin, 2009) and themes evident in images portraying thought dispositions and orientations which were the very ones I also happened to encounter in coffee shops, grocery checkout lines and professional conversations, in live theater productions, films, and even implied in architectural styles. Yet another cautionary check-by-adage from my early life became useful in these exercises: *we attract who we are*. In this case, the very themes that pulled at the cultural consciousness of those who loved Jansson – the many Finns who especially revere her work and who feel touched by her delightful ability to draft the cultural biography – presented me with a tailor-made, and much needed, example of the way vital characteristics recur at different levels of culture and are reflected, as in a house of mirrors, in artistic and popular mediums. The often piercingly thoughtful manner in which Jansson

represented ideas and portrayed cherished cultural activities, without doubt, speaks loudest to members of this particular cultural system of understanding but, human art being mostly universally accessible to all humans, her message was still audible to this outsider/observer, for whom her work thereafter became a touchstone to test subsequent observations of Finnish cultural characteristics. And what is stable among these characteristics should, if truth holds, be detectable, especially within such a coherent culture, in almost anything I observed or encountered and wherever I observed or encountered it. Soon the instructional strategies and targeted metacognitive skills, along with the theatrics of *Sana-Arkku*, began to take on increasingly familiar historical and sociocultural significance, and thereafter the outlines and imperatives of Finnish pedagogy itself seemed to me clearly shaped to serve the same culture.

I must note here that displacement theory is a committed adversary of television watching. It essentially suggests that television is subtractive from "cognitive development, academic achievement, and active participation in society" (Anderson et al., 2001, p. 5), and it is dismissed in favor of other activities which might prove more additive to intellectual development, such as museum-going and reading (Neuman, 1995). Further, the theory holds that the "overwhelming attraction of television is the cause of reduction in other activities" (Anderson et al., 2001, p. 5). In general, "The default hypothesis, by contrast, states that viewing is the default chosen when other alternatives are not readily available or are not of interest" (ibid). Though the authors explain that, at least in terms of teen viewing, "The clustering of media use patterns does not support the time- displacement hypothesis," and "that it is not so much the medium - television or print - as the potential uses, interest value, or functions of particular content that are important" (ibid, p. 34). "Observational learning and information processing theories lead to the straightforward prediction that children can learn the content presented on television" (ibid, p. 37) but, while "The evidence

is slightly more mixed for educational programs in general," it is "perhaps because the content and quality is variable" (ibid, p. 38). Still, there is room for the credibility of the theory with respect to "the preschool years" (ibid, p. 40). Unrelated to children's developmental stage, it seems the case "that if a negative impact of time displacement exists, it is associated with the time spent viewing entertainment content rather than educational content" (ibid, p. 42).

External validity, similar to generalizability and "transferability" (Shenton, 2004, p. 69), is a concept which asks "the extent to which a study's findings hold true outside of…the particular context of the research" (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011, p. 140). I situate my thesis within the broader theory of opportunity to learn (OTL). The OTL framework holds that formal learning is a contingency of student engagement, and that engagement is constrained by schooling time (Schmidt & Maier, 2009) and by limited content coverage time (Schmidt et al., 2001, 2011). My study challenges displacement theory and aims to demonstrate how the OTL framework operates through cultural and social systems by example of the two programs under study; and that these programs provide multiple encounters with cognitive information that works to reinforce and reproduce culturally preferred cognitive capabilities.

The final check for the legitimacy of a given research design is its reliability, its "dependability" (Shenton, 2004, p. 71). The reliability of a study is high if a later consideration of "the same case study" would render "the same findings and conclusions" (Yin, 2009, p. 45). Low reliability suggests the opposite. In the case of this study, any duplication effort would necessitate duplicating my training as well as the syncretic steps taken in interpreting the programs under study. In this way, one's mind, training, life experience and predispositions are also instruments brought to bear in case study. My bona fide qualifications for this undertaking include: a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology; Master's degrees in biological sciences and in anthropology, with a

socio-cultural emphasis; doctoral training in educational policy; my professional background and life experiences have afforded me unusual proximity to low-income urban conditions domestically and to impoverished circumstances throughout the developing world, and both for extensive periods of time. The chief recommendation for avoiding the pitfalls of case study is the development of a "case study protocol" which helps to wall off the possibility of any "'subjective' judgments" being formed (Yin, 2009, p. 41), and aids in insuring a level of "confirmability" in a study by supplying an "audit trail" (Shenton, 2004, p. 72).

My study follows the interpretivist paradigm (Glesne & Peshkin, 2011) and is therefore based on theoretical insights, while remaining grounded in studied considerations of multiple types of data, including sociocultural sources. I have striven to capture the dynamic "social world[s]" within which episodes of two televised learning programs in two Western national settings are enmeshed, and to understand them "from the perspective[s] of those who are actors in [those] social worlds," by "interacting with people in their social contexts and talking with them about their perceptions," and by relating in all appropriate venues to various other cultural materials (ibid, p. 8).

What a qualitative study most decidedly is not is a vehicle "for producing precise measurements of variables, estimating characteristics of a large population, calculating the magnitude of relationships between variables, or providing statistical evidence of a cause-effect relationship" (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011, p. 60). What the qualitative approach "is good at [is] uncovering possible causes when these are largely unknown" or have been under-considered by a particular line of disciplinary scholarship (ibid). Above all, case study is, in my opinion, positioned to deliver lessons, "not in the hope of proving anything, but rather in the hope of learning something!" (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 7).

Methodology and Theoretical Grounding

My objective is to adopt a research design appropriate for the collection and analysis of complex data, which in this instance describes case study methodology (Yin, 2009). My field period necessitated vigorous utilization of personal analytical resources for processing complex information from multitudinous sources, which must be continued even in the regular occurrence of mental and emotional exhaustion (ibid, p. 69), which I will hereafter refer to as analytic exhaustion. Prior to my field engagement, my intellectual process began with literature review. I have gained deep familiarity with the effects of urban low-income SES conditions on student learning, and early learners specifically, through course work at Michigan State University's Education Policy program, along with much longer-term independent engagements with popular press accounts. I became acquainted with scholarly considerations of the role of history, parent(s), household, neighborhood, community, teacher, classroom resources, school level resource and organization, district level interactivity with schools, state and federal relationships to educational policy and practice in relation to learning and achievement; and the significance of policy implementation by all parties involved in school leadership, teaching and fostering achievement. I am likewise familiar with arguments and debates about the possible role of underachieving low-income urban students with respect to their own learning; I am equally aware of scholarly treatments and media coverage of the obstacles facing their higher-income peers; and I have lived experience at both ends of the spectrum. My preparations for the Finnish side of my study were necessarily different. I am not Finnish, nor, prior to my research, had I ever visited Finland. Thus, *I started from scratch*.

Procedures

My study involves several lines of literature review though I will restrict mention to the more prominent branches. I began with scholarship on shadow education, prosociality and metacognition. I situated my case studies in a nested explanatory framework, or micro- and macro-consideration, aimed at highlighting interrelationships between pedagogy and culture. Other literature served as justification for the selection of my research settings, and respective viewership populations. Several other lines of literature were incorporated in response to research setup or developments, from those verifying the debilitating relationship between low-income conditions and schooling, specific to attachment-dyads, household, neighborhood, community and school, to a fairly exhaustive consideration of the physical features of the learning environment, and behavioral effect; to literature about the specific instructional strategies under consideration, their cognitive targets and their possible sociocultural basis.

The research process began with a preliminary viewing of season five episodes of *Between the Lions* and, ultimately, selection of season nine as the analytical unit. I identified the Finnish program, *Sana Arkku*, by assistance of the Finnish National Broadcasting Company. The specific episodes were selected by randomization as with *Between the Lions*. My pilot period in Finland involved IRB-approved engagement with research respondents, translation of the transcripts of *Sana-Arkku* episodes by a professional translation agency, review and correction of the translations by the author and their daughter, and my ongoing immersion in cultural activities and everyday life in Finland. Altogether these experiences influenced the manner in which I decided to approach the U.S. portion of my study, and ultimately resulted in my decision to conduct a sociocultural consideration of pedagogy and cognitive behavior.

1. Literature review.
2. Preliminary viewing of season five episodes of *Between the Lions*.
3. Preliminary viewing of season nine episodes of *Between the Lions*, with transcript.
4. Randomization of the 10 episodes of season nine of *Between the Lions*; I selected every second episode to establish inter-rater reliability at 50%. Although my study shifted from a quantitative to qualitative analysis and I abandoned the initial study, I retained the original episodes selected by this process. Episodes: 901, 904, 905, 909, 910.
5. Preliminary viewing of episode one of *Sana-Arkku*.
6. Randomization of the complete series of *Sana-Arkku*, of which there are 20 episodes; I chose to view only $1/4^{th}$ of the episodes to arrive at 50% inter-rater reliability as with *Between the Lions*. Although my study shifted from a quantitative to qualitative analysis, and abandoned the former study, I retained the original episodes selected by this process. Episodes: 1, 4, 5, 17, 19.
7. Pre-data collection trip to Turku and Helsinki, Finland; field study of nearly seven weeks in Finland in the cities of Helsinki and Jyväskylä primarily, which involved cultural immersion, engagement with cultural activities (e.g. museum attendance; television viewing; viewing outdoor folk activities such as street performers), open-ended questionnaires developed for Yle producers and subsequent questionnaire clarification meetings; and informal discussions with Finns from many walks of life.
8. Translation of relevant episodes of *Sana-Arkku* by the translation service, FastTranslator; and reviewed for accuracy of translation by creator and daughter.
9. Cultural reflection prompted by consideration of particular instances of Americana, or of what seemed to me quintessentially American moments, included in the theatrical setting of *Between the Lions*.
10. Development of approach to content analysis detailed in the Appendices.

Chapter 4: *Between the Lions*

Chapter Four presents an exhaustive consideration of Season Nine, Episode 1 of *Between the Lions*, segments 901.1 and 901.2, "Nightshift," and "Under Construction." This case centers on the instructional strategy of cooperative inquiry and the cognitive skill of prosociality, while also deconstructing how creative elements of this televised learning space work to demonstrate its perceived necessity within the American sociocultural context. The target audience for this program is a culturally and socioeconomically diverse population of preschoolers, including urban low-income children. I enfold my interpretation of this episode in socio-constructivism in order to demonstrate the measures taken by this televised learning program intended to help improve the learning conditions of urban low-income child viewers. I provide interpretive commentary on how the deliberate use of Americana as scenic elements in *Between the Lions* works both to solidify its middle income viewers, and to reinforce compensatory literacy values for lower-income child viewers. Familiar Americana ranges from a 1920s "Good Humoresque" truck, to what appears to be Jackie Robinson's Number 42 Jersey, to the choice to frame the program itself with images of the New York Public Library. The ensemble of principal and minor characters and the familiar scenic elements of Americana constitute a consensus space, which is particularly resonant through such a character as Ice Cream Monkey. I follow with an explanation for why I chose to exclude secondary characters from my overall analysis of Episode 1, though I suggest the broader pedagogical purpose served by their programmatic inclusion.

Next, I explain cooperative inquiry within the context of the present episode, and close with a brief and more general account of cognition, followed by a consideration of American classroom teaching conditions, which serves to reinforce the importance of compensatory education. Finally, I present the analysis of Episode 1, highlighting the problem-solving scenarios

involving three key characters, the computer mouse Click, Cliff Hanger and Opposite Bunny, who each demonstrate the instructional strategy of cooperative inquiry targeting cultivation of prosocial skills. An unexpected finding emerged from the analysis of the problem-solving scenarios, each of which implies a high value on an other-directed attitude which I can best characterize as benevolence; the further implication – that benevolence is the ground or precondition for prosocial action – appears to be the message communicated to all child viewers. This message of benevolence is a significant element in my effort to establish a sociocultural rationale for the dominant pedagogical emphasis in this episode, and it adds dimension to the more general consideration of the nature and origin of civic orientation in the national setting.

Episode 1, 901.1 and 901.2: "Nightshift," and "Under Construction." "Nightshift" and "Under Construction" are two segments of a single theme about employment, and night-time jobs specifically. The issue of employment is of particular relevance to the targeted demographic of *Between the Lions* whose families or circumstances bear unique relationship to these particular jobs. It is also likely that those holding night-time jobs are also part-timers (Greenhouse, 2014), supplementing incomes with daytime jobs as well. It is in this sense, programmatically biographical. By situating the child-viewer in this setting, they are simultaneously entranced by a Deweyan-familiar (Kliebard, 1995; Trouillot, 1995; Tozer et al., 2006; Dewey, 2004) while a programmatic framework of emergent literacy (Teale & Sulzby, 1986) introduces new ways of looking at and thinking about their worlds.

Environment describes "human interactions with, and interpretation of, that context" (Barnard & Spencer, 1996, p. 185). Episode one seems to invert *life as it is*, and simulates a safer space of *life as it can be*, and dramatizes for children how literacy events can be enacted in these environments. On the one hand, it is a lived space imbued with sentiments, good or bad, pleasant

or not, but a space which these children call home. Here the potential for conflicting messaging is particularly delicate; there is a point at which literacy socialization can break down and recede into the backdrop of production miscalculations, risking both community affirmation and community resentment. How to encourage beyond the walls of community without admonishing community origins is a delicate matter, and if handled indelicately, can lead to program cancellation at best, or confused identities among children and angry parents at worst. Careful handling of significant social dynamics, and the potential for stepping on social sore spots is the reality of a program serving children living in difficult circumstances. Structural inequities are strongly related to socioeconomic conditions, and both are tightly hinged to learning outcomes. However, before learning can happen attention must be secured, a process which results in significant programmatic resources directed to social issues.

Socio-constructivism

I will analyze episode one from the theoretical perspective of socio-constructivism, which foregrounds agency and regards children as negotiators of their own learning experiences. It characterizes literacy socialization as joint-collaborations between children and their learning environments. Presumably, the wider vista of child-culture is a landscape peppered in secure attachments, safe living spaces, positive peer relations and play spaces, which prove additive and not deleterious to socio-emotional development. To be sure, the extent to which child-culture is permeated by cultural capital and social assets determines the type of agency a child brings to learning experiences. Socio-constructivism is a conceptual position which assumes that learning events draw from interactions with the learning environment. The sociological circumstances surrounding the learning environments of *BTL*'s lower-income viewers seems, at least in part, to target the inversion of unproductive elements of the urban experience. Studies suggest that the

program met with low to relative success in reaching at-risk viewers, and positive results from lower income Caucasian viewers. Thus the task of securing the attention of the ethnic audiences, and urban low-income black children in particular, and the prospect of succeeding to influence their cognitive development, given the complexities of the urban condition, is clearly more difficult. Therefore, the programmatic devices designed to transform counterproductive aspects of urban life will be discussed as legitimate instructional strategies.

Americana

Between the Lions inserts itself into this political educational space as if it were an allegorical commentary on "the politics of…," and relating itself to all such spaces hosting education (Mitchell, et al., 2011). The first segment is titled "Night Shift" and the second, "Under Construction." The duration of segment one is 14 min 22 seconds and the storyline is set at night. Literacy experiences are enacted by puppets and within the primary literary setting of the feature "Big-book," which is considered an effective instrument among literacy socialization strategies according to scholars who find "Big-book" strongly supportive of early reading instructional approaches and engagements with rich language experiences (Adams et al., 1990; Juel, 1991). The feature presentation offers several glimpses into archetypical Americana, chief among them the 1920s Good-Humoresque truck with puppet-monkey wearing the classic good-humor "white-refrigerator" uniform; the appearance of Number 42 on the lion son's jersey, a respectful and likely nod to Jackie Robinson, who broke the color barrier in American major-league baseball in 1947, a significant event which set the stage for several other civil rights activities which helped to propel Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society Programs and his War on Poverty; the living room provides echoes of 1950's conceptions of the American Dream, with its high-back "comfy chair" situated in a house rather than an apartment, a production decision which seems to provide for atmospheric

stability and a sense of permanence. Newer-world American motifs such as Click, the anthropomorphized Computer mouse which could indicate changing times and the not-so-subtle push away from self-reliance toward greater technological dependence.

Learning Setting: New York Public Library

The program is "housed" within the New York Public Library, founded in 1895 (NYPL, 2014). As the opening theme song concludes, the camera pans up the library's main stairs "between" the iconic stone "lions," which form the gateway of the nation's largest public library. The decision to situate *BTL* in this space, which houses Columbus's proclamation and George Washington's farewell address (ibid), whether intended or not, is symbolic of the state of public libraries in recent decades, which have brought budget woes and an unprecedented number of closings. "Closing Public Libraries - A Death Knell of Democracy, Shutting Homework, Literacy & Citizenship Centers" is the title of a recent overview of the crisis facing American public libraries, a blow to yet another system of traditional equalizers of educational opportunities (White, n. d.). The account lists "Public libraries from Seattle, Denver and Honolulu to cities in California, Ohio, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Michigan and beyond," as victimized by "branch closures, staff terminations and curtailment of services and hours due to federal and state budget decisions" (ibid, para 5). The account closes with the often forgotten point that "Not everyone can simply buy books, newspapers and magazines at will. Not everyone has internet access in their home or even school. And every child does not have a home in which to read and study" (ibid, para 7).

Home Space

Viewers are introduced to the puppet-family, Theodore (Theo) and Cleopatra (Cleo), the lion parents; Lionel (7 years old, first grader) and Leona (4 year old preschooler), the lion siblings

(Guide DVD). It is the nuclear family to which studies ascribe socio-emotional and cognitive value: mother, father, and a sibling structure of two children. The specific ages of mother and father lion are not available in the literature, although costume choice and conversational styles help to approximate their years as around forty. If this is the case, then they are the parental choice reflecting the more mature segment of the spectrum of the parenting population. This parenting pair seems to have waited until somewhat later in life to have children, perhaps for reasons of education or career, or both. Links have been found between children's educational achievement and the level of parental education, which appears to determine the cognitive and overall educational stimulation afforded by the household (Davis-Kean, 2005); the total time spent with children, which is among the more precious "parenting effects" of marriage, has also been linked to academic engagement (Badger, 2014). Older, more experienced parents can provide an "authoritative parenting" which is "associated with increases in a number of attitudinal and behavioral indicators of academic orientation during adolescence, including stronger work orientation, greater engagement in classroom activities, higher educational aspirations, more positive feelings about school, greater time spent on homework, more positive academic self-conceptions, and lower levels of school misconduct" (Steinberg et al., 1992, p. 1266-1267). And though these particular behavioral outcomes are expressed during adolescence, they are debatably byproducts of parenting practices and influences exerted at an earlier stage of development. In either case, like their human counterparts, the puppet parents in *BTL* have reached a level of stability in their careers which provides them more time for parenting. Theo and Cleo wear the badges of social capital and are clearly middle class.

They deliver literacy values and messages to a rapidly vanishing middle class and relatively stagnant working class America. They read to their children, Lionel (7 years old and in 1st grade)

and Leona (4 years old), and engage them in literacy-rich language interactions (Hoff et al., 2002), using the rare words (Weizman & Snow, 2001) targeted by *BTL*'s vocabulary curriculum. They model oral language situations, which enable discernment of sound structures of spoken words (Wagner et al., 1997; Rayner et al., 2001), which adds to and influences vocabulary growth (Huttenlocher et al., 1991). Hoff (2006) treats the role of phonological processing in learning to read; parent/child interactions within the lion family afford Lionel and Leona the opportunity to hear, and thus learn from meaningful conversations (Hoff & Naigles, 2002), which provide children with clues to word meanings (Gillette et al., 1999) and offer contexts that expand life (Hirsch, 2006; Stanovich et al., 1995) and cultural knowledge (Hirsch et al., 1987). Theo and Cleo's middle class portrayal of literacy messaging also throws some light humor on conceptions of cultural or social capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Here, class, rather than cultural or social membership, is a currency of conversation.

Living Room Space

The home literacy environment is the living room, the architectural heirloom once common to the home experience of early American family structures (NMAH, 2014); it is emblematic of a burgeoning middle class, with home-parlor space and free-time no longer the exclusive domain of the wealthy; it is a space for mom, dad, sister and brother. The heirloom builds in significance as it narrows to the "comfy chair" where shared reading happens. Repeated encounters with the comfy chair help redefine a social context into a literacy socialization space. Studies show that "children's understanding of the intentionality of print is related to both the frequency of literacy events in the home and to their personal focus and involvement in the literacy events" (Purcell-Gates, 1996, p. 407). The figurative, emotive, and visual elements attached to the comfy chair all work to transform the function of this space and the meanings, attitudes and dispositions

surrounding it. The living space of low-income child caregivers is often restricted, especially in apartment dwellings, by the absence of a clearly defined literacy corner where homework or avocational reading can take place; "Organizing the physical space in ways that are clearly visible to young children appears to support their learning" (Roskos & Neuman, 2001, p. 283). Therefore, this becomes a literacy-loaded visual for children who might gain literacy strategies from watching how a simple object, such as a chair, or a particular window, or throw rug, can behaviorally modify space.

Life As It Is vs. Life As It Can Be

The program moves from knowledge of life *as it is,* and animates tales of life *as it can be. BTL* works from an awareness of class tension and America's income disparities; it is alert to the pervasive American entertainment culture and its profound lock on youth attention. Its task, as with many children's educational programs, is to appeal to a broad base of children, and foster a narrow set of skills. This means programming across varying levels of cultural and social capital, and through a cross-section of different family values and parenting approaches. Variation might differ by a single digit in street address, as is the case in gentrified neighborhood settings, or by community, district, or town, and across political values, red, blue or independent, and state by state; the debates concerning local versus national educational values are not absent from the episode; ethnic tensions are carefully rendered by accents or neutralized by anthropomorphic stand-ins; and social issues are presented head-on by example of the topic of employment.

The characters in this episode empathize with these conditions. The voices of rural and urban working-class accents resonate through the Good Humor truck driving Ice Cream Monkey who displays an accent which respectfully nods to the 1920s origin of the Youngstown, Ohio, brand. The urban "Bronx" accent is discernible in the Museum of Modern Art's security guard, in

the Dinosaurs "Velociraptor (Veloci)" and "Brachiosaurus (Brachio)," and in most characters featured in the plot of Night Shift, the feature book of the episode, by Jessie Hartland, and in the construction workers in dialogue with Cliff Hanger, a resident character of the program who represents one of several purposeful parodies. Cliff Hanger is the consummate Boy Scout, though the character may also be an explicit nod to "Indiana-Jones" (Series Guide, 1998, p. 25). In his backpack is his trusted "Survival Manual" — another motif of Americana — full of helpful instructions for how to decode children's dilemmas of contemporary times: words and sentences. The "Manual" is an instrument of literacy. A treasure chest of dense Progressive era cultural commentary about social, ethnic, and economic disparities seems audible in these accents, as well as a continuity between past and present challenges.

Consensus Space

The cast of puppet-characters also includes the friendly neighborhood Ice Cream Monkey who parodies the Good Humor Truck Driver. Ostensibly, this character seems to personify the episode's consensus space. *Between the Lions* supports a viewer base from low-print, working class, lower income homes. Ice Cream Monkey is costumed in the original, and readily recognizable, white-refrigerator outfit. The monkey is male and speaks with a discernable Ohio-Kentucky accent: "Gosh-a-roonie! The best ice cream in town, and nobody's buyin'! Ooh! Maybe this big library here…" (Transcript 901, p. 3). Ice Cream Monkey makes regular appearances in the Lion living room. He drives along working class neighborhood streets. Single story homes with private driveways, line the streets. And in the shallow neck of one driveway appears a flatbed truck. Ice Cream Monkey steers through the nighttime neighborhood streets and along the downtown "main drag" in a Good-Humoresque truck. Here, in an act of irony, the ice cream truck

is projected as a nighttime, rather than daytime occurrence. The pun is also a fun way of canvasing the innumerable array of night-time jobs which fall along the occupational index.

Secondary Instructional Strategies: Repetition

The decision to exclude treatment of the balance of the characters is based on the fact that their roles are largely inconsequential to the thesis. Their most apparent function is to repeat vocabulary terms targeted by the program. *Between the Lions* is, of course, designed to raise reading skills and vocabulary knowledge, but the purpose of my investigation is quite narrow, and relates exclusively to the identification of the major instructional strategy at work in building the central cognitive task. The three characters that are key to this task, Click, Opposite Bunny and Cliff Hanger, will receive full treatment below. I will give brief treatment to three other characters because they regularly appear in most episodes: Joy Learno, Arnie-Smarty Pants and Reginald Livingston Senior. The numerous other characters who may only be mentioned in passing include the Metropolitan Museum Security Guard; puppet extras who appear as ice cream truck customers; the animated dinosaurs, Velociraptor (Veloci) and Brachiosaurus (Brachio); the pig characters in the Annual Construction Vehicle Race; the construction workers in the Cliff Hanger section and various other workers appearing in the Night Shift segment. Among these characters, those who speak contribute little to the major cognitive goal of the program, but serve the principal purpose of repeating, or contextualizing vocabulary words. Repetition is an effective rhetorical device demonstrated to enable memory and secure attention. Disadvantaged classroom, home, neighborhood and community environments present children with comparably less opportunity to engage meaningful content, and to hear or use vocabulary words. The pervasiveness of this instructional strategy is therefore intentional, and pursued in full awareness of the sparse learning environment of some of the children it means to serve.

Joy Learno is one of a number of light parodies in *BTL*, an obvious spin on Jay Leno, the well-known late night talk show host. Her role, as Leno's in real life, is to interview program characters and highlight literacy rather than popular public affairs and celebrities. The literacy issue in this episode is vocabulary, but in other episodes Joy may draw attention to the object which stands for the program theme. In this episode the object is a backhoe, a construction vehicle. The late night platform features the object within its context. Arnie Smarty Pants is a marionette puppet who seems to serve an important, but ancillary function to this study, which is to repeat target vocabulary words and demonstrate, or highlight by comedy English language puzzlements, such as the verbal orientations "up" and "down." Reginald Livingston Senior also plays a part in language and reading skill development, but mostly in the area of reading awareness. He creates reading interest and, as with other characters and programmatic elements, he is a nod to national culture. Like the Announcer Bunny, he may introduce the ensuing segment, but his role has another level of complexity.

Reginald Livingston Senior also narrates featured books or poems. He reads with thoughtful delivery and offers the subtle reminder that shared reading experiences advance reading skill development (Anderson et al., 1985; Senechal et al., 2006) and that proper modeling of word pronunciation and good diction improve children's overall oral language experience (Vihman, 1996). Phonological awareness, or the ability to recognize underlying sound structures of words, is among the strongest oral language predictors of reading skill development (Wagner et al., 1997). For many child viewers served by this program Reginald Livingston Senior helps to compensate for diminished environmental supports (Hoff, 2006) by fostering the oral language experience. Another prominent function recognizable in Reginald Livingston Senior, is to serve as a cultural role model. His voice and accent are refined, possibly intended to resemble the style of Alistair

Cooke; he is dressed in the classically high-brow smoking jacket, complete with ascot; his chair also seems a motif from the Masterpiece Theatre set; and the monkey bust in the background, is a delightful parody of high-brow, self-congratulatory grandeur, emblematic of the behaviors of rulers, intellectuals or powerful families as depicted in Western artistic tradition: all of which signal a delicate thread of cultural messaging woven through a multi-leveled brocade of multiple literacies.

Instructional Strategy: Cooperative Inquiry

Inquiry based learning (Slavin, 2011) refers to a system of educational practices common throughout western educational environments, with iterations of it found within the practices of educational settings in America and Finland. Kuhn et al. (2000) define "inquiry learning as an educational activity in which students individually or collectively investigate a set of phenomena" and "draw conclusions about it" (ibid, p. 496-497). Accordingly, "Students direct their own investigatory activity, but they may be prompted to formulate questions, plan their activity, and draw and justify conclusions about what they have learned" (ibid, 497). The transmission of learning from teacher to student is considered a "passive" tradition, and incompatible with "behaviorist traditions" (Slavin, 2011, p. 155). The inquiry approach views the student as active in the "acquisition and construction of knowledge and that learning was a social, interpersonal activity, not just an individual act" (ibid). The goals of the inquiry-based activities range from "simple," to complex (Kuhn et al., 2000, p. 497). Kuhn & colleagues (2000) provide a breakdown of these activities, citing the basic classificatory tasks and those requiring "measurement of familiar phenomena" (ibid, p. 497). There are also those intended for "older children or adolescents" which "have, as their goal, the identification of causes and effects" (ibid). Older children's inquiry preparations usually entail exposure to causal and non-causal events with the

purpose of heightening the ability to discriminate between factors which contribute to how a system functions and those which do not**.** The researchers raise the question whether "students of the elementary and middle school grades (in which inquiry activities are most commonly introduced)" are "capable of inferring such relations based on investigations of a multivariable system?" They note that "little educational research" "exists" which "would answer this question directly" (ibid). The authors assert that middle school children and, by implication, elementary level children, should be prepared by inquiry-driven curriculum (Kuhn et al., 2000), and suggest that their under-preparation "underlies strategic weaknesses" which "impedes the multivariable analysis required in the most common forms of inquiry learning" (ibid, p. 497). Although their study is focused on science education (Kuhn et al., 2000), I would argue that it has implications for the thinking required by many content areas. It would be fair to suggest that the authors' phrase, "multivariable analysis," while it has a specific meaning within the physical sciences, is a term which can be generalized to describe the process of inquiry into any subject of notable complexity, which includes almost anything involving the biological species *Homo sapiens* (ibid, p. 497). From this perspective, the substance of their argument holds for the goal of my own argument, which is that inquiry-based learning necessitates inquiry-based cognitive preparations.

Mental processing, whether purposed toward reading skill development, science or math, or other content areas, is greatly aided by the ability to reason through information logically. In general, cognitive skills refer to the abilities to gain meaning and knowledge from experience and information and thus aid in the development and refinement of inferential and deductive processes. Cognitive skills are not restricted to information learning or retrieval, but apply to all mental functions including intellectual innovation. Commonly, attention skills refer to the ability to sustain attention; the capacity to organize what is attended to by means of selective attention; even

the ability to divide attention, or multi-task (LearningRx, 2015): all are critical skills. Auditory and visual processing skills commonly refers to the abilities to recognize and interpret multiple levels of text from what is heard, what is expressed in print (ibid); in painting, in song; and there is much in human experience that is not at all directly apparent to any of the senses; and the ability to retain this and other information and apply it hierarchically, according to a system of long or short term memory prioritizations (ibid). Also, the capacity to recover information at will is useful to the data-gathering process which precedes learning, but actual learning is a synthesis which may follow any number of paths and is often shaped by individual practice, cultural standards or educational norms. Learning is the process whereby one reasons through information according to one's own mental preparedness and forms concepts and conclusions. How we think about new information, and the methods and strategies we use to process it is partly owing to the preparedness our individual circumstances have provided us, but under any circumstances it is largely a byproduct of culture.

Knowledge-building within any content domain, and how one comes to know what one knows, are processes forged by cognitive skills. Cognitive skills have been described as including attention skills (sustained attention, selective attention, and divided attention), memory (long or short term recall), logic and reasoning, auditory and visual processing, and information recovery (processing speed) (LearningRx, 2015). Each of these domains contributes to the ability to solve problems and influences the manner in which decisions are executed. The development and relative proportioning of these skills, attitudes and dispositions also creates particular habits of mind.

Classroom

Between the Lions provides a critical learning space for acquisition of prosocial skills, which have deep meaning within the American classroom space; it is possible however that overemphasis on prosocial skills is less advantageous to individual development than to democratic goals. Although American teachers retain "remarkable flexibility in what they teach and how they teach it" (Kennedy, 2005, p. 3) there is still little time in the school day to take advantage of this independence. Kennedy explains that "Virtually all other countries have national curricula," but, while "American teachers" are "provided with textbooks and other materials, they can and do skip sections they think are irrelevant and add material not covered by the text"; they can "design their own classroom settings" (ibid). Nonetheless, and "Despite their apparent instructional autonomy, and despite the many ideas available to them" (ibid, p. 4), time is the anathema of the American learning experience – as opposed to the shorter time frame of the Finnish school day – because classroom management has become paramount in the American classroom. Many factors contribute to the time-sink teachers must now endure (Smith, 2000; Stevenson & Stigler, 1994; Stoel & Thant, 2002), among them: the pressure to deliver "rigorous and important content" (Kennedy, 2005, p. 6) within strict time-blocks; extensive bureaucratic classroom disruptions; and the expectation that content be conveyed brilliantly in order to engage, "interest," and "pique" "curiosity" (ibid, p. 7). Quite ironically, it is the centerpiece of the Johnson era War on Poverty that created the true dilemma for the classroom, in its mandate that the goals of equal educational opportunity be *universally* disseminated (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009), so that "all" children benefitted, regardless of individual student need, capability or preparedness. It was just a few years after the passage of this unparalleled mandate that *Sesame Street* became the

premier entry into televised educational space to help in the fulfillment of this great purpose (Fisch and Truglio, 2014).

Kennedy (2005) and Neuman (2006) provide glimpses into the American classroom. The environments described stand in sharp contrast with the Finnish classroom experience, and represent a narrative of the disruptive nature of contemporary forms of poverty, as well as the true challenge of delivering on equal education for *all*, the capstone promise of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. A retrospective consideration of Reconstruction era institutional practices of black educators and the learning habits of black learners persuade the point that not just poverty, but key legislative actions and broader political and economic factors have contributed to the downward spiral of urban education (Anderson, 1988; Douglas, 2005; Sugrue, 2005), and the comparably distorted performances of U.S. urban low-income learners, compared across the landscape with their national and international counterparts. *All* children includes *these* children and *those* children and an impressive list of "others" distinguished by ethnicity, history, learning challenges and gifts; and all are expected to work together while their parents exist in a wider world of competing interests. They are now classmates and the job of the American teacher is to round them together in cooperative learning spaces with "engag[ing]" and "interest[ing]" pedagogical techniques calculated to "pique" "curiosity" (Kennedy, 2005, p.7). It is a monumental task rooted in a fundamentally democratic ethos, and therefore a core function of *Between the Lions* and other televised learning spaces, which can reach many magnitudes more young learners simultaneously than any individual teacher, any school, any school district or any major urban school system.

Studies show that children's positive cognitive development follows from attachment securities and that secure attachment fosters the maturation of several specific cognitive outcomes

including self-regulatory abilities and spatial-temporal orientation. Both of these cognitive abilities deserve remark in light of the novel requirements of the diverse classroom space. Self-regulation, among its many meanings, suggests the ability to self-monitor and attend to tasks. Spatial-temporal abilities assume that a child's psychological center is satisfied by a sense of emotional stability and, ultimately, predictability. This suggests that the experience of predictability liberates the child to venture out and explore, perspective take (Cohen & Cohen, 2013), risk take, and set goals, each of which signal psychological dispositions prepared to act in the realms of "individual" and "social" learning (Slavin, 2011). Lower socio-economic circumstances, bringing a higher probability of attachment insecurity and less developed cognitive abilities, present a paradox to the expectations of the inquiry-based learning environment.

Finnish children engage compulsory schooling at age seven, which places them at an advantage for building core attachments before entering the formal classroom, and when formal schooling commences, family time is preserved in the Finnish system. School days are shorter, fieldtrips more plentiful, averaging monthly, or "as many as possible" (PC); city- and parent-group-sponsored hobby time after-school enables children to spend time in writing workshops, math help, chess, or ice hockey (PC), all spaces in which additional literacy socialization among adults and peers takes place; extensive winter and summer family breaks are coordinated to student holiday time, along with nearly weekly excursions to a weekend cottage (PC); and regular family time in a cultural phenomenon called sauna (PC), in which evening family breaks transfer from dining room or living room into a long-standing relaxation-inducing environment for which Finns are well known. Family time is a recurring motif in Finnish photography, painting and sculpture, and is an institution built into Finnish state family allowances. The birth of a child brings maternity and paternity leave, regardless of marital status, and takes place in staggered fashion for one year

post-birth (Lammi-Taskula, 2008; Ploug, 2012). These provisions must be explained given research attesting to the consequences to cognition and achievement when parental attachments are severed. Parents' educational attainments are heavily implicated for achievement, while early attachments imply the same for cognitive development. These matters must be taken into consideration as I prepare to canvas the American classroom (Kennedy, 2005), with special attention given to low-income classroom circumstances (Neuman, 2006), especially in light of the role assumed by *Between the Lions* as compensatory to these environments.

American children from urban low-income backgrounds have longer school days than Finnish children and, ironically, less content-coverage time, enjoy few or no fieldtrips and often experience family time which varies widely in quality. Neuman (2006) details the learning atmosphere of "several prekindergarten classes specifically targeted for poor children" (ibid, p. 34) which begins to explain why *BTL* builds specific environmental factors into its conceptual apparatus. The author's field period spanned 3 hours of class time during which twenty minutes of instructional time was observed (Neuman, 2006). Instead of instruction, there was considerable classroom management tied to "transitions" related to "(late arrivals, early dismissals, lunch, bathroom washing, getting ready for outdoor play, getting back from outdoor play, going to and coming back from "specials," cleaning up)" (Neuman, 2006, p. 35). "Specials," though beneficial to curriculum, can range from "physical education, foreign languages, arts, music, and so forth," and are scheduled "by the person coordinating the special program, not by the regular classroom teacher," and result in "students coming and going at odd times" (Kennedy, 2005, p. 69-70).

Instruction was also episodic and took the form of uninventive memorization tactics in which "Children were asked to memorize lines of print, to say the alphabet letters and numbers about five times, to spell their names, to spell the names of children who were not there" (Neuman,

2006, p. 35). Classrooms such as these might also be expected to be busied by "Distractions caused by off-task students" "scrap[ing] their chairs, drop[ping] their pencils, wiggl[ing], giggl[ing], talk[ing] to each other, and teas[ing] each other" (Kennedy, 2005, p. 73). The author refers to this learning environment, and by intimation, to others like these, as an "approach," and contrasts it with the "approach" of a "content-centered classroom" (Neuman, 2006, p. 35). Arguably, what was witnessed in the less desirable scenario was less motivated by instructional "approach" and more by necessity. Teachers in these classroom environments are not immune to or oblivious of what is happening. Rather, what appears to be a mindless memorization tactic is more likely a signal of "resignation," "frustration" and "annoyance," (Kennedy, 2005, p. 78) and a response to "their unstable environments" (ibid); the regularity with which their days begin with morning "'warm-up'" activities (ibid, p. 69), is perpetually "foiled" (ibid, p. 78) by events which fall within, but more often intrude from "outside their control" (ibid). Hence, in classroom settings where "continual distractions" are law, "teachers rely on" "rules and routines to stabilize their classroom environments" to preserve or create "intellectual tranquility" (ibid, p. 81) "emotional tranquility" and "social tranquility" (ibid, p. 81-82).

Teaching has as many needs as learning, and both require "tranquility" (Kennedy, 2005, p. 63). The irony is that tranquility is precisely what is largely unavailable in lower-income classrooms. A high-order principle embedded in the Finnish pre-primary learning environment is that atmospheric conditions "should be joyful, open, encouraging and unhurried" (NCCPE, 2010, p. 8). It should offer "opportunities for play, other activities" and notably, "peace and quiet" (ibid). Tranquility, of course, aids in concentration and helps to promote attentional focus and reinforce the self-regulatory requirements of learning, for example by "help[ing] students concentrate" (Kennedy, 2005, p. 63). Tranquility is particularly useful to American teachers who, while trying

to maintain "a sequence of instructional events" (ibid, p. 64), are also "trying to keep track of many things simultaneously" (ibid, p. 63). Kennedy (2005) finds "that the circumstances of classroom life impinge to the point that any intellectual thread can get lost" (ibid, p. 63). Educational reform expects engaging, rigorous, and intellectually stirred students. The problem is that there is a price to this expectation in any classroom where student behavioral and intellectual capability is highly variable: some children may be characterized as special needs, others as suffering attention deficit disorders; there may be emotionally needy children, shaped by ill-attentive or over-indulgent parenting; some learners may be quick and others slower; some learners eager and impatient, and others disinterested. Teachers are daily teaching to such an unpredictable crowd. Teachers must also be prepared to cope with unintentional student sabotage of their lesson plans when, while trying to "succeed in engaging students intellectually, then students, in their enthusiasm, are likely to share their partial thoughts and their misconceptions with the group, creating for teachers the problem of how to respond to these comments while also keeping the larger group on track and maintaining momentum" (ibid, 122-123). This assumes that teachers are "sufficiently versed in the subject matter to be able to respond to the variety of ideas students generate" (ibid, p. 123).

Nonetheless, the teacher's attempts at various approaches – lecture, student involvement, one-on-one attention, classroom circulation, dialogical repartee, group discussion jig-saw – can all be undermined by technological problems from software failing or mouse cursor-stickiness, student misbehavior or sudden illness. Birthday announcements, excessive or extraordinary classroom adornments, pajama days and other onerous distractions in addition to the existing internal time sinks of the "public address systems," classroom "telephones ringing," (Kennedy, 2005, p. 172) and "assemblies" and "holiday celebrations" (ibid, p. 15), are formidable competitors of teacher attention; and all while student emotions and ideas must still be managed (Kennedy,

2005). These and other unintended (Cooper, et al., 2004) outcomes of the bureaucratization of the classroom, especially among lower budgeted settings, undermine teacher practice and student learning. Expanding curricular responsibilities within this budgetary environment bring further disincentive to venture pedagogical risks (Kennedy, 2005) that might foster intellectual rigor and engagement (ibid). When the social circumstances surrounding the classroom are desperate, teaching becomes increasingly scripted (Shavelson, 1983). Memorization tactics, at teaching's worst, is a reaction to chaos (Jackson, 1968). Just the same, "portray[ing] content," to "render abstract ideas more concrete and render complicated ideas more simply" is just as much a risk with "errors quickly lead[ing] to confusions" (Kennedy, 2005, p. 133-134), with the potential of rendering a fatal blow to already fallen student confidence, rousing classroom "commotion" (ibid, p. 166), and further corrupting the already feeble "sense of community in the classroom" (ibid, p. 92). Along these lines, and admittedly an idea which might count among the more obscure disturbances in attaining classroom tranquility, is the degree of instructionally solicited *talk*. Is this tangential, or might students be thinking too little, and talking too much? Indeed, is the frequency of think-pairing itself, and other such group exercises, perhaps playing a more prominent role than realized in classroom management issues, while undermining individual academic development? Is there any material significance here?

Taken together, all the above describes the general circumstances of the American public school classroom. These are the material drawbacks especially of low-budget districts, from issues of teacher commitment and burnout (Darling-Hammond, 2000), to the inferior instructional quality available to students, as well as the dire consequences to cognition when the conditions of learning are driven by residential tax-base, which some scholars condemn as disuniting the public education process (Kincheloe, 2008). At the same time, the K-12 teaching profession is ever more

beleaguered by challenges to its right to unionization and by manipulation of its pension funds by budget-strapped states. There seems to be no end to the necessity to monitor compliance with the established standards of equal rights for all regarding access to education, while the moral imperative to redress the structural inequities in the funding of public education, especially in urban areas, remains unanswered. The local nature of basic public education funding, still based in part on real estate tax assessments within school districts, practically guarantees funding inequity across districts. From inequity in funding flow the many other inequities in infrastructure, educational materials, administrator and teacher competence, etc. The option of redirecting income or real estate taxes to wherever needed across school district boundaries is politically difficult, if not impossible.

Problem-Solving Scenario 1

Computer Mouse, Click. Click represents the Help-Function, and the "library work horse" (Guide DVD). Click operates to *save the day* when the Lion family or siblings need an answer to a question, or when there is need for a solution to a challenging or even a simple problem. The Lion father, mother and children variably turn to or depend on Click. An early report summarizes key findings about the effects of nearly half of the first season of *Between the Lions*, some of which include comments from young children about long-time resident characters such as Click (Linebarger, 2000). Click is a favorite. Some of the children's comments are particularly revealing in light of the present thesis: "She is really fast," "She did magic things," "She can do anything," and "He is really really smart" (ibid, p. 88), "She can do anything," (ibid, p. 96). Interestingly, other students may not have liked Click, because "She does the impossible" (ibid, p. 88). Some students expressed that they would prefer to talk with Click more than any other character when they were sad because "He helps the lions," "She's the smart one," and apparently

because “She’s a robot,” and “robots know a lot” (ibid, p. 98). Indeed, Click “never makes mistakes with his words” (ibid, p. 99). The researchers aimed to define each character by relative appeal and Click managed to always come out nearly on top. For most recognizable character, Click was named seventy-five percent of the time, second only to Cliff Hanger at seventy-eight percent (Linebarger, 2000). Click proved to be preferred by girls in terms of the “character to invite to their birthday party,” while eighteen percent chose Leona (ibid, p. 38); boys preferred Cliff Hanger (ibid, p. 5). All in all, ninety four percent of the time, Click was generally rated favorably (Linebarger, 2000).

Click appears in the Lion living room and represents the technological solution to quandaries. In the present episode Click solves a simple problem which befuddles the Lion parents and little sister Leona. The scene opens with: “They all see” a “tree” in their living room (Transcript 901, p. 38) and Lionel suggests that Click be consulted to solve a problem which ultimately requires the help of a handyman, or construction worker. Although Cleo, the Lion mother, attempts to offer the irrational, silly solution, “stay calm! I think I can fix this! All I need is… uh… duct tape!” (ibid), Lionel exclaims, “Mom thinks she can fix everything with duct tape” (ibid, p. 39). Click, as the voice of rationality and reason, suggests they all “Pause! Duct tape will not be sufficient. You need help” (ibid), in response to which father Lion hopes to draw attention from people, “(calling out) HELP!! Help!!! Help!! Help?” (ibid). Finally Lionel offers the more sensible solution, “We should look for help on the Internet” (ibid). Theo, the father Lion, praises Lionel’s smarts, stating “That makes a lot more sense, actually” (ibid, p. 40). Lionel initiates an internet search and lands upon “a website all about construction!” (ibid). A song about construction work follows, in which the target construction vehicles are introduced, “Bulldozer,” “Dump truck,” “Crane,” “Steamroller,” “Backhoe,” “Forklift,” “Concrete mixer,” “pickup truck” (ibid, p.

41-42). The song concludes and Handy Monkey appears, "You ordered a Handy Monkey?" (ibid, p. 43). Of all characterizations Click leaves the distinct impression of help.

Problem-Solving Scenario 2

Cliff Hanger. Cliff Hanger, though an "Indiana Jones-lookalike," is nothing if not a Boy Scout (Series Guide, 1998, p. 25). He is "the star of a continuing series of adventure stories" (Sirius Thinking Project Proposal, 1995/1996, p. 18). While each of his segments begins and ends with him hanging very precariously from a cliff, stashed in his backpack is the trusted "Survival Manual," a clever piece of Boy Scout memorabilia. In the theatre of this literacy setting it becomes the text which contains helpful literacy instructions and strategies for how to decode words and sentences, instead of anecdotes for how to survive wilderness problems. It is an instrument of literacy, a different frontier. By including the Boy Scouts reference, the program rouses another cultural commentary, but this time about the Progressive era, as the organization was founded in 1910. Here, Cliff Hanger represents the legacy character, linking the present to past challenges (Tozer et al., 2006). And while at times students in the study (Linebarger, 2000), apparently exhausted by Cliff's consistently unresolved predicament, suggested that "Cliff Hanger should just let go," (ibid, p. 40), in effect, give up; but he was rated as among the "Favorite Recurring Segments" (ibid). And yet, students exhibited a genuine indecision about whether to like or dislike, this character. At once, they liked and disliked him because "He never gets off the cliff," and because "He is silly" (ibid, p. 88); "Every time he tries to do something to get off the cliff he always ends up back hanging on the branch" (ibid, p. 89). Apparently, Cliff Hanger's character incites empathy. For example, students suggested that they would like to be with him, or to talk with him if they were sad (Linebarger, 2000). Some wanted to "play soccer and football with him" (ibid, p. 97). And though comments about Cliff Hanger seemed less laudatory or admiring than

critical, it is perhaps his empathetic quality which enabled viewers to identify with this character, and consequently account for the ninety-five percent likeability of the show overall, as Cliff Hanger was listed first among "most liked characters" (ibid, p. 5). If anything, Cliff Hanger is more easily relatable to life experience and therefore more sympathetic than other characters. His problem is critical but never resolved, while his life in perilous suspension is always filled with humorous complications, through which his cheery disposition seems both indomitable and infectious. His effect on viewers may be in part to animate and magnify challenges that dwarf the everyday problems of human life. Cliff Hanger provides a useful program lesson: he lightens the psychological atmosphere around problem-solving. In the space of cooperative learning, Cliff Hanger helps to elevate the empathy of the more rapid learner, and perhaps disabuses the slower learner of any ill-feeling toward themselves. The tenor of the "Cliff Hanger" segment is more hyperbole than satire; in the face of his life-threatening dilemma Cliff remains light-hearted and optimistic rather than terrified and immobilized by the prospect of his impending doom.

The segment begins with a quandary: "We find Cliff Hanger where we left him last, hanging from a cliff" (Transcript 901, p. 61); "Suddenly, Cliff notices that a big construction project has started up in the valley below" (ibid, p. 62); "Say, fellas! You aren't by any chance building a tall skyscraper, are you?" (ibid), and when they are unable to help, Cliff consults his "survival manual" and proceeds to read for a solution (ibid, p. 63); the manual advises that "If a construction crew offers to help you, ask them to use their machines to get you off your cliff" (ibid); and after attempts with every construction vehicle available to the construction workers, a problem with "the crane" causes Cliff to fall just when nearly free from his predicament (ibid, p. 65). But in the end his clothes snag "a branch on his way down" preventing yet another plot

resolution (ibid). The object lesson of Cliff Hanger is not only persistence, but also that, as his "Survival Manual" instructs him, in times of trouble it is good to ask for help from others.

Problem-Solving Scenario 3

Opposite Bunny. Opposite Bunny is a takeoff on super heroes; Bunny fixes situations gone awry. Bunny's alter-ego is an elephant who seems only to make mistakes. Opposite Bunny re-assembles projects which have somehow been disassembled by the elephant. And when emotions run amok Bunny's presence is calming and therapeutic; his mere appearance helps to dramatically transform socio-emotional states from "sad" to "happy."

The segment begins with a quandary: "Three little toy blocks are on the ground in front of the seated elephant"; after which, "the elephant picks up a little block in his trunk and moves it toward another block" and after placing another block "on top of the two block tower" he "gestures, proudly," and gratified by the accomplishment, the segment announcer proclaims that "the elephant has built a tower" (Transcript 901, p. 53). The elephant "jumps for joy" and consequently "causes the ground to shake," which "wreck[s] the tower" (ibid, p. 54). This turn of events is disturbing for the elephant, leaving it "sad" and in "tears" (ibid). But, while the elephant is in the midst of personal disappointment and dismay over a problem with no apparent fix, Opposite Bunny appears on the scene. The "Bunny quickly assesses the situation, and then easily flips the blocks one at a time back into position;" "ta-daa" goes the musical accompanist (ibid, p. 55). All is well again, "The elephant was sad. And now he's happy" (ibid); the question posed is "How does that bunny do it?" (ibid). The question is left unanswered, though the "cute bunny" elicits a "big" "smile" and the elephant "hugs" Opposite Bunny who shortly afterward, "hops away" (ibid). Elephant's reliance on Opposite Bunny, and consequent release from a particularly confining problematic, leaves the distinct impression of rescue.

In the end, the lesson is social reliance, and the instructional strategy is cooperative work. Child viewers experience modeled behaviors which strongly hint at the idea of learning by doing *together*, rather than learning by doing *alone*. Click's quick technologically effortless solutions translate similarly. However, instead of social, it is a technological dependency. The effect is analogous to the messaging of Cliff and Bunny, which is to deemphasize "individually" driven "inquiry learning," and instead to emphasize group investigation of phenomena (Kuhn et al., 2000). Cliff Hanger's social dependencies and Opposite Bunny's seemingly universal reliability for assistance and miraculous rescue efforts, work to reinforce the same cognitive messaging. Kuhn and colleagues' (2000) discussion of inquiry-based learning is centered in the argument that elementary and middle school children should be prepared by inquiry-driven curriculum, but more importantly that their under-preparation "underlies strategic weaknesses" which "impedes the multivariable analysis required in the most common forms of inquiry learning" (ibid, p. 497). The teamwork approach evident in the problem-solving strategies of Click, Cliff and Bunny serve to highlight strategic weaknesses in inquiry-based learning, but also represent strategic advantages to a K12 public educational academic environment, which expects considerable prosocial skills given its emphasis on group projects. Group activities and exercises involving two or more individuals often require that students of varying abilities, socioeconomic backgrounds, life experiences and exposures, or of different ethnicity, cultural origin or religion operate within a context of assigned (i.e., enforced) proximity. These are the social pre-conditions of American classroom learning, and conditions which simultaneously hold strong implication for the performance conditions of various levels of the labor market.

Concluding Remarks

The characters given close study include: Click, the anthropomorphized puppet computer mouse; and the animated characters Opposite Bunny and Cliff Hanger. These characters demonstrate problem-solving strategies which reveal the consistent and principle cognitive message of the episode. The instructional strategy is centered in cooperative learning (Slavin, 2011) and the task to be performed requires prosocial skills. Click, however, presents a rather unexpected finding, in view of my thesis. Click signifies technological capability, and implies human limitation; it is neither he nor she, but seems to be all-powerful: it is the "help function" (Transcript 901, p. 42). The instructional message of Click is the quick fix, the immediate solution. The cognitive outcome of this particular learning strategy is solution-finding rather than problem-solving. The consequence to cognition is somewhat limiting, however useful the outcome may be in serving a practical end. While the humanist in me bridles at this conclusion, I must admit to having resolved more than one practical problem with a little typing and a few clicks on my Web browser, which leads me to regard Click as an instructor in modern survival strategy.

An additional finding is that benevolent behaviors are evident in the prosocial actions in episode one. Click, Cliff Hanger and Bunny potentially represent parts of a general instructional theme aimed to enhance benevolent, rather than altruistic qualities among young child-viewers; its appearance thus reopens a conversation about the possibility that benevolence rather than altruism represents the targeted democratic social action. More fundamentally, the concept of benevolence implies a critique of altruism, which is arguably a kind of behavioral debt-service, or a type of prompted and incentivized gift-giving (Mauss, 1954/1990). Accordingly, altruism is quite unlike benevolence. Hastings and colleagues (2007) offer "The strictest definition of altruism" as "sacrificing one's own gain in order to promote another's well-being. Prosocial behavior toward

others does not necessarily require self-sacrifice, of course; it can also benefit the actor, or come with neither cost nor gain" (ibid, p. 639). The author goes further to describe how prosocial behavior may stem from the expectation of reward or reciprocity or from fear of punishment as one might "fear repercussions for not being prosocial, or may only want to alleviate another's distress" (ibid). In any case, the motivations driving particular social actions are complex.

Early deliberations about how and why people approach problems and decisions as they do were insightfully handled by the early utilitarian philosophies of Bentham, Mill and Moore (Smart, 1961). A brief overview of Smart's (1961) discussion seems appropriate here. The author describes Act-Utilitarianism as the system of normative ethics which represents the higher good (Smart, 1961), and contrasts Act-Utilitarianism with Rule-Utilitarianism. The Act-Utilitarian suggests that one be called to "actions" on the basis of whether the end result is to "increase happiness and diminish misery" (ibid, p. 109); indeed that "the rightness or wrongness of an action, is to be judged by the consequences, good or bad, of the action itself" (ibid, p. 110). Rule-Utilitarianism proposes that one "act according to *rules* that tend to increase happiness and diminish misery" (ibid, p. 109). And although Act- and Rule-Utilitarianism contrast, Smart (1961) makes the case that both perspectives build from a similar "moral principle" "of benevolence," rather than "altruism" (ibid, p. 117). This viewpoint becomes particularly interesting in light of the positions presented thus far. Altruism has been described as the "intrinsically motivated voluntary behavior intended to benefit another" (Eisenberg et al., 2006, p. 647); the authors elaborate further on this idea and, perhaps unwittingly, introduce the dividing line between altruism and benevolence. Altruism is explained as the act "motivated by concern for others" but also by "self-rewards" (ibid). Concrete and social rewards refer to a wider system of behavioral conditioning designed to prompt action by "avoidance of punishment," rather than by personally or socially

desired goals (ibid). Self-rewards similarly refer to a system of rewards based on internal payments which materialize as self-gratification or self-validation. Taken together, the above descriptions point to incentive structures engineered to reinforce the experience of either self-glorification, as in the case of self-reward, or socially regulated behaviors, as would be the case with social rewards. Benevolence is, in this way, fundamentally different from altruism, and begs the question of why "we often tend to praise and honor altruism even more than generalized benevolence" (Smart, 1961, p. 117).

To begin, the benevolent "agent" counts "himself neither more nor less than any other person" (Smart, 1961, p. 117) and from this disposition social action becomes relatively resistant to remunerative or moral social pressures. Benevolent actions do not arise from social imperatives, nor are they strictly regulated by social forces; they are self-regulated actions which emerge from perspective-building experiences. The experience of empathy within the American setting is expectedly more complex, given large variance within or across schools or across neighborhoods, communities and states, and with respect to SES, national, ethnic and cultural origin, politics, religion, gender orientation, parental educational attainment, and student learning style. Each of these factors can create more demanding cooperative learning situations and conceivably add substantial dimension to empathetic qualities as they are tested against ever more conditions.

I have endeavored to distinguish between concepts which lie at different points on the prosocial spectrum, or at least rank differently in terms of the extent of prosocial response. This brief treatment is necessary to help clarify the much more difficult path to attaining benevolence, and the comparatively less arduous task of becoming altruistic. Benevolence is an ethical response much more aligned to empathy, while altruism is a corollary of sympathy. Altruistic behavior, as with sympathy, can "derive directly from perspective taking" or by act of retrieving "information

from memory" (Eisenberg et al., 2006, p. 647). Its relationship to others is therefore limited to "feeling sorrow or concern for the distressed or needy other" (ibid). Altruism is a subclass of prosocial behavior, which operates as a shadow of emotional experience; it does not build from experience, but is rather an approximation of knowledge. Benevolence emerges through experience in the lived condition, through intensive and longstanding interaction with it; it is experiential. It is a challenging sensibility to develop and requires life-long facilitation and practice, occasions for which are abundantly supplied by the American experience and its formal and informal learning environments. It would however be misguided to suggest that diversity and diverse experiences are uniformly available to all Americans. However, it is defensible to suggest that the televised environment plays a uniquely unifying role in imparting a glimpse into many of the themes, tensions, debates, quandaries, drawbacks, complications and advantages which comprise the inimitably diverse human terrain of the American setting.

Chapter 5: *Sana Arkku*

Chapter Five closes with an analysis of *Sana-Arkku's* three problem-solving scenarios but begins by nesting *Sana-Arkku* within the broader history of Finnish preschool developments. This is followed by a brief discussion of the Nordic stance on socio-constructivism as the driving force of play-based pedagogy and its importance in narrative learning. *Sana-Arkku* delivers early literacy lessons through the genre of narrative learning, a play-based teaching strategy which also carries strong meaning within Finnish cultural and literary tradition. Similar to the above socio-constructivist consideration of the scenic elements used in *Between the Lions*, I work to provide interpretive commentary on various cultural objects installed in the scenic setting of *Sana-Arkku*. I revisit socio-constructivism as contextualized in the Finnish learning environment in order to examine the interplay between the social and natural environment in the Finnish play experience. I place emphasis on several scenic artifacts, from animals to canoes and lanterns, and provide a more extensive discussion of paper, a culturally loaded cornerstone Finnish industry, deeply linked to Finns' longstanding esteem for forest, language and reading. The discussion then concludes with an analysis of Episode 1 of *Sana-Arkku*, "Lepakon majassa" (In the Forest Hut with the Bats).

My analysis of the three problem-solving scenarios revealed an unexpected element: the inclusion of a challenge course as a pedagogical feature in each scenario, increasing in difficulty across the three scenarios. The challenge course seemed to me at first a distraction from the problem-solving task, until I realized that this play tactic seems intended to heighten the learner's self-awareness during the problem-solving task by strengthening self-control. Both self-awareness and self-control represent facets of the self-regulatory domain, strongly linked to academic achievement. Numerous observations from my immersion experiences helped me enlarge my idea of play, its possible effects on metacognition, and the many sociocultural contributors supporting

a play-culture, including local children's activities and play spaces wherever I traveled, evident parent availability, pastimes like sauna, hobby time, cottage time, forest excursions and swimming, and the very real influence of landscape and geography. The sociocultural rationale for why play-based pedagogy is the choice of this setting is readable in the fabric of everyday life, which seems organized to elicit from the young the very cognitive skills most highly regarded.

In the Cultural Tradition of Play

Sana-Arkku is intended for an audience aged 4 to 6 years. The program emerges from an early childhood pedagogical setting driven by play-based teaching and learning. However, this paradigm was not always in place. "A decade" prior to the production of *Sana-Arkku* (2006), "preschools were anxiously copying school's formal teaching methods, but these have now been abandoned and replaced with child-centered and play-like methods" (Karvonen, 2007, p. 152). The decision to redraft pre-school education policy emerged from several factors, not least among them Finland's commitment to realizing "cultural equality" (Council of Europe, 1971, p. 9) and children's rights (Karila, 2012; Jensen, 2009; Hakovirta & Hiilamo, 2012; Alasuutari, 2014), and to promote early cognitive development (Hakkarainen, 2006). A full contextualization of Finnish pre-school education is beyond the scope of my thesis but, in order to provide some necessary explanatory background for my analysis of *Sana-Arkku* I will briefly treat how play became formalized within Finnish early education; how pre-school education derives from a general Nordic position on early childhood; and how Finland's play-based philosophy builds from a brand of socio-constructivism supported by the provisions of a social welfare system. Further below I will treat narrative play as the type of play through which deductive teaching is enacted in *Sana-Arkku*. I liken narrative play to what my Finnish colleagues repeatedly referred to as *the story*. Finnish culture is rooted in myth and relates strongly to the idea of *the journey*.

An almost Homeric vein courses through Finland's most esteemed works, especially the *Kalevala*, through its folk songs, lore, poetry and even its contemplative traditions. The journey-centric attributes of Finnish play are in a tradition fascinated with the *odyssey* of the human life process. These cultural elements survive in *Sana-Arkku* and can be legitimately counted among the newer "stratum" of Finnish works which build from a rich mythical tradition (Vento, 1992, p. 89) and remain quite visible in contemporary times as evidence of a long-standing Finnish approach to child culture. Of course, most children in most cultures play, as do the young of most mammalian species (Burghardt, 1998; Barnard & Spencer, 1996). My argument is different. I suggest that the Finnish culture of play has been preserved as a distinct social system for children, and has possibly maintained a cultural persistence similar to the tradition of sauna.

To Play, or Not to Play

In "October 1971" "the Scandinavian Council for Cultural Exchange" caucused on pre-school education in Norway, with representation from research bodies, "practicing pre-school teachers," "clinical psychologists" and "the central administration" (Council of Europe, 1971, p. 10). Of the problems discussed at the seminar, the following are most relevant to the present discussion: 1) how best to go about stirring the "intellectual development and stimulation" of pre-school children while 2) meeting the "demand for teaching" and "intellectual direction in the pre-schools" (ibid); but also how best to provide for "creativity, self-direction" and "play" and for "children's emotional needs" (ibid). In short, the question became whether pre-school education should be child-centered or teacher-driven (Council of Europe, 1971). Whether preschool curriculum was to be play-based or not to be play-based, was the question, and arguably constituted a *Great Debate* in Finland's educational history.

Turunen and colleagues (2012) provide a "historical review on Finnish pre-school education" (ibid, p. 595). The authors pay particular attention to "how the trends and conceptions of pre-school education have changed during recent decades" and how they reflect "national societal goals and political and economical interests as well as changing conceptions of pre-school education in the Finnish educational system" (ibid). The discussion builds from events at the "end of the 1960s" when "pre-school education started as an experimental enterprise" (ibid, p. 586), and progressed into "the 1970s" when, "owing to reform in compulsory education, several committees discussed the implementation of pre-school education and reports at that time supported lowering the age limit to six years" (ibid, p. 587). However, the notion of how best to acclimate and accommodate the educative needs of "six-year-old children in the Finnish school system" has made for rich discourse "since the beginning of the comprehensive school in 1921" (ibid).

By "1983, the new Basic Education Act introduced pre-school education as part of basic education a year before compulsory school age (Finnish Parliament 1983)" and "The statute came into effect in 1985" (Turunen et al., 2012, p. 590). By 1994, "The first Finnish curriculum of the new era" or, "the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education," was codified (ibid, p. 592). Just two years afterward, in 1996 "the Core Curriculum for Pre-School Education was introduced" and reflected a fundamental revision of the approach to formal early childhood educational practice (ibid). It was, at its core, a national framework which acknowledged the whole child, and the communities' role in shaping the intellectual and emotional process (Turunen et al., 2012). The approach involved "teachers and the wider community, including parents" who "formulated local pre-school curricula. Instead of controlling education, it was a means to explicate the development and implementation of pre-school education" (ibid, p. 592).

By 1996, “The National Core Curriculum for Pre-School Education 1996 was remarkably different from its predecessors,” proclaiming that “a child’s experiences and interests were the bases of pre-school education and it recognised that children’s activities and thinking evoked learning” (Turunen et al., 2012, p. 593). Accordingly, children “were in the centre of pre-school education” and understood “as constructors of their self-images, social relationships, activities, and learning and” possessed “a natural desire to learn” (ibid). The role of the educator had been redefined as facilitator of the learning process, and teachers became “enablers of children’s development. Their tasks were to participate in children’s activities and to provide opportunities and help if needed” (ibid). Ultimately, the next direction in Finland’s early childhood educational approach followed “Rousseau’s philosophy” in broad outline and was premised on the idea “that every child was innately good, and with the right education, each child’s potential would prosper” (ibid). Consistent with Rousseau’s philosophy, “the Core Curriculum for Pre-School Education 1996 emphasised a passive, natural approach to pre-school education” (ibid), while “educators should observe children and provide them with possibilities to learn things in which they were interested. This image placed educators in an onlooker’s position where active education was not needed” (ibid).

By 2000, “The National Core Curriculum for Pre-School Education” “was completed” and scheduled for “implementation,” in “August 2002” (Turunen et al., 2012. p. 594). Its significance lies in the fact that “It was the first document that guided the entire preschool education system” (ibid). “The document emphasised children as individually developing persons” and resulted in educators devising “an individual plan for every child” (ibid); the pendulum swung from static views of childhood to viewing children in terms of their developmental process; they were “‘human becomings’” (ibid, p. 595).

Generally, “The factors which have influenced the development of pre-school education” are generally related to particular national histories, and to “the various institutions of society,” including the “family” (Council of Europe, 1971, p. 15), and national and local government. Governments usually have a stake in early childhood education “to increase women’s labour market participation; to reconcile work and family responsibilities on a basis more equitable for women; to confront the demographic challenges faced by OECD countries (in particular falling fertility rates and the general ageing of populations); and the need to address issues of child poverty and educational disadvantage” (Starting Strong II, 2006, p. 12). Women’s issues are increasingly germane “Because economic prosperity depends on maintaining a high employment/population ratio” (ibid). This is especially true for “European governments” which “have put into place family and child care policies to help couples to have children and assist parents to combine work and family responsibilities” (ibid). But without “significant public funding,” “sustainable and equitable early childhood system[s]” become less possible (ibid, p. 102).

The “OECD thematic reviews” put forward that “When the main burden of costs falls on parents, children from disadvantaged backgrounds become less represented in ECEC provision or the quality of provision at their disposal is inadequate” (Starting Strong II, 2006, p. 102). The consequences of leaving any particular group out of the equation has a ripple effect which extends across society. To be sure, “Governmental domains that benefit from the widespread provision of early childhood education and care services” would be equally undermined by a widespread absence of these same provisions (ibid). But in the best-case scenario, when there is “widespread provision of early childhood education and care services” and when the development of children’s potential supersedes all else, evidence seems to suggest that benefits are felt at the level of “the national economy (short-term, through the contribution of working women, and long-term through

more effective human capital formation); health (better mental and physical health for children and families, less at-risk behaviors, etc.), social welfare and criminal justice (less dependence of families on social welfare; higher earnings for families; more gender equality; less family violence, less criminality, etc.); education (better grade progression, less participation in special education, etc.)" (ibid, p. 102-103). The point is that "investment in young children" brings "benefits not only for children and families but also for society at large" (ibid, p. 103). Of course "the consequences of underinvestment can be seen all too clearly" (ibid).

Socio-Constructivism

Finland follows a "socio-constructivist learning conception" (Starting Strong II, 2006, p. 62) and *Sana-Arkku* adheres to "the socio-constructivist view of learning" (Karvonen, Thesis Summary, n.d., p. 145). The socio-constructivist prototype follows the idea that children are "active" in the learning process (Starting Strong II, 2006, p. 62). Within this pedagogical orientation "there is no grading or ranking of children" (ibid); instead, there is play. Overall, "play methodologies" characterize "the Nordic pre-school" environment (ibid). In this regional setting, learning is received as emergent and is granted the room to happen whether in "outdoor discovery play" (ibid), or anywhere along "a continuum of adult participation in children's play" (Hakkarainen, 2006, p. 193) from: "independent pretend role-play" in which "adults participate only indirectly" (ibid); or when play is targeted to "promote the development of children's skills, knowledge, and personal traits" (ibid); to teacher-prompted play in which play is used "as a didactic method to promote specific learning outcomes in classroom settings" (ibid); and, to whatever extent, "'free play'" (ibid, p. 187), which might vary in use and description across Scandinavian early educational settings. Play is a complex term which points in several directions depending upon its cultural setting and pedagogical system. As contextualized in education, play

is typically purposed to fulfill particular educational aims or objectives, as in the case of play employed in the context of narrative learning. "Developmental psychology provides several alternatives for capturing play-based learning and development" including "narrative learning," which enables adults, "through analysis of" "play and narratives" to "gain insight into" the children's "world, including their academic development and learning" (ibid, p. 194).

Narrative Learning

The objective of narrative learning, similar to deductive teaching strategies, is "sense making" and a strategy for "organiz[ing] the world in which the child lives" (Hakkarainen, 2006, p. 194). Bruner, Egan or El'koninova might have described narrative learning as a form of teaching and learning which helps children draw connections between their "inner" and "outer world" (ibid). For Bruner, "narrative was a symbolic schema through which a child interprets the world" (ibid). For Egan, stories like Cinderella teach through "contradiction[s]," "opposite[s]," "tension between good and bad," but for the purpose of "discover[ing] the structure, sense, and meaning of phenomena and our narratives about this discovery" (ibid). El'koninova likens "fairy tale" learning to "pretend play" (ibid), both of which teach through "emotional identification" (ibid, p. 195).

Emotional identification, in particular, was a recurring element in conversations with my colleagues during my field period. But it was through repeated conversations with one of Finland's most celebrated script-writers/directors that I came to understand the significance of emotional identification as a responsibility of practice more generally, and in children's televised learning productions specifically. This writer/director coined the phrase "simple learning theory," to describe the approach that recognizes that "What a person laughs and cries at, he/she remembers" (Televizion, 2005, p. 39). On another occasion I learned of the importance of the narrative, or

"story," as I heard it called in my many interactions with Yle producers, and in conversations with several teachers. After one such conversation on May 28th I wrote:

> The story is the emotional element of programming. Children need a story to relate to, and this story makes the information memorable. The story can be happy, sad, exciting, but this is the way to transmit information to them. Children already exist in a myth, and perhaps Finnish people understand this because we are forest people. I especially relate to the forest. I told her about my short-lived story-telling stint I called Mrs. Apple Butterbean, in which I delivered animated stories to children and the elderly while wearing one red rubber boot. I told her that through this experience, I learned that sleepiness was also an emotion. She laughed when I explained how I stumbled upon this find. Well, when telling stories to the elderly, some of them would sometimes fall asleep, and eventually wake. There were, of course, occasions when I would return home feeling defeated, but after several more story-telling sessions, I realized that my audience did not wish for me to stop, but rather that the sleepiness resulted from a lullaby effect. At least this is what I preferred to believe.

The essential meaning behind narrative learning and the "story" is, in my opinion, found in Hakkarainen's description of "pretend play" (Hakkarainen, 2006, p. 195). The author characterizes pretend play by contrasting it with fairytales. The fairytale structure presents a "boundary between the spaces" which "always belongs to only one of the spaces, not both at the same time," and where "characters living in this space cannot change their surroundings" (ibid). The boundaries of pretend play are different; they rely on imagination. In this space, "a door can become a window" and "a river can become a landing strip, or a sleeping dog can disappear all together" (ibid). My colleagues explained the importance of the story in relation to children's developmental processes, and its inseparability from the overall learning experience. It was explained to me that "children already exist in a myth," and part of the responsibility of teachers is to bring into plainer view the mythical elements of a given lesson for children, and help them to see their place in the story. The cognitive process in this way becomes an unexpected development in the *Hero's Journey*.

Odyssey

Episode one of *Sana-Arkku* opens with a theme song that uses the term "odyssey": "Come and sit by poem tree, join us to this odyssey, sniff the words so secret, story bits and pieces" (Transcript 1, p. 1). The episode situates learners in a cognitive pursuit of specific animals, and requires that the novice detectives "sniff" with metacognitive athleticism and persist on task through fairly strenuous deduction strategies (ibid).

Amid the backdrop of the opening theme song, eyes are set on several animals, including bats, crabs, owls, salmon and the feature object, a treasure chest, all of which are framed by night-time. To start with, I was corrected for mistaking night-time for evening time. There is a difference. Night-time connotes sleep time, whereas evening time is a period in which children would likely still be awake. These are subtleties I would not be attuned to as my night and daytimes have not been experienced under the extremes of northern solstice. Here was a place in which one might be given to double-takes, for example during a casual walk along the Esplanade or Museokatu 8, at coming upon a shop window with mannequins outfitted in bathing suits, immediately followed by a window with a mannequin draped in a floor-length down winter coat. I was accustomed to being regulated by a clock which roughly follows progressively diminishing light. The references of this environment are necessarily different and rely upon different markers, which is also reflected in the language of what constitutes night versus evening.

I was also struck by the selection of animals. They would have been recognizable to these children and their home environment, but not to me in my largely urban experience. In this case, crabs might elicit fond family memories of going fishing with dad near summer cottages situated by lakes (PC). Child viewers might associate crabs with crab-catching, described as a fun children's activity enjoyed in southern and central Finland, though less so to the north (PC); crabs

are commonly incorporated into children's books and are a familiar presence in textbooks (PC). The treasure chest itself roused within me earlier stories of seafaring expeditions by explorers and pirates, or of activities such as treasure hunts. And though Finnish children do participate in gaming culture, as do many other children, pastimes such as treasure hunts are still actively a part of the play repertoire of Finnish child culture (PC).

The canoe is another cultural object replete with family-centric significance and found as a recurring theme among the social lives of the many Finns with summer cottages. As I understand it, in earlier times the canoe was built by the grandfather (PC). Today, companies rent out boats or families might personally own them (PC). And if somehow without a cottage, it is likely that individuals or families would join those with cottages and enjoy the tradition of canoeing the extensive lakes throughout the Finnish water system. The point is that the experience of cottage approaches ubiquitous availability.

The lantern is another object found within the programmatic setting of *Sana-Arkku* because lanterns might be used as ornament or be useful in summer cottages, though flashlights are more commonly used when navigating the forest (PC). My overwhelming experience as a city dweller, and comparable inexperience with coastal environments, was driven home to me when I could not readily recognize the purpose of the rope placed atop a wooden chest on the board walk in the program. What is the purpose of the rope, I wondered? This was a glaring give-away about my limited adventures in more rural settings. Of course the function of the rope is to anchor the boat while fishing. I was too young to retain the memories of my earlier childhood in Virginia visiting my maternal grandparents with my siblings and participating in early morning fishing on motorized fishing boats. These memories don't necessarily belong so much to me as to my older

siblings whose earlier childhoods were enriched by fishing expeditions with our grandfather, while I usually opted out, staying behind with my imagination teeming with piranha and alligators.

The Forest Times: A Story of Paper

The Finnish forest industry has constituted the livelihood of Finnish people for over a century. Surely, "Finland is Europe's most heavily-forested country: indeed "a 'forest giant,' there being over sixteen times more forest per capita than in European countries on average" (Boreal Forest, 2014, para 1). In earlier times, timber and paper products were chief among Finnish domestic products. Jansson's Moominpapa is often portrayed with his tool box, a not so subtle reminder of the heavily wooded Finnish ecosystem, and the predominance of the agrarian, craft and carpentry-capable human resource base. Moominpapa's iconic axe and hammer are frequent motifs in Jansson's work. An early Jansson childhood sketch features a jester's long hat, an elephant, a pony and an *axe*. In an image from 1985, Jansson's Moominpapa brings the *axe* into view again, this time inside and among other objects of iconographic significance. The setting is a light house atop an ice pool, another cultural footnote; there is a clock, a compass, a sauna, a crystal ball, a tool box, a lamp, a hammer, and an *axe*. The axe is a cultural icon that emerges from the mists of Finnish antiquity as part of the armament of Ukko, the most significant Finnish mythical figure, who famously wields the hammer, the sword and the axe. The axe is also prominent in Poems 8-9 of the *Kalevala*: here, in a journey home,

> Väinämöinen meets the maiden of Pohjola and asks her to marry him. She agrees on the condition that Väinämöinen carry out certain impossible tasks. While Väinämöinen carves a wooden boat, his *axe* slips and he receives a deep wound in his knee. He searchers for an expert blood-stauncher and finally finds an old man who stops the flow of blood by using magic incantations (Finnish Literature Society, 2014a).

In the Tradition of the Kalevala

The Kalevala was gathered, assembled and edited in 1835 by "Elias Lönnrot on the basis of the epic folk poems he had collected in Finland and Karelia" (Finnish Literature Society, 2014b). It belongs to a "poetic song tradition, sung in an unusual, archaic trochaic tetrametre, [which] had been part of the oral tradition among speakers of Balto-Finnic languages for two thousand years" (ibid). The *Kalevala* is the most centralizing work of the Finnish cultural and national tradition, with literary, mythical, spiritual, and political significance; nearly "350 compositions based on Kalevalaic themes have been composed until the present" (Vento, 1992, p. 88). The *Kalevala* helped to solidify "the Finns' self-confidence and faith in the possibilities of a Finnish language and culture" (Finnish Literature Society, 2014b). These, and many more reasons that I may never fully understand, elucidate why the *Kalevala* is an accomplishment of more than literary proportion, and the one work that announces the emergence of "a small, unknown people to the attention" and political consciousness "of other Europeans" (ibid).

The *Kalevala* is Finland's "national epic" (Finnish Literature Society, 2014b). *Kalevala* catapulted the Finnish Literary Society, founded in 1831, into greater cultural relevancy. The Society was established to promote literature written in Finnish, but its acclaim rose considerably when it became "the first publishing house to bring out the *Kalevala* in book form" (Finnish Literature Society, 2014c). Another milestone was "The official acknowledgment of Finnish [which] was preceded by the establishment of the first professorship of Finnish Language in Finland in 1850" (Siikala, 2006, p. 158). Finland also founded the Nordic region's first public library, Rikhardinkartu Library, "completed in 1881" (Rikhardinkartu, 2014a), and opened to the public in 1882 (Rikhardinkartu, 2014a, 2014b). Another critical event in the chronology of modern Finland's cultural development was the founding of the Finnish National Theatre in 1872. The National Theatre was the first exclusively Finnish-language professional theatre. I attended a

memorable performance there that counts as one of the highlights of my experience in Finland. The production was a contemporary piece titled *Erkat ja Tavikset*.

Erkat ja Tavikset was intended for audiences between the ages 7-10, and was performed entirely in Finnish. I was not concerned by the prospect of attending a foreign language production, given my enthusiasm for Italian and German opera, in neither of which languages do I have any particular competency. In fact, it was in the setting of opera that I first realized that it was possible to read multiple forms of texts. In this case, I listened for the lyrical quality of the Finnish language. Finland is a multilingual society and, while Finnish is the official language, spoken by 94.2% of the population, it is not uncommon – while sipping tea or coffee at Kahvia Marocco, or while seated casually on a bench along Esplanade, or while defending fresh warm pulla (common, traditional sweet bread) or munkki (traditional bread) from circling seagulls scavenging from above the Market Square – to hear conversations nearby in English, or Swedish (5.5%) (World Fact Book, 2012). Because "Finland was under the reign of Sweden until 1809" there are approximately, "290,000 Finns who speak Swedish as their mother tongue," or "5% of the Finnish population." (Yle Your Story, 2014, p. 1).

The ethnic makeup of Finland is, at least in part, visible in Helsinki's downtown City Center area, where an experienced eye or ear may distinguish Finns (93.4%), Swedes (5.6%), Russians (0.5%), Estonians (0.3%), Roma (Gypsy) 0.1%, Sami (0.1%) (World Fact Book, 2006), and Africans (Somalia, Gambia, Cameroon) (PC). Actually, "The largest language and ethnic minorities are Russian, Estonian, and Somali" while "The diversification of Finnish society since the mid-1990s has been the fastest in Europe" (Sahlberg, 2011a, p. 8)

My motivation to attend a performance of *Erkat ja Tavikset* was my desire to listen to and hear uninterrupted Finnish. In this setting, it became possible to listen to Finnish delivered by

professional actors for a period exceeding an hour. At first I requested to be seated in a row well clear of the stage. My prior experience with first row seating in American theater has included the experience of *actors' spray* when they vigorously pronounce various plosive sounds. However, I was reassured of the unlikelihood of the spray effect by the ticket-office attendant, who reminded me of the distinct differences between English and Finnish, reassuring me that the spray-effect would be negligible.

Seymour (2005) frames language complexity in a 2X2 grid, which characterizes Western languages by syllabic structure (simple, complex) and orthographic depth (shallow, deep). These characterizations indicate the relative accessibility of languages for literacy acquisition. Finnish, Greek, Italian, and Spanish are described as *simple syllable/shallow orthography* (ibid); German, Norwegian, Icelandic, Swedish and Dutch are described as *complex syllable/shallow orthography* (ibid); Portuguese and French are described as *simple syllable/deep orthography* (ibid); and Danish and English are described as *complex syllable/deep orthography* (ibid). Finnish and English, in fact, stand at the extremes of language accessibility.

Leppanen et al. (2006) examine Finnish language learning, explaining what is meant by the extreme regularity of Finnish orthography, and its consistent grapheme-phoneme correspondence, which ultimately work to strongly shape practice and cognitive processes. Reading instruction is centered in the alphabetic strategy in which reading and spelling are taught with equal emphasis, and includes letter recognition, listening, segmenting, and phonemic and syllabic blending (Holopainen et al., 2001). The Finnish language features 21 letters and 21 sounds and, because "Spelling a phoneme is as consistent as pronouncing a grapheme" (Leppanen et al., 2006, p. 9), children are able to combine "to form CV/VC syllables and CV/VC-CV/VC" "After a few letters are mastered" (ibid). Finnish "ABC books" (ibid) reinforce children's awareness of

this syllable-centered feature of their language by segmenting words into syllables (Seymour, 2005). These Finnish ABC books demonstrate the level of clarity available to languages of shallow orthography, in sharp contrast to the deeper language system of English.

The work of Wimmer and Hummer (1990) describes how the early acquisition of German reading and writing skills by German-speaking children, might signal a pattern related to earlier engagement with alphabetic skills among regular orthographies. Indeed Ehri contends that reading and spelling skills develop reciprocally, a claim which jibes with correlational studies linking invented spelling at the beginning of first grade with later competencies in word recognition and reading comprehension (Morris & Perney, 1984). Others have found that spelling in preschool correlated with word recognition and reading comprehension in first grade (Ferroli & Shanahan, 1987). Leppanen et al. (2006) draw attention to yet other instances in which correlations were found between phonological accuracy in spellings during preschool and word identification in the first grade (Mann et al., 1987). Other studies also illustrate what seems an established link between spelling and reading (Bradley & Bryant, 1983; Uhry & Shephard, 1993). The clear reciprocity between spelling and reading development is perhaps most visible in the Finnish language setting, where basic literacy skills are generally acquired during the first six months in first grade (Leppanen et al., 2006), and even prior to first grade for up to 20% of Finnish students (ibid).

While I listened without comprehension to the sound of Finnish, my eyes were absorbed in the numerous texts of costume and props; the style of repartee between actors; the call and response between actors and audience; the body postures, their fluidity or stiffness; I watched eyes intently, observing their reaction times and responsive behaviors; I watched how theatrical pauses effected audience members, both children and adults alike; I watched for the relative comfort or

discomfort caused by the element of surprise or suspense. In the end, it is all text. I wrote on May 22nd:

> Here is a different text, a very different set of sensibilities awakened by theatrical performances. It is a multivocal experience. Instead of words, there are sounds of distinct lyrical quality. I watched lighting communicate. I watched bodies emote, react, respond, and relate. I watched pauses; body fluidity, body stiffness. I watched eyes. I suppose the purpose of this activity is to train away comfort with the sensibility which silences all others, language. Instead, I'll work to awaken my senses to the other symbolic instruments at work in the human orchestral system.

With this decision, I was able to quiet the *noise of language* and hear more clearly the *sound of silence* present in stage lighting, costume, body movement, and eye work and in the cultural messaging of stage scenery and props, from the "long beam which lay extended across the floor," last seen as crossed by Jansson's Moomin characters along the gallery walls and displayed within exhibit casings at the Ateneum; episodes of "tree climbing," fancied by Finnish children; the elven or troll-like protagonist borrowed at least indirectly from the Santa Claus tale, which in origin is a myth of northernmost Lapland; the electrifying display of "thunder" bolts across the ceiling; and the "tree" and the "telescope" (Journal, May 22). My objective in this exercise was to begin to sharpen eye and ear for the silent language of behavior.

Sana-Arkku Analysis

Episode 1, "Lepakon majassa" ("In the Forest Hut with The Bats") has a running time of approximately ten minutes, including opening titles and closing credits; it is a classic *whodunit* in the genre of mystery, while the mood suggests myth. *Sana-Arkku* uses human actors; it does not employ animation or puppetry, and there is only shadowy running music. No parents are present, only three children Aaron, Sanni and Susanna, and an adult guide named Olli. In real life, Olli is a kindergarten teacher and the children are preschoolers. In character, the children are known as the Bat Team, and Olli is the understood forester, or forest ranger with great, assumed knowledge

of the forest and its many mysteries and wisdoms; he speaks in occasional whisper. And though this program emphasizes reading and language skill development, the cognitive messaging is equally audible.

The program is delivered through the genre of mystery. Mystery is of course, an investigative genre which involves detectives, a riddle, puzzle or problem and the need to bring closure to suspense. In *Sana-Arkku* the children assume the role of amateur detectives and are guided by Olli through a series of analytical strategies which become key to solving each of the three problem-solving scenarios of the present mystery. Here, The Bat Team stages a rescue attempt of a sleepless flea from the all-night disturbances of noisy forest animals. The flea's desperate plea was first reported in a newspaper article called "Strange Sounds in the Woods," published in "The Forest Times." The Forest Times is a fictional newspaper, which draws attention to an ongoing cultural past-time of early morning newspaper reading. As noted above, Finland's paper industry remains one of its principle national assets. In this way the forest setting and the decision to include a fictional newspaper is to be received as cultural commentary.

Unlike *Between the Lions*, *Sana-Arkku* is not fully scripted (PC); the stage has been set and Olli has been given the necessary props and knows the story line (PC), but the interactions between children and adult, and each learning moment are fresh and authentic. The goal is to find the "suspects"/"culprits" (Transcript 1; Episode One DVD), the animals responsible for the flea's disrupted sleep. The flea suspects "that the disturber is either susi (wolf), sammakko (frog), siili (hedgehog), pöllö (owl) or sharp-clawed villikissa (wildcat)" (Transcript 1, p. 1). However, the "task is to go find out which three" of the original five "are guilty of making those noises" (ibid, p. 2). Ultimately, the three culprits are sammako (frog), susi (wolf), and silli (hedgehog) but the process of discovery will require an approach to problem-solving which depends on keen

observational skills, memory, deductive abilities, and the ability to focus amid distraction, each of which heightens awareness of the three problem-solving scenarios in an incremental fashion. In short, the problem-solving presents increasing difficulty from the first to the third situation.

Olli does not provide answers; he asks questions and provides clues; he creates learning moments in which the next step reveals the next logical question. The investigative process moves forward through four *questions: Who? What? Where? And How*? I recalled a conversation with a Finnish teacher which helped me to better grasp the theory which underlies investigative teaching. I wrote on June 9th:

> Children aren't to be simply given lessons, only asked what and why. The idea is to build up children's natural inquisitive nature and thrill them by their own devices. Intuitiveness is a skill which can be enhanced. It is a forest quality. I asked if intuitiveness could also result from early experiences with problem-solving, and the answer was, yes. Problem-solving requires confidence in the learning process; this requires patience, task persistence, and having accumulated enough experience with environmental discovery and self-discovery, to be able to intuit. Intuition is inborn, but also can be cultivated. Science is inside the learner. Science is not a subject area, but a learning style.
>
> Ultimately, learning requires sensory denial. Things are especially memorable when one of your senses is denied. If the senses are spoiled, they stop striving. You have to leave room for imagination. I brought up Chaplin. He said that people think too much and feel too little; that silence is the space that is feared. I asked if silence could conceivably have a space in children's television. Yes, silence manifests through wonder; it is suspense, mystery, and hunting. These are the features which propel curiosity and build cognition. Missing pieces have intention; look for missing pieces. So I asked another question, this time about play. So play is the hunt? Yes, mystery and suspense and all of these things. Learning is experiential; it is kinesthetic. Children must see, feel, hear and sense the learning experience. But to hear best, they should not see; to feel best, they cannot hear, etc.

The question of "Who?" is implicitly answered when the episode opens. Olli shows the Bat Team, Aaron, Sanni and Susanna, pictures of the five animals, but explains that only three are responsible: "Who?" contains its own element of mystery. From here the task is to find the three. How to do this requires understanding what the attributes are to be looked for. And, given this knowledge, where they are likely to be found. The "How?" relates to the hidden curriculum of the

play-based pedagogy, and the way it collaborates with deductive teaching strategies to elevate the metacognitive goal.

Listening Skills

Whether in search of sammako, susi, or silli, the problem-solver is first alerted to the imperative of listening skills. Olli opens the episode asking first, "Are you ready?" (Transcript 1, p. 2). The significance of this is perhaps worth noting because learning requires the permission of the learner and their willingness to attend to the immediate task; it is an agreement between the learner and the problem. Olli's interactions with, and responses to the children build from a reflexive relationship between deductive teaching and adherence to play-based pedagogy. In the overall, deductive teaching builds from a basic confidence in the "emergent literacy perspective" (Kamhi & Catts, 2012; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). Accordingly, children enter into learning moments with a preexisting fund of knowledge "learned in social interaction with their parents, siblings, and more knowledgeable peers," which must be acknowledged as "a legitimate part of the process of learning literacy" (Korkeamäki & Dreher, 2000, p. 351). The assumption is that children possess the ability to sense-make, are present to sense-making, and are able to construct meaning from the raw material of the problem-solving setting itself. *Sana-Arkku* assumes that mind and environment work in concert as if a single instrument.

Attention and Focus

Each problem-solving scenario tasks the problem-solver physically and in terms of metacognition. To see, to hear or to otherwise apprehend the conditions surrounding each problem-solving scenario requires attention to detail, focus, relative quiet, physical stamina and agility, and the ability to exercise self-control. And more than the exciting aspect of these problem-solving scenarios, I realized that self-control might be an implicit program goal as the theoretical function

of the physical challenges became clearer to me; physical challenges increased in difficulty and un-relatedness, from the first problem-solving scenario to the third. The difficulty may be described as a challenge or obstacle course, purposefully designed as unrelated to the task at hand, but calculated to condition attention and focus from being thrown off course by the distracting circumstances which often accompany problem-solving situations.

Self-Awareness

I consider that *Sana-Arkku's* general metacognitive target is self-awareness; that it aims to guide children 4-6 years of age toward an acute awareness of the "knowledge about" their "own thinking" (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 65). Additionally, I suggest that self-awareness enhances the ability to exert self-control during the problem-solving events of the three scenarios in episode one. My analysis draws on the work of Zimmerman (2002), which divides the student learning process into three phases: 1) Forethought Phase; 2) Performance Phase and 3) and Self-Reflection Phase. "The forethought phase refers to processes and beliefs that occur before efforts to learn; the performance phase refers to processes that occur during behavioral implementation, and self-reflection refers to processes that occur after each learning effort" (ibid, p. 67). The Forethought and Performance Phases were treated as separate in Zimmerman's original work; they are treated as simultaneous in this development. The Forethought Phase involves task analysis and self-motivation. The Performance Phase is subdivided into two classes which break down as self-control and self-observation. Task analysis is further subdivided into goal setting and strategic planning. The proposal is that play-based activities have the potential effect of collapsing Forethought and Performance phases into a single learning level which enhances problem-solving capabilities quite early in life.

Essentially, it is play which has the capability of revising the forethought phase in which a cognitive switch has been cultivated to flick on the investigative and forensic capacities otherwise disturbed under pressure. It is a mental *process* which arguably collapses Zimmerman's (2002) phases one and two so that the abilities to exert self-control and to task-analyze are combined, and further enhance self-awareness. And though these skills and strategies are separable in the abstract, I contend that their cultivation within the context of play is quite possibly simultaneous. Zimmerman (2002) describes self-control as a strategy which selects from and involves "deployment of specific methods or strategies" including, among others, "*self-instruction*, *attention focusing*, and *task strategies*" (ibid, p. 68). These strategies make up approaches selected during Zimmerman's (2002) Performance Phase. Self-control is hence positioned at phase two. However, it is arguable whether *self-instruction*, *attention focusing*, and *task strategies* can reliably occur without the benefit of self-control. Forethought involves both "task analysis and self-motivation" (ibid, p. 67). Task analysis is defined as "goal setting and strategic planning" (ibid, p. 68).

A crucial distinction separates "the self-regulation profile of novices" from that of experts, which is that novices "tend to rely on comparisons with the performance of others to judge their learning effectiveness" (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 69). On the other hand, the expert profile is characterized by "high levels of self-motivation," and "hierarchical" goal-setting (ibid); they "plan learning efforts using powerful strategies and self-observe their effects" (ibid); "They self-evaluate their performance against their" own benchmarks rather than the accomplishments of another (ibid); "they make strategy…attributions instead of ability attributions" (ibid). Self-regulated abilities are "not asocial in nature" but "can be learned from instruction and model[ed] by parents, teachers, coaches, and peers" (ibid) and as such, depend on "personal initiative, perseverance, and

adoptive skill" (ibid, p. 70). Self-awareness is principle among abilities required to "implement that knowledge appropriately" (ibid, p. 66).

Problem-Solving Scenario 1

Sammakko. The first problem-solving scenario involving Frog begins with a reminder from Olli: "Do you remember who the grumpy flea suspected to be the guilty parties?" (Transcript 1, p. 1). In this instance, the Forester instructs by repetition, asking first that the Bat Team take stock of the clues of the problem-solving scenario. Aaron responds, "Susi (wolf)" and "villikissa (wildcat)" (ibid, p. 2); Others chime in, "Kissa (cat)" and "Sammakko (frog) (ibid); Aaron completes the inventory of possible culprits, offering the final responses, "Silli (hedgehog) and pöllö (owl)" (ibid). The investigation initiates with Susanna. She is asked to find "which [of the] three are guilty of making those noises" (ibid). The search begins with a very basic challenge course which involves walking down a cluttered "deck" with care "so that you will not trip over any of those objects" (ibid). Olli warns, "zigzag around them, okay?"; and to forward their pursuit "carefully. Just point the light to your feet so you won't trip" (ibid). The inclusion of the deck-walk is actually irrelevant to the task at hand, which is ultimately to "Open up all ears and…listen" to a sound, which in the final analysis is identifiably frog (ibid). And though the deck-walk is superfluous to the hunt, it is central to any problem-solving scenario to be able to *listen* for givens in spite of the problem-solving conditions. In this case, the learner can consult auditory memory to identify the animal and, if this fails, attempt a process of elimination from the five possible options to identify by auditory reasoning the mostly likely match for the sound heard.

The process of elimination expects from the learner the ability to decontextualize sounds from the pictures originally presented at the beginning of the program; it also expects the ability to contextualize data abstracted from the environment while comparing it to competing referents

occurring within the environment. Conclusions drawn from this manner of reasoning hone the sensitivity to accuracy and precision. It is perhaps relevant to note that the initial presentation of the pictures did not involve an auditory component demonstrating what the animals sound like; this is therefore assumed knowledge based on the widely shared Finnish experience of excursions to the forests and countryside, but since the three learners' experiences of these animal sounds may not be identical, one or two of them may learn from the other(s), or all three may learn from Olli. At this point, Olli checks the viability of the Bat Team's conclusion that what is heard is actually Frog: "Are you sure it's sammakko (frog)?" (Transcript 1, p. 3). The question of *are you sure*, is a critical sensibility to build into the problem-solving orientation, and forces the learners to check their own reasoning against their own knowledge, as well as against the reasoning of others. Olli gently insists that the learners explore the truth of their supposition with at least two questions, "What sound is this?" and "Why don't you…try to see if that frog is somewhere here in this pond," a suggestion that includes the implicit question of whether this is the expected environment in which the animal in question would normally be found. The final check involves a flashlight, a tool: "Look for it with the flashlight" (ibid).

Problem-Solving Scenario 2

Susi. The second problem-solving scenario advances in a similar fashion, with challenge course and the recollection of previously acquired knowledge, but this time without prompt. Here lies the subtle expectation of short-term memory, and the ability to recall the original list of possible culprits, now reduced to four, "Susi (wolf)," "villikissa (wildcat)," "Silli (hedgehog)" and "pöllö (owl)" (Transcript 1, p. 2), and recollect that Sammakko (frog) has been removed from the *multiple choices*. Now there are but four possible culprits remaining and the next task is to determine which of these animals, based upon the Bat Team's ability to abstract from the

environment, makes the next sound heard. After considering the problem givens, Olli will eventually ask the Bat Team to cue up their observation skills with the question, "What can we hear now?" (ibid, p. 3); the answer is "susi (wolf)" (ibid).

But first, the challenge course has noticeably increased in difficulty: it is a tire-walk. Olli cautions before venturing off into the next escapade, "You will step carefully always on top of these tires. You may also step here in the middle, if it's easier," but this must be done "Carefully" (Transcript 1, p. 3). He reminds the children that this walk will require "accuracy" (ibid); the constraints are demarcated. The children are permitted to step on top, or in the middle of the tires; that's it. The tire-walk, as with the deck-walk, is a meaningless task in the overall, with respect to content learning; it is the metacognitive demands which are different. The walk to the problem-solving condition is more cumbersome; it requires more athleticism, balance, and physical agility than before. The challenge course of the second problem-solving scenario is therefore designed to toughen the learner's attentional focus to the task at hand without lessening the demands of the problem-solving situation. After all, as was explained to me, when one is physically taxed, thoughts may be nowhere else; and as I was urged to remember at an earlier point in my field work, when "the senses are spoiled, they stop striving" (PC). The tire-walk provides insights into how the kinesthetic elements of play work collaboratively with the development of the metacognitive skill known as self-awareness. But also, the implicit lesson of tire-walk is to demonstrate how maintenance of self-control is trained into the wider metacognitive repertoire. The tire-walk becomes a model for difficult circumstances or for the kind of distractions that can often accompany a given problem-solving condition. The task remains unchanged, though the parameters within which the problem-solver operates have altered. The metacognitive lesson bears broad cross-applicability, and demonstrates the importance of self-control in tasks.

Olli opens the next phase of the mystery by asking whether the Bat Team "remember[s] any of those animal suspects." (Transcript 1, p. 3). Unlike the first problem-solving scenario, when The Bat Team is given the opportunity to think aloud, the expectation is that the list of givens is now established in working memory. Therefore, after a single member of the Bat Team, Susanna, answers "Yes" to the question of whether the "animal suspects" are remembered, her response is sufficient (ibid); Olli moves on this time. The next question is again, as was more or less the case with Frog, "What can we hear now?" (ibid). Sanni answers this time, and correctly. After applying her ears to the problem-solving environment, Sanni believes that what they heard was "susi (wolf)" (ibid). However, in another example of data verification, Olli suggests that the Bat Team double-check: "Why don't you all point the lights there at the same time" (ibid). The accuracy of Sanni's conjecture depends on metacognitive critique, and again, by use of a physical tool, a flashlight. The correctness of the identification is confirmed by deductive logic and metacognitive reasoning.

Problem-Solving Scenario 3

Silli. The last problem-solving scenario features "silli (hedgehog)" as the final culprit, and presents the circle-walk, the challenge course of greatest difficulty in comparison to deck and tire-walk. Olli revisits the teaching/learning strategy of repetition as he prepares the Bat Team for the final problem-solving condition. Perhaps this is appropriate. The challenge course is more strenuous than the others, and therefore the likelihood of forgetting the task set before them has become more probable. Herein lies a valuable lesson: circumstances surrounding a given problem-solving condition can become so complex that they effectively threaten one's ability to exercise the necessary self-control. Notably, it has been "found that people with high self-control got better grades, were better adjusted, had better interpersonal skills and better interpersonal relationships, and had more optimal emotional lives than other people" (Tangney et al., 2004, p. 315). Those

"low on self-control reported a remarkable range of unhappy and undesirable outcomes in schoolwork, social life, personal adjustment, and emotional patterns" (ibid). When conditions overwhelm self-control the ability to select from and execute the proper "methods or strategies" such as "*self-instruction*, *attention focusing*, and *task strategies*" toward resolution of a problem-solving scenario is potentially thwarted (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 68). And from this perspective, the challenge course is a model with design truer to form than not. The suggestion is that the Bat Team "slowly start to move forward" through a challenge course of different shapes (Transcript 1, p. 4): "There [are] circles, triangles and squares" but the challenge is to avoid the triangles and squares (ibid); "You are allowed to step on the circles only" (ibid). Additionally, the shapes are surrounded by imaginary water, which they are not allowed to step in; "can't hit the water" (ibid). And last in the list of unrelated trials complicating the task of identifying "silli (hedgehog)," the children are asked to "stop and stand on top of the last circle" (ibid).

After the team successfully negotiates the formidable circle-walk, the investigation continues at the mouth of a cave. Olli inaugurates the problem-solving scenario by a statement, rather than a question: "Some animal lives there in the cave" (Transcript 1, p. 4). The question, of course, is which one. Aaron quickly deduces from the problem-solving conditions and the characteristics of the cave habitat, that the search ends with "siili (hedgehog)" (ibid); he is correct. However, consistent with prior verification checks, Olli encourages the Team to test the accuracy of the claim. He asks, "Are you sure it's siili (hedgehog)?" (ibid). Olli continues with a lesson aimed to build sensitivity to proper reasoning and precision into the metacognitive repertoire. He asks "How do you know that" (ibid); Aaron answers, "By the sound" (Episode One DVD).

Unlike the prior two scenarios, Olli's pursuit of explanations requires a heartier form of deductive reasoning which, in this case, is by process of counterargument, also known as

falsification. He asks, “Does siili (hedgehog) huff like that?” (Transcript 1, p. 4). Counterargument, or deductive reasoning by counterexample, is a sophisticated ability (Leighton, 2006). Its difficulty is apparent to the members of the Bat Team. After asking Aaron how he knows what he believes he knows, the self-efficacy of the learner shifts. The question is essentially: how can you be sure that the animal sound heard was, in fact, produced by a hedgehog? Aaron begins to second guess himself. He replies, “No, it’s kissa (cat)” (Transcript 1, p. 4). Aaron, in this instance, demonstrates that his first answer, though correct, may have been a lucky guess. Another possibility is that Aaron’s response might demonstrate what is referred to as bias. Leighton (2006) explains that “adolescents and adults exhibit regular biases in their deductive reasoning” though the occurrence is not common among children (Leighton, 2006, p. 110). Biases result from “failing to search for counterexamples” (ibid).

Deductive skills are in fact “higher-order thinking skills” (Leighton, 2006, p. 110). Had his response been for reasons related to strategy, then its correctness would be predicated upon the ability to “recognize meaningful relations or patterns,” for example (ibid, p. 112). Aaron realizes through Olli’s facilitation of deductive thinking that his second answer, “kissa (cat),” is in fact inappropriate; cats and hedgehogs do not sound at all alike. Olli asks, “what does kissa (cat) say?” and after the children answer, “Meow,” Olli follows with yet another counterexample, “What about pöllö (owl)?” (Transcript 1, p. 4). The children follow with the sound, “Hoo hoo” (ibid). Olli then concludes the logic check after exhausting all remaining contenders, and announces that, “Aaron was right from the start. It’s siili (hedgehog)” (ibid, p. 5). Still, loyal to the final verification strategy, Olli recommends that “Aaron go with the flashlight to confirm that siili (hedgehog) lives there” (ibid, p. 5). He does so, and settles the matter: “Yes, it lives there, I see the silli (hedgehog)” (ibid). The episode is therefore drawn to a close having identified each of the three disturbers of

the flea's night-time sleep, Sammako (frog), Susi (wolf), and Silli (hedgehog). There are remaining checks in place in the program, which begin approximately at time 7:12, but they are strictly aligned to content. The objective is to deposit pictured cards "into our secret Word Chest" (ibid). The children "Roll up [their] sleeves…and then take the handle. Start to rotate it in the direction of the arrow. Squeeze it tightly" (ibid); then "Something strange and wonderful is happening in the word chest," which is the emergence of picture cards bearing actual words which signify the names of the three suspected animals that are key to the three problem-solving scenarios of episode one (ibid). Olli's final question for the Bat Team is to tell him how these three animal names are alike. At first they are stumped by this question, probably because Olli has radically changed the nature of the investigation by shifting it from the identification of animals in the forest by their sounds, to the identification of some similarity or pattern in these animals' printed names. Olli gives the Team the hint that the answer is the same for the animals' names as the way the names of the Bat Team's members, Sanni and Susanna, are alike. The team quickly changes focus and answers that the animal names all begin with "s." With this little grace note the episode concludes. The object lessons of each scenario cue the problem-solver to at least three skills which build toward heightened self-awareness: self-control, attentional focus and cross-check.

Concluding Remarks

The argument is that the challenge course serves to enhance self-control and, as a consequence, heightens the learner's ability to apply *attention* to *focusing*. This process is conceivably tied to a mechanism which enhances self-awareness among children 4-6 years of age, and enables the ability to strategically plan toward fulfillment of the needs of problem-solving scenarios within the same frame of time. Strategic planning occurs, for example, when the learner resorts to the use of "spelling strategies" such as "segmenting words into syllables," as a tactical

approach to spelling (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 68). In my view, strategic planning is really a threefold concept which reflects the learner's 1) knowledge that a strategy is needed; 2) knowledge of what strategy is needed for the task at hand; and, arguably, 3) the learner's ability to navigate the conditions inherent in the problem-solving scenario and employ the appropriate strategy or strategies.

The three problem-solving scenarios laid out help to build up self-awareness in terms of "knowledge of general strategies that might be used for different tasks" and "knowledge of the conditions under which these strategies might be used, knowledge of the extent to which the strategies are effective, and knowledge of self," with respect to knowing one's "own strengths and weaknesses pertaining to the task" (Pintrich, 2002 p. 219). Finnish play-based instructional strategies support the dynamics of children's play space and operate to heighten self-awareness, a central component of metacognition; and offer learning strategies which arguably strengthen thinking, and problem-solving, and potentially optimize the preconditions of academic achievement. Additionally, self-awareness might make up a behavioral component contributing to the sustainability and coherence of longstanding Finnish sociocultural institutions, building out from the institution of family, and now reinforced by the more contemporary educational reform values of cooperation and trust.

Cooperation and trust are the two cornerstone values credited with positive educational change within the Finnish educational system; they contrast with competition and individualism (Sahlberg, 2010). Sahlberg (2010) cautions that inter-school competition in combination with test-based accountability, so prevalent world-wide, are happening in tandem with a "decline" in "family and community social capital" "in most parts of the developed world" (ibid, p. 45). And specifically family in terms of "better educated" parents who "are a part of networks that value

education as a personal good" (ibid, p. 46). Bourdieu concretized this thought when he "introduced the notion of family and community social capital that is embedded in relationships among individuals or among institutions and hence benefits all individuals or institutions involved in these relationships by making their work more productive" (ibid). From "Family, community or nation social capital" flows "cohesiveness, trust, supportiveness, and care for those students in these networks that, in turn, help them learn better in school and to possess higher expectations for their own thinking, behavior and learning" (ibid); and not just learning for the sake of "academic knowledge" but in the interest of life knowledge with meaning to "families, communities and nations more than simply achievement for external expectations or to satisfy policy norms" (ibid).

Chapter 6: Sana-Arkku: A Narrative of Metacognition

Chapter Six helps to establish the broad differences between the two educational television programs under study, and between the sociocultural settings of the two national educational systems. I begin the consideration with the importance of play in Finnish early education, and develop how play's role in pedagogy and its principle cognitive outcomes reinforce sociocultural and certain ecological aspects of Finland. I place emphasis on an observational finding during my pilot period of a cultural preference for aloneness, which provides a window into a larger set of cultural, pedagogical and cognitive insights. I will return in greater detail to aspects of these subjects in following sections in order to more clearly establish the basis for my concluding analysis of season one, episode one of *Sana-Arkku*.

Between the Lions intends to build prosocial behaviors while *Sana-Arkku* works to elevate metacognitive abilities. My awareness of this difference between the two programs and my initial observations in Finland quickly led me to the following conclusions: 1) there is conceivably a qualitative distinction between the educational settings of public schools in urban America and in Finland; 2) the explanation for this distinction can be found in cultural dispositions and the sociocultural conditions shaped by them; and 3) that the best method to discover the differences between the two educational settings – given my existing intimate familiarity with American urban school conditions – would be that of case study in Finland involving immersion, observation and interaction with well-informed participants.

In *Sana-Arkku* "there are no pencils nor notebooks or books" (Correspondence with Participant 1, June 4, 2014). Literacy learning is happening through action of "Physical exercise and play" (ibid). The program authors assert that "Children are usually very kinesthetic learners," that "Play and movement exercise motivates children to learn," that learning "happens inside the

play" space "and in the children´s world" (ibid). Instructional strategies targeting language enhancement and reading skill development are predicated on the accepted fact that "Children love jumping, running, hopping, searching, hanging and balancing" (ibid). The program's authors also indicate clear cognitive goals with "all episodes" targeting "attention, perception (sensory experiences), language, thinking, insight, problem-solving, memory and learning together" (ibid). Several of these cognitive targets, I would suggest, have metacognitive implications as well.

The program is based upon a dissertation thesis (Karvonen, 2007; Karvonen Thesis Summary, n.d.) which identifies *Sana-Arkku's* three principle approaches to reading skill development: first, "playfulness and fun"; second, "components enhancing linguistic ability are hidden in [the] - Basic structure of each episode"; and third, because "children's motivation is supported by functional activities that include meaningful motoric tasks"; these are employed within the "narrative" storyline of each episode and are dedicated to the "creation of exciting moments" in support of "finding a solution" to a problem (Correspondence with Participant 1, June 4, 2014). *Sana-Arkku* is one of a set of short programs housed within *Pikku Kakkonen* (ibid). "Pikku Kakkonen has been broadcasted since 1977 and it is the most popular children's program in Finland. *Pikku Kakkonen* is not only an educational program, but an all-inclusive packet of contents targeted for children under school age" (Correspondence with Participant 2, June 4, 2014). "More than half of the program is animated, and deals with, for example, topics such as space, mathematic issues" (ibid). "The weekly broadcasting time is 12 hours" (ibid). Each episode of *Sana-Arkku* runs no longer than "ten minutes" (Correspondence with Participant 1, June 4, 2014). I was told that it is simply the "duration" "mandated by" the "broadcasting company" (Correspondence with Participant 1, June 4, 2014). This time frame would no doubt seem short to most Americans, but it is just one of many differences which distinguish this example of a Finnish

learning program from American educational programs, and Finnish cultural preferences from those in America.

Between the Lions transmits learning over a duration of twenty-six minutes, within which language enhancement and reading skill development are promoted but not to the exclusion of other important themes at work in its curriculum, such as social goals, issues, and dilemmas, and a careful treatment of social controversies. *Sana-Arkku*, by comparison, is centered exclusively on basic language skill development. My immediate point however is not to suggest that Finnish learning programs exclude social issues and larger life quandaries from their approach to children's productions; or that Finnish children are somehow insulated from the tougher questions and concerns of their immediate surrounding world. What seems to be the case is that these matters are presented to older children through programs with an explicitly philosophical approach such as, for example, *Cogito, Ergo Sum* (*I Think, Therefore I Am*).

I Think, Therefore I Am is a series targeting "Primary school children, grades 2-5 (8 – 12 year olds)," rather than the preschool population for which *Sana-Arkku* is designed (Correspondence with Participant 3, June 4, 2014). "Growing up to be a human being is an important subject entity in the Finnish school education" and, therefore, "The programme series and the relating web material support teachers in their work and inspire school children in the treatment of this important subject" (ibid). "However, *I Think, Therefore I Am*, is more than an educational programme aimed at school children. The ideas and characters drawn by the children make the programme interesting for the whole family" (ibid). It was explained to me that the "series challenges us to philosophise together with the children, at home or at school. For the series 8 – 12 year old school children in four townships in Finland were interviewed. The school children drew bits of paper with questions written on them out of a hat, questions to which there are no

ready answers. The children were also allowed to put bits of paper with questions to each other into the hat. During the interview the children also drew pictures of their thoughts and stories. In the series the characters drawn by the children start circulating in everyday school life and on the stage of thinking. The rich picture world of the children opens up a new and illustrating viewpoint to the treatment of philosophical questions" (ibid). I learned that "The use of animations is unique to the series. The difficult and philosophical subjects become alive and clear when the drawings by the children are transformed into animations. The contents of the programme and the way it is made challenge[s] parents as well as children to ponder on the vital questions of life" (ibid). *Sana-Arkku* and *I Think, Therefore I Am* are but two productions in a broad array of programs and offer a limited basis for inference regarding the extent to which Finnish children's programming is socially driven; but I was informed that "Yle's children's programs attempt to respond to societal needs" (Correspondence with Participant 2, June 4, 2014).

For instance, "when it became recognized that children were not as active, either indoors or outdoors, but rather playing internet games, Yle's children's programs attempted to feature free play in programming" (Correspondence with Participant 2, June 4, 2014). This process of adjustment is ongoing in the development of programming: "These insights into the needs of children, sometimes develop from discussions with internal experts or with experts external to Yle," although, "by example of free play, it is not always necessary to involve outside authorities. As a concrete example, we received a message that children do not recognize tree species, and we started to think what could be the best way to bring out the topic in our programs" (ibid). *Sana-Arkku* and *I Think, Therefore I Am* are differently purposed: *Sana-Arkku* promotes reading, language skill development and cognition among early learners; *I Think, Therefore I Am* guides older children in the process of thinking about the social world and viewing themselves within it.

This distinction points to a conceptual framework within Finnish education in which age 7-8 is regarded as a transitional period when the student emerges from the preparatory stage of child culture ready to be introduced to the kind of philosophical and ethical thinking that is characteristic of adult society.

While *Sana-Arkku* and *Between the Lions* are children's programs targeting language enhancement and reading skill development, with both emphasizing word and vocabulary learning, their approaches are quite different. *Between the Lions* targets child-viewers age 4-7, and *Sana-Arkku* age 4-6. American children begin formal schooling at age 5 at the start of kindergarten; Finnish children begin compulsory schooling at age 7 at which point they enter first grade. Prior to formal enrollment in compulsory schooling, the 6-year-old Finn is still designated a "child"; the American child, on the other hand, attains the status of "student" at age 5. Both American and Finnish children generally attend preschool, but for American children preschool quality is largely a contingency of socioeconomic status (Barnett & Masse, 2007; Barnett, 2007). For the urban lower income early learner, early childhood is of variably lower quality, and frequently complicated by difficult surrounding circumstances that may range from the challenging to the disturbing. More often than not, and without staged intervention by preschool programs such as the Abecedarian Project and Head Start (Barnett & Masse, 2007; Dickinson et al., 2006; Barnett, 2002; Barnett, 2007), potentials remain undeveloped. Intervention must be rigorous for children whose Maslowian hierarchy must be simulated by the exhaustive designs of intensive, comprehensive preschool programming, follow-up programming to sustain outcomes, and social service programming to compensate for a deficit in social capital resulting from historical socio-economic inequities. Finnish children, by contrast, are secured within the boundaries of a social

welfare system which constrains both wealth and poverty from reaching the extremes permitted by the US capitalist system.

The conditions of Finland's social welfare system provide for Finnish citizens to be housed, fed, and medically covered; most adults are employed – about 2, 447, 000 as of September 2014 (Statistics Finland, 2014) – unless fresh out of school; and to the best of my knowledge few Finnish children or families experience homelessness, with homelessness defined within this setting as "People staying outdoors, staircases, night shelters etc.; People living in other shelters or hostels or boarding houses for homeless people (c. 1000 people); People living in care homes or other dwellings of social welfare authorities, rehabilitation homes or hospitals due to lack of housing (almost 1500 people); Prisoners soon to be released who have no housing; People living temporarily with relatives and acquaintances due to lack of housing (the majority of the homeless, almost 5000 people); Families and couples who have split up or are living in temporary housing due to lack of housing" (first.fi Housing, 2014). However, "Most of the homeless in Finland" are sheltered and "are over the age of twenty-five," "on their own, poor, urban dwellers" "staying with friends temporarily and mainly men" and "some of whom are working" (ibid). My own experience with homelessness in major or smaller American cities is not lived but through participation in extensive outreach efforts.

In American cities I have observed shelter to mean a cardboard box, beside which is a grocery cart filled with all earthly possessions; the nooks and crannies around support beams of roadway underpasses; the space between trash dumpsters in alley ways; and the recessed doorways of storefronts. I have seen park benches serving as beds with newspaper as bedclothes, and the bodies of the homeless cocooned in layers of cast-off clothing supplemented with bits of wool, fleece or cotton. In the coldest weather I have seen them huddled at the exhaust vents of high-rise

buildings or the iron grills of the ground-level vents of underground transit systems. For adults perhaps life takes a turn for reasons of a "Lack of Employment Opportunities," "Decline in Available Public Assistance," "Lack of Affordable Health Care," "Domestic Violence," "Mental Illness," or "Addiction" (NCCH, 2014). The phenomenon is also experienced by American children and youth. Among youth, homelessness often results from "family problems, economic problems, and residential instability" (NCHFS, 2007. p. 1). At least "1,682,900 homeless and runaway youth" "between the ages of 15 and 17" encounter these conditions, according to a report published in 2002 by the "Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in the US Department of Justice" (ibid). Another account suggests that "as many as 2 million youth experience a period of homelessness, and every year more than 5,000 of these young people lose their lives to the streets" (Covenant House, 2014).

Finland protects childhood from dire circumstances. Indeed "Fostering the well-being of children starts before they are born and continues until they reach adulthood" (Sahlberg, 2011a, p. 10); "Day care is a right of all children before they start school at age 7, and public health service is easily accessible to all during childhood" (ibid). Steps taken by Finland to equalize social capital across the population result from "the main post-war social policies of other Nordic countries," which "led to the creation of a type of welfare state where basic social services, including education, became public services for all citizens" (ibid, p. 112); "It increased the level of social capital, as did national government policies that affected children's broader social environment and improved their opportunities and willingness to learn" (ibid). It is within this particular social setting that "Finland…has been able to create an educational system where students learn well and where equitable education has translated into small variation in student performance between schools in different parts of country at the same time" (ibid, p. 5).

Up until first grade and, to an extent, for some years afterward learning is embedded in children's play space. I would argue that in Finland the play space is expansive and displays a number of distinct aspects that can be broadly defined, and which I will designate here as play-actual, play-lived, play-learned, and play-culture. Play-actual refers, first, to activities that occur naturally as testing and practice of developing motor skills and brain functions; these seem to be universal across human cultures, are common also among most mammalian species, and include running, jumping, climbing, foot-racing, wrestling, and various types of hide and seek. Second, play-actual refers to distinctively human activities that exercise development of the higher cognitive functions and usually involve manipulation of objects of human material culture, for example, building with blocks, sticks or other materials, shaping and forming with sand or clay, making constructions with paper or other materials, and games involving the tossing of balls or other objects. All these types of cognitive developmental activities are common across cultures but they naturally vary in materials and forms from culture to culture; there are many cultural variants, for example, of the game Americans call "hopscotch." By play-lived I refer to the present culturally informed political and societal provisions available to parenting and childhood; in Finland these provisions include generous parental leave, abbreviated school hours and the absence of homework until later elementary grade levels, and government subsidies for apartment rental and mortgage loans, when needed, to assure that every family is housed. In Finland play-lived also includes the minimally fee-based free-time hobby activities sponsored by cities and parenting groups, which allocate time, space and lessons for swimming, ice-hockey, chess, and the arts: writing workshops, music, painting, drawing, etc.

Finnish students start formal schooling at 7 years of age, making them one year older than American children beginning first grade. However, at least one-fifth of Finnish children are able

to decode words before the start of first grade (Leppanen et al., 2006). The presence of this capability strongly suggests heightened literacy socialization prior to formal schooling (Hoff, 2006). Finnish society is structured so that children benefit from nearly equal input from mothers and fathers. Maternity and paternity leave are available in Nordic settings generally (Ploug, 2012). While mothers are increasingly paid higher wages for maternity leave, the father's role in child development has become more recognized, as demonstrated by "'daddy quotas'" (a portion of parental leave reserved for fathers)" (ibid, p. 519), and increased leave days available to fathers in all Nordic countries from 2000 to 2009 (ibid). Today's Nordic children are at "equal" chance of being "born to married and unmarried mothers" (Agell, 2001, p. 317); all Nordic countries require that the paternity of the child be known, which is attributable to a growing acceptance of joint parental responsibility for divorced or unmarried parents, whether or not they share a residence. Indeed, "A leading principle" "is that the paternity of the child, where possible, must be established" (ibid, p. 318). And "with respect to divorce, the promotion of joint parental responsibility has been strongest in Finland, Norway and Sweden. As a main rule, joint parental responsibility for spouses is automatically preserved after a divorce (or separation) if neither of the parents contests the issue" (ibid, p. 319). We see among Nordic countries, a cross-national prioritization for kinship, continuity and children's well-being. Lammi-Taskula's (2008) discussion of the development of Finland's provisions enabling greater participation in parenting by both mother and father illuminates the high priority given to child culture in Finland. The full flavor of this child culture can only be conveyed by generous quotation:

> The late but rapid industrialisation in the late 1960s was combined with a growth of the service sector. Like their Nordic sisters, women in Finland were active in the construction of the welfare state that supported the reconciliation of work and family life. Women were empowered to make choices about their work and family life: contraceptive pills were approved in 1961, maternity leave was legislated in 1964; the Abortion Act was passed in 1970, and the Daycare Act passed in 1973. In 1975, the employment rate of women was

67% (Haataja, 2005). A new form of a gender contract defining wage-worker motherhood as ideal emerged (Julkunen, 1994) and a male breadwinner family model never got firmly established. Fathers obtained their paternity leave right in 1978 (Lammi-Taskula, 2008, p. 135).

In the 1980s, policy developments further contributed to the "women-friendly welfare state" (Hernes, 1987). The number of men taking paternity leave increased and the father's right to share parental leave with the mother took effect in 1982. The first Act on Equality between Women and Men was passed in 1987. In 1990, children under age three years were guaranteed a municipal child care place and as an alternative a flatrate home care benefit was paid to parents (Lammi-Taskula, 2008, p. 135).

The favourable economic development of the 1980's turned into a deep economic recession in the mid 1990's. A new gender contract started to emerge with themes of gender conflict entering the public discussion (Rantalaiho, 1997). The high employment rates of mothers with children under school age went down from 76% in 1989 to 61% in 1997 (Haataja & Nyberg, 2006). Mothers' paid employment was also more openly questioned as harmful for children (Anttonen, 2003). Many families with young children moved from a dual breadwinner model towards a male breadwinner model where the mother is - at least temporarily, and often because of unemployment–away from the labour market for some years after a child is born (Haataja & Nyberg, 2006). Mothers of young children not only took most of the parental leave that can be taken until the child is about 10 months old but also took some of the available childcare leave so that employment breaks are typically 1.5 years per child (Lammi-Taskula, 2004) (Lammi-Taskula, 2008, p. 135).

Fathers in Finland can take paternity, parental as well as childcare leave to stay at home with their children. Fathers in Finland can take paternity, parental as well as childcare leave to stay at home with their children. Paternity leave is 1-3 weeks and is usually taken right after the child is born while the mother is also at home. During the 1980s, paternity leave grew more and more popular, and became an "everyman's mass movement" (Lammi-Taskula, 1998). Today paternity leave is taken by almost 90% of fathers (Kela, 2006), Lammi-Taskula, 2008, p. 136).

A five-month parental leave period starts after maternity leave–when the child is about 4 months old–and it can be divided between the parents as they like. Childcare leave starts after parental leave and can be taken until the child is three years old. Only one parent at a time can be on parental or childcare leave. Thus, fathers on parental or childcare leave take full responsibility for childcare while their spouse returns to work. Until 2002, parental and childcare leave were taken by only 2 to 3% of fathers, (Lammi-Taskula, 2008, p. 136).

The Finnish stance on family suggests a centeredness in children's health and well-being. A more complex picture emerges of the real advantages in Finnish education: orthographic transparency, high teacher quality, and the informal education provided by the seemingly

indissoluble parental relationship. A growing literature suggests a strong causal link between children's attachments to significant adults and positive cognitive development (Ainsworth, 1979; Bowlby, 1969, 1988; Bretherton, 1992). Hoff and Naigles (2002) report that children's literacy development depends on mutual engagement between adult and child during the first 18 months. Others find that the degree to which children hear spoken words increases phonological sensitivity which enables word differentiation (Scarborough, 2009). Ehri describes the reciprocal relationship between reading and phonemic awareness (Ehri, 1987), and Hart and Risley (1995) characterize advantaged settings by the extent to which mothers talk to children and use richer vocabulary. High-density oral settings where talk is more frequent and richer (Senechal et al., 2006) and where vocabulary is dense and includes rare words (Weizman & Snow, 2001), build toward reading acquisition by enhancing children's phonological awareness and listening comprehension (Senechal et al., 2006).

Perfetti et al. (1996) remind us that vocabulary is one component of oral language necessary to reading comprehension and that, by age 4, the size of a child's vocabulary is largely determined by the number of words spoken by parents (Hart and Risley, 1995, 2003). Parentally facilitated vocabulary socialization sets off a cascade of effects with direct and long term consequences for reading comprehension (Catts et al., 1999). The vocabulary children build from conversation before first grade has implications for reading comprehension extending to the eleventh grade (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997). The point here is that the Finnish stance on family and parental responsibility promotes a density of literacy socialization that optimizes engagement with language; and highly qualified teachers advance these well-prepared learners with a significantly reduced chance of early elementary "slumps" (Chall & Jacobs, 2003). As a final point, play-learned specifically refers to the intentional assignment of teachable moments

during children's play activities, as is especially evident in episode one of *Sana-Arkku, w*hile Play-culture refers to the core cultural values dramatized in *Sana-Arkku* and thus reveals the cultural function of play in Finland.

Elements of Finnish Culture Informing the Pedagogic Approach of Sana-Arkku

In the sections following these introductory paragraphs I will discuss various aspects of Finnish traditional culture and the many ways these become apparent to the keen observer in the course of everyday interactions with Finns from all walks of life. In fact, I was constantly amazed by the self-confident awareness of their cultural traditions that I encountered in my casual interactions with Finns, and their willingness and ability to explain them to an outsider. I will briefly consider the historical path through which these cultural dispositions have been incorporated into the modern Finnish educational system, and elaborate further on the role of play in Finnish early education.

Here, as a general introduction to these considerations, it is appropriate to begin with description of Finland's distinctive geographic, physiographic and climatological characteristics; as well as to indicate something of the flavor of an opportunistic approach to field observation: I learned much about Finland's culture – as incongruous as it may sound – from a lengthy chance encounter with a museum employee, from Finnish kitchens and from Charlie Chaplin.

The programmatic setting of episode one of *Sana-Arkku* is night-time. As one of the northernmost nations in the world, Finland's climate features extremes; it is in large part a solstice environment, with long winters marked by extended darkness and short summers by extended day-time. The northern Lapland regions of the country, from which many elements of Finnish culture originate, is either entirely dark during the winter months – "sunless polar night lasts 52 days" (FOAF, 2001, p. 4) – or entirely bathed in "uninterrupted" light (ibid) during the summer months.

The curricular undercurrent of the program tells this environmental story and thus conveys certain cultural messaging. The extreme nature of Finland's climate and its heavily forested ecosystem, have played a significant role in shaping cultural practice, which factors heavily into the manner of play in *Sana-Arkku*. Finns are an athletic culture (Taramaa, 2014), not solely in the spirit of athleticism, but because movement is integral to practical aspects of Finnish life. Today's Finnish children are but three or four generations from a past heavily agrarian and forested social experience. Some of my Finnish peers and acquaintances who reside in the cities of Helsinki and Jyväskylä still commute home to visit with parents and family living in what are sometimes extremely rural northern regions of Finland where neighbors are spaced "kilometers apart" (PC). I'm told that this is quite common (PC).

Among European nations Finland is one of the largest in area, but its population of 5,268,799 (July 2014 est.) is the smallest (World Fact Book, 2014); most Finns live and work in its most densely inhabited cities, most of which are in the southern third of the country, including Helsinki, the national capitol, and Espoo the second largest city, both of which are contained within the Uusimaa region (Statistics Finland, 2011). Proceeding north from Helsinki to the northernmost division of Lappi, by the 1990s population density per square mile falls quickly from about 260 to 5 or less (Weibull et al., 1993, p. 182). And though most Finns now reside in cities, their urban experiences are relatively new, with steady internal migration to the cities starting only after World War II. I should note that my analysis is based on field observations over a period of nearly seven weeks in only a few Finnish cities, but including regular interactions with individuals from several walks of life. I noted the prevalence of wooden architecture with notable preference for large and numerous windows everywhere across the urban landscape, giving substance to the remark "we are a forest people"; and wherever I saw open ground in the cities it bore the rough characteristics

of a land shaped by the encroaching and then receding glaciers of the last Ice Age. I also began to notice here and there, and then almost everywhere I went, the social and environmental inspirations behind the works of the revered and celebrated Tove Marika Jansson. Jansson's Moomin tales present characters, themes and settings based quite liberally on the Finnish folk past depicted in the national epic, *Kalevala,* and on the ever present Finnish landscape.

Jansson's Moomin characters are a powerful Finnish cultural motif which attuned me to the readily identifiable forest and rural qualities which strike a deep chord of self-recognition (Taramaa, 2014) among Finns of all ages, professions and occupations. As luck would have it, a long-awaited exhibition of Jansson's work was just opening at the Helsinki Ateneum. I visited the exhibition repeatedly and each of these experiences gave me an increasing confidence in another maxim from my childhood: *when people show you who they are, believe them; and when they tell you that they are who they are, it is foolish to second guess them*. On several occasions, at points of conversational clarification or affirmation of a particular perspective articulated by a respondent, even in casual exchanges, I would hear the phrase repeated, "You see, we are forest people," or at some point of seeming misunderstanding, "You see, we are a little bit forest people" (PC). The experiences gave me a certain confidence that this is, indeed, the case. It became clear to me that, despite Finland's tumultuous political history under Swedish and then Russian domination, the Finns' adherence to core cultural values was firm (Taramaa, 2014). Scholars have noted a certain centeredness as an apparent norm among Finns but have variously ascribed it to, for example, a cultural concern for self-image or a reaction to political and social strife. "Peltonen argues that self-images in general are seldom as self-deprecating as those of the Finns," and that "Finnish people have constantly undervalued their self-images" (Taramaa, 2014, p. 44). Some have discussed the idea (Siikala, 2006), and others have simply asserted that "there is no such thing

as Finnishness" (Taramaa, 2014, p. 44). Still, Taramaa thinks there is something discernably Finnish in

> …certain objects, items, occurrences or people. For some people 'sisu' and 'sauna,' for example, manifest Finnishness, and in other words they become symbols of Finnishness. Viewing the central aspects of Finnish identity, Räsänen stresses the importance of Finland's history (10). Seeking relevant explanations for the justified traditions of the Finnish nation, historians have located several periods in Finnish history when Finns were pursuing knowledge about their self-image. The rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century sought its supporters among the Finnish elite; on the other hand, the Romantic Movement in Finland, which underpinned nationalist ideology, was derived from German and Scandinavian sources (Taramaa, 2014, p. 44).

The "national cliché" – "'We are not Swedes, we can never be Russians; let us be Finns'" (Taramaa, 2014, p. 45) – seems to me rather ambiguous; it could be interpreted as either a positive statement of cultural identity or as an archly self-deprecating definition of Finns as Finns by default.

If we look to Finnish art, however, we find that the character and works of Finland's most celebrated artist, Jansson, richly embody culturally preferred behaviors and the cognitive dispositions very much alive in these behaviors. I was repeatedly reminded by her works of the Finnish preference for "aloneness" and, while at first I was eager to discern this attribute in the behavior of any child I observed in a grocery store, or on their scooters along a given *katu* (street), or in the lines in coffee shops, I did not find it; but it is quite apparent in the behaviors of many adults. The behavioral outlines of aloneness are especially visible in a distinct manner of business transaction I witnessed, for example, in completing a grocery purchase at *Alepa*, or buying a ticket at the *rautatieasema* (train station), or when experiencing the famous Finnish pause during conversation, which can be more than a little disconcerting at first to an American accustomed to rapid-fire repartee**.**

Aloneness as a concept moved from abstract to concrete in my visit to the Chaplin Exhibit at the Tennis Palace, which led me to expand my idea of "aloneness" beyond a simple concept or a feeling most people experience from time to time, to recognize that aloneness can be a preferred state of being; indeed, the title of the exhibit was "Alone." Today I know much more about Charlie Chaplin than ever before, as my carefully studied viewing of the exhibit worked to both complicate and unpack the many nuances of the concept of aloneness, which became manifest through a richer understanding of Chaplin the person, and Chaplin the artist. In a conscious effort to confirm my growing understanding I spent the early morning and night-time hours viewing at least forty of Chaplin's films, including both his best known and less often seen and discussed works. And as I read and continued to reflect on silent films and Chaplin's significance to the art form itself, my understanding of aloneness became progressively more sophisticated. On June 4th I wrote:

> I've just re-watched The Tramp, The Kid, Easy Street, The Immigrant, The Pawnshop, The Boxer, Modern Times, etc. I watched them because I sense a link between the cognitive effects of silent films and the instructional strategies used in Sana-Arkku.

While waiting for the exhibit to open, I quite unexpectedly had a lengthy conversation with a member of the museum staff about the idea of "alone" and its relevance to Finnish culture. As with many of my encounters, the individual approached me. I recall wondering how I was so visibly foreign and so unmistakably American. Soon thereafter, on an evening out at a local Asian restaurant my essential American character was explained to me. I was told that my facial expressions are vivid and that my gestures more animated than would otherwise characterize people from other cultures. I was admittedly shocked by this explanation because I expected my ethnicity to perhaps be more the give-away than my nationality, so I asked this individual why American, and not African. "You smile with different intensity," is all that was said. In either case, this is perhaps why the museum staff member asked first if I was comfortable, second was kind to

remind me that I was thirty minutes in advance of the exhibit opening, and third, inquired how long I'd been studying in Finland and whether I was from New York or San Francisco. I smiled and remember saying with continued amazement at my failure to blend in, "I'm not coastal, but Midwestern." "Yes, but you are American." I replied, "Yes I am." And with a very warm nod, "yes of course." I remember being stunned by the transparency of my nationality and perplexed by the idea that my Finnish encounters suggested that they knew me better than I knew them. I wondered whether I could know the essential discernable character of Finnish culture as apparently easily as my American-ness seemed knowable to Finns. However the much more daunting question became whether I possessed a similar competency in my own American-ness as with the Finnish-competency I seemed to be acquiring. The implication of this quandary began to torment me as I realized that my interpretation of *Between the Lions* necessitated that *I know myself.*

Meanwhile, I expressed a general fascination with Chaplin and long admiration for his work. I also mentioned delight in the irony of the exhibit theme, aloneness. When I asked, I explained my interest in Finland's early childhood educational system and its philosophy of play. I was offered several opinions and ideas on the subject which seemed already ripe for the moment and the setting. For starters they had young children of their own; they were well informed about play philosophy, its corresponding instructional strategies and its relevance to culture. Several key ideas were shared and developed over an hour's time about aloneness. They imparted insights to me about other aspects of forest culture which introduced subtleties of lived experience so richly present in Tove Marika Jansson's work; this served to remind me of the often flat conclusions gleaned from mere literature review, or the casual observations of the foreign visitor, or a foreigner's interpretations of the *Kalevala* – Finland's national saga, compiled from Finnish and Karelian folklore and myth by Elias Lönnrot in the mid-19th-century. At the same time, a much

unexpected interaction added farther-reaching implications for the concept of self-awareness by way of a coincidental chat about Chaplin. From our conversation, I learned that aloneness is a byproduct of a longstanding and deep relationship to the forest but also to water. "Finland is bounded in the south and west by the Baltic Sea" (FOAF, 2001, p. 2); "Finland's marine borders are formed, in the south, by the Baltic Sea proper and its eastern arm, the Gulf of Finland, and in the west, by the Åland Sea and the Gulf of Bothnia, which extends far into the north" (ibid); its "maritime belt comprises more than 80,000 islands larger than 100 square metres" (ibid); its "salient natural features" are its "relief, watercourses, climate, and vegetation"(ibid), separate from the "nearly 100,000 islands in Finland's lakes, a number only Canada can match" (ibid, p. 3).

As I continued to listen to explanations about how the forest contributes to a general need for personal space, and consequently time alone, I also learned that enough time spent outside the cities, where all is forest and water, tends to exaggerate the need to be alone. I was cautioned not to draw too many behavioral conclusions from my southern Finnish experiences because, as it was explained, Helsinki is particularly talkative because of tourism and the university. There, Finns are adapted to foreign travelers who tend to be more talkative than us, I was told. But even still, there is a cultural preference for space though it is usually internalized until after work. And though this individual seemed especially open and talkative with me, I gained deeper insight when I heard the statement that while there is variation across personalities, "I and my friends can be alone for days, and alone in each other's company" (PC). "Have you noticed that swimming is required in the curriculum?" I was asked (PC). I had indeed noticed but I admitted to paying it little attention (NCCBE, PE, 2004). "You should always care about required courses," I was reminded (PC). "So I should," I agreed (PC). They explained that swimming is a compulsory activity because diving is also integral to Finnish culture. An intriguing interpretation of this cultural phenomenon was

offered, and one for which I have developed a growing regard. "There is a love for swimming, perhaps because it is natural for a country interspersed by so many lakes, but it is also because of the purity of silence encountered in the deep" (PC). On other occasions I met various individuals holding doctorates or extensive training in sports – a highly regarded field of education in Finland – including one of the two authors of *Sana-Arkku*. I was reminded from these prior conversations that the Finnish educational system requires that children be competent swimmers. But I was most struck as our conversation neared its close when, for the first time in my five weeks, and through all of my collective encounters with numerous reminders of the Finnish need for "space," and tendency toward "silence" (Sallinen-Kuparinen et al., 1991, p. 57), and preference for "distance," the museum staff member referred to silence as the Finnish "skill." I immediately sought clarification of this idea, silence as skill.

I am a rather intent listener, an attribute I owe largely to falling last in birth order in a house constantly resounding with sophisticated conversation and debate; *you see: children should be seen, and not heard*. My peculiarity magnified in this moment. I watched as they searched for words to more fully express the idea; the struggle ended and explanation followed: "first of all, free play in groups is a more recent development and comes with this new reform pushing for greater socialization and group work" (PC). Further it was explained that traditional play involves alone-play and group play; but that it is important to remember that, while play involves both, playing alone is more common, and even expected in Finland. "Children play together, but if left alone, they play alone" (PC). They went on to introduce another characterization of aloneness in the statement that "Play is a reflective space for children" (PC). "The traditional Finnish home is often kilometers apart from other homes, and so we have learned to be comfortable in our own skin" (PC). It was at this moment while they were talking, that I recalled Zimmerman's

metacognitive studies and other studies which link self-regulation and spatial orientation to learning and intelligence; I also recalled several sections from Rose's book that I'd read for a qualitative methods course in the spring of 2014. I fold in several key insights from this book as it discusses cognitive skills in terms of the everyday genius of working-class professions, noting carpentry especially, which provide particularly clarifying "portraits of cognition" (Rose, 2004, p. xx). But after some time, they found their way to an explanation they'd strived to make about silence as skill and it related back to the idea of traditional Finnish homes being kilometers apart. In their opinion, skill results from the fact that the Finnish environment, landscape, and low population density ultimately provides for the ability to "see long distances" (PC). Uninterrupted lines of sight were hereafter described as the Finnish "land advantage" (PC); indeed "nothing obstructs our lines of sight" (PC). Speaking to me through these explanations were the works of Tove Marika Jansson: Moomin, portraiture and images with pointed sociocultural commentary on the rapidly changing Finland of the 1930s through the 1950s, though her work extended into the 1990s.

Jansson's body of work is replete with cultural references to telescopes, lighthouses, docks, gazes into far-off distances, cloud chasing, crystal balls, and, among other motifs, Moomin figures canoeing along waterways dappled with reflected light, and passing between tall and haunting rock projections reminiscent of Bierstadt (1803-1902) paintings (Bierstadt, 2014). Each motif, along with balance beam walks, report preoccupations with contemplation, physical steadiness and mental alertness, the intentional act of gazing across distances, and the self-possessed command to do so. But in much more lucid terms: "large urban settings, like in Tokyo or New York, where you can't see meters in front of you, and when you look up, tall buildings interrupt skyline. We do not have this deficit" (PC). My conversation at the Tennis Palace helped me to reconceive and

enlarge upon my prior notions of aloneness, helped me to recognize that space and inner quiet factor into why silence was referred to as the Finnish skill. And if silence is a skill, noise is its Straussian opposite, its deficit. I admitted to myself to being thrown by a very different concept from what I had learned, read and experienced as "social deficit."

A moment of sudden clarity deepened my appreciation for how televised learning spaces serve American urban low-income children whose SES, social capital, cultural capital and access to national capital provides for a very different quality of space than experienced by the average Finnish child. Many children living under present-day US urban, low-income conditions exist within a landscape of violence, fear and apprehension of being too small and powerless to combat threats which overwhelm childhood. Accordingly, their space is *non-space*. Such conditions impede the experience of "clear lines of sight," or as it might be expressed, *the space to develop an idea*. I soon realized that another contributing factor to earlier PISA results might have been related to Finns' ability to hold concentration, maintain attention span, indeed an ability to self-regulate and make strategic (Kuhn et al., 2000) use of metacognitive abilities earlier in life than their Western counterparts. It is quite possible this inner psychological discipline, carefully nurtured by the Finnish educational system and informal learning spaces, is what sets them apart, along with the public space where it can be developed and practiced.

The preference for social distance is at times quite obvious: the extended stares experienced during conversation, and the notable everyday conversational pauses among some adults famously portrayed in the film *Man Without A Past*, directed by Aki Kaurismäki's, contrasted with what I had observed of children's behaviors, a difference suggesting a behavioral arc in which the cognitive outcomes of play supply a culturally positive state of mature aloneness with active tools and content. However speculative this statement may be on my part, it is not difficult to see how

such a progression would cultivate notable abilities to self-regulate, persist on task and maintain attention, abilities known to lead to higher academic performance. Play and free development are requisite in Finnish preschool and early elementary curricula (Ojala & Talts, 2007; Korkeamäki & Dreher, 2000; Lerkkanen et al., 2004; Karila, 2012), and are common in parenting practices (PC).

The Museo Hesingin Kaupungin – a Helsinki city museum – tells the story of Finland's recent emergence from an agrarian past through a chronological display of photographs that climbs from the first to the second floor. The first-floor slideshow presentation does a particularly neat job of narrating Finland's recent economic and social transformation in a walk-through of the history of the kitchen in Finland. To most American eyes, some of the kitchens depicted would suggest the 1930s or 1940s – some, indeed, give the impression of turn-of-the-century wood-burning conditions – but are labeled as dating from the 1970s. All the above excerpts from the journal of my stay in Finland help me bring into relief how closely contemporary Finns are to their rural, forested history, and the ways they retain a close relationship with, and reverence for, that recent forested past, which is a key part of Finnish culture. The folklore that arises from the forest and other prominent features of the Finnish environment, as articulated in the *Kalevala* and in the cherished art work of Tove Marika Jansson, have helped me to understand and identify some of the core cultural values discernible in *Sana-Arkku*. Each of these experiences became part of my portfolio of Finnish culture and inform my surmise that, embedded within the programmatic layout and storyline of *Sana-Arkku,* are motifs and instructional strategies which reinforce and reproduce culturally valued metacognitive skills and abilities.

Learning Environment: Silence and Noise

Silence and noise represent opposing ideas and environmental states. While leafing through "Sauna from Finland," a magazine publication, I read an article titled "Enjoy the Silence" (Sauna

from Finland, 2012). This, along with several other discoveries, began to establish for me as fact that "Finnish mentality has a certain affinity with silence" (ibid, p. 28). The article describes a product line designed to simulate "The soothing effect of the sauna" (ibid). I was intensely curious to know the *effect* claimed by a cultural practice that at least "2-3 million" individuals and/or families experience on a regular basis (ibid, p. 11), in a population of 5, 268,799 million (World Fact Book, 2014). The statistics provided are impressive: there is "one sauna for every three Finns and nine out of ten bathe regularly at least once a week" (Sauna from Finland, 2012, p. 11). Finns "are genuinely obsessed with the sauna" (ibid) to a degree that resembles a ritualized practice. But, to view sauna as ritual is to appreciate that "Ritual does not merely represent social structure, nor conceal it, but acts upon it, as social structure acts upon ritual" (Barnard & Spencer, 1996, p. 493).

My goal became to identify what cognitive faculty might be associated with sauna and, by extension, what other cultural practices that I might become familiar with during my field period indicated similar associations. This line of investigation was significant as it helped to expand cognitive effect beyond the realm of educational practice; it became strongly indicative of the possibility of the existence of other, informal cultural institutions and social processes associated with both the development and the maintenance of particular cognitive effects. It also served to verify from a range of sources beyond my own intuition and subjectivism that known cultural practices produce these outcomes. And if this is the case, my argument as to the apparent cognitive effects gleaned from analysis of *Sana-Arkku* became increasingly defensible.

Most theoretical interpretations cast ritual as an "action from everyday life" (Barnard & Spencer, 1996, p. 490); and though "Accounts vary as to the purpose, function and meaning of ritual" there is relative consensus in the view that "ritual is habitually connected to 'tradition', the sacred, to structures that have been imagined in 'stasis'" (ibid). Participants in ritual can also be

viewed “as conscious agents in the reproduction of” a particular cultural “pattern” (ibid); or as exacting a particular cognitive disposition. Durkheim maintained that “the apparent function of ritual is to strengthen the bonds of…society” “Because ritual is a direct representation of society to itself” (ibid). The article characterized sauna both by familiar description, “calming and relaxing effect,” and then by particulars such as “develop and strengthens a sense of conscious presence,” it functions to heighten “mindfulness” and enables “relaxation,” and “stress management,” with its effects more recently translated into audio material from “a distinct soundscape of sounds from the sauna and its surrounding nature” (Sauna from Finland, 2012, p. 28). Together, these descriptors aggregated toward a critical mass, and rationalized other cultural activities I had either witnessed, participated in or read about. The data were merging and conflating for me into a single conceptual interpretive framework for my understanding of these various aspects of Finnish cultural practices, and it pointed toward a type of metacognitive wholeness. I stress that this interpretive framework is my own explanatory mechanism and makes no claim to identify the “essence of Finnish culture”; my training and field experience in anthropology have armed me against such empty generalizations.

An article titled “Sauna –Temple for the Finns” also deepened my understanding of sauna as cultural practice (Sauna from Finland, 2012, p. 11). It became clear that sauna represented but one of several “deep-rooted traditions” among the Finns not only relevant in terms of a “symbol of their identity” (ibid) but, as expressed by another article, “Enjoy the Silence,” sauna provides the behavioral effects of fostering “mindfulness” and enabling “stress management” (Sauna from Finland, 2012, p. 28). In the overall, sauna is a cultural practice which has been “an integral part of life in Finland for centuries” (ibid, p. 11). Its effects are multiple: “Due to its high temperature, it was often the most hygienic of domestic spaces and therefore used for giving birth and treating

the sick and injured"; "it was also customary for bodies to be washed and dressed in saunas before their final journey"; "it was not uncommon for cured meats and other food to be prepared in saunas as well," (ibid); it "is linked to a wide range of beliefs" such as in "Finnish folk tradition" where "stories of sauna spirits and elves that are generally good-natured live in harmony with the people" (ibid); "It was a sacred place where speaking loudly, behaving disruptively or otherwise in violation of good manners was considered inappropriate" (ibid). Sauna seemed to reproduce many of the dispositions I had come to recognize as part of a spectrum of Finnish cultural behaviors: contemplative, introverted, thoughtful, quiet, still.

I revisited some of the literature on learning environments with the purpose of developing a more studied understanding of the physical attributes most and least beneficial to learning settings. I was not unaware of the "the impact of individual elements of the physical environment which might inform school design," and "support student achievement" (Woolner et al., 2007, p. 47). And though "these ideas do not appear to be firmly based on empirical evidence" "those with architectural backgrounds" do recognize "that aspects of the physical school must affect behavior and influence learning" (ibid, p. 48). Indeed it was confirmed that the character of "school buildings and classroom layouts vary between countries in ways that are related to understandings and philosophies of education" (ibid). My conversation at the Tennis Palace brought into plain view that both population density and urbanism mediate the learning environment and might feasibly conflate to affect a population's metacognitive tendencies.

Learning environments have been discussed in terms of how they impact student learning. A useful set of proxies for understanding the quality of a given learning setting are "*Attainment,*" "*Engagement,*" "*Affect*," "*Attendance,*" and "*Well-being*" (Woolner et al., 2007, p. 49). Attainment is defined as those "improvements in curriculum attainment measured by standardised tests or

exams, or as monitored by teacher observation" (ibid). Engagement describes "improvements in levels of attention, more on-task behaviours observed, decrease in distracted or disruptive behaviour" (ibid). Affect refers to "improvements in self-esteem for teachers and learners, increased academic self-concept, improvements in mood and motivation" (ibid). Attendance is stated as "fewer instances of lateness or absenteeism," and well-being describes "impacts on the physical self, relating to discomfort as well as minor and major ailments" (ibid). The authors make the case that learning is susceptible to environmental influences whether it is the "physical environment of a school" and its "impact on attendance," or "when an unattractive school is suggested to fuel truancy" "or through affecting well-being, in the way that poor ventilation is proposed to result in ill-health" (ibid). However, environmental effect has also been contested. Some research suggests "no relationship between school physical factors and a range of learning and behavioural outcomes" (ibid., p. 50).

The verdict on environmental effect is not always so cut and dried, as with the case of room organization, where researchers are split, with some arguing a direct effect on teaching and learning, and others suggesting the effect may "not [be] as dramatic as might be expected" (Woolner et al., 2007, p. 53). Still others have asserted that "'the essential element was the school's educational philosophy and physical layout, not merely the physical layout on its own'" (ibid, p. 54). Nonetheless, "Rows of desks" have been shown to elicit "individual work and increase[d] time on task[s]," with "less attentive and less successful pupils" "particularly affected by the desk arrangement" (ibid). The debate about which type of room organization optimizes teaching and learning have some vying for the "'T' shape," and others for the "'horse shoe' formation" (ibid). Noisy surroundings affect learning as well; noise elevates "blood pressure" (ibid, p. 57). "Hygge (2003) reported that various noises (recordings of aeroplanes, road traffic and trains) appear to

interfere with the encoding stage of memory and that this is not mediated by distraction or mood" (ibid, p. 52). Without doubt, "chronic noise exposure impairs cognitive functioning" with "a number of studies hav[ing] discovered noise-related reading problems," "deficiencies in pre-reading skills" "and more general cognitive deficits" (Higgins et al., 2005, p. 18). Correlations and, certainly, suggestions of causation are to be handled with some delicacy. Causation belongs to a domain of propositions more ably handled by "quasi-experimental methods, propensity score analysis and regression discontinuity," and "mimic" the ideal research condition of "random assignment" which "increase[s] the likelihood of speaking to causal inference" (Lomax & Hahs-Vaughn, 2012, p. 270). With this caution in mind, it is noteworthy that research has linked learning and engagement to a constellation of environmental variables including air quality, heating, ventilation, lighting, color, room arrangement and furniture (Woolner et al., 2007). I venture the possible validity of an insight from my museum companion: if population density and urbanism translate as noise, then perhaps play-activities have a silencing effect that tends to optimize the growth of particular metacognitive outcomes.

Deductive Teaching Strategies

Sana-Arkku situates play within "deductive teaching strategies" (PC). Deductive thinking has been held to result in "better decision makers, problem solvers, and thinkers" (Leighton, 2006, p. 110). Deductive reasoning itself is considered "the cornerstone of scientific research" (ibid, p. 109). Deductive teaching employs an approach to reasoning which "generate[s] key and necessary inferences from masses of information" (ibid, p. 110) and is considered a method of analysis "fundamental to many scholarly disciplines" (ibid, p. 111). *Sana-Arkku's* genre is mystery, which also relies on deductive strategies in problem-solving.

Deduction is a method of reasoning and the preferred strategy of disciplines requiring logic. It is a "systematic" approach to "evaluat[ing] the truthfulness of [a] statement" (Leighton, 2006, p. 109). And deduction, by counterexample, is a type of falsification strategy which eliminates a statement "If you can think of at least one counterexample" (ibid). The author states that deductive reasoning in the setting of Canada is not "taught in secondary grades when students would be expected to increasingly exercise their reasoning skills" (ibid, p. 110), because these "higher order thinking skill[s]" "are assumed to be learned *indirectly*" "in traditional content areas such as science and mathematics," or are otherwise "'pick[ed] up'" (ibid) along the way. The assumption has been that deductive reasoning is a type of "skill that emerges successfully without training" (ibid); "this view increasingly lacks empirical support" (ibid). *Sana-Arkku* evidences how the informal learning environment works cooperatively with the objectives of the formal learning environment, and what seems quintessential to the Nordic Model (Antikainen, 2006). The metacognitive ability of self-awareness is "'pick[ed]-up'" (Leighton, 2006, p. 110) "as if by accident" (National Board of Education, 2000, p. 11) through a system of deductive strategies active in the play experience; it is an approach which adds substance to the statement "'an educated nation cannot be created by force'" (Sahlberg, 2011a, p. 2).

Conceptual Framework of Play

Sana-Arkku provides insights into what might be considered the architecture of play. It is possible within this programmatic setting to observe how culture, environment, and deductive teaching work through play to achieve a single metacognitive event. Much speculation surrounds the subject of play and the legitimacy of its claim to foster "'real learning'" (Hakkarainen, 2006, p. 183). Its controversies are the result of "variations and inconsistencies in defining play, as well as in perspectives about what constitutes play versus learning" (ibid, p. 188). Additionally,

"qualities of play that actually promote children's development" are difficult to evaluate (ibid, p. 185). Play is also a multi-level activity possessing "both a meta-level and an actual level"; the argument for play also loses some ground because it gives the appearance of being "nearer to experiences in artistic self-expression than to cognitive/academic learning"; or it is ruled an "activity driven by the contradiction between sense and meaning" (ibid, p. 185-186). It is interesting that amid this considerable theoretical irresolution, the Nordic countries would grant "privileged status" to play "in early childhood education programs" (ibid, p. 184). In the northern-most countries it is the overwhelming consensus that "play promotes children's psychological development and learning" (ibid). The Finnish educational environment is especially favorable to the role of play in spurring "cognitive development" (ibid, p. 188).

> In the new system, various public laws and three official documents regulate early childhood education in Finland. These documents are the national curriculum guidelines on early childhood education and care (September 2003), the national curriculum guidelines on kindergarten education (August 2000), and the national curriculum guidelines on elementary school education, grades 1-2 (September 2004) (Hakkarainen, 2006, p. 186).
>
> According to the official documents, play should have a central role in day-care and playful learning should be a fundamental aspect of kindergarten curricula (Hakkarainen, 2006, p. 187).

The strength of play lies in its ability to produce learning potentials and not "concrete, measurable results, such as school knowledge and skills" (Hakkarainen, 2006, p. 189). Its effectiveness lies in providing "child-friendly experiences and new, child-friendly contacts with their surrounding world," which "increases children's opportunities to actively produce and experiment with new hypotheses" (ibid). The term *actively* rather than *passively*, is meaningful here. The author draws attention to Piaget's take on "'active learning'" (ibid). From a Piagetian perspective, "active experimentation during play" enables children to eclipse their "present level of mastery in the areas associated with the play" (ibid, p. 190). Play also helps in socialization. It

provides for the conditions for children "to do something together" (ibid). And though the effects of play are discernible at the level of socialization, for present purposes this outcome is among the lower-hanging fruit of "material features" and "easier" outcomes of play (ibid). The substance of "play situations and roles" is not "to develop social relationships" or to "learn the social skills of the adult world, or master knowledge and skills in a content area" (ibid). Neither does play "produce knowledge within the child or tools and techniques for mastering reality or for distinguishing fantasy from reality" (ibid, p. 191). Rather, it is a voracious "exploration of the environment" which produces "mental flexibility" and reach (ibid). In the space of play "nothing really changes" but "on an imaginary level," and here lies the distinctiveness of play (ibid).

Play is a low-stakes setting where the budding scientific orientation organizes itself and picks up, here and there, vital learning-skills for problem-solving. It feasts on puzzles large and small, and samples and abandons theories. In this space, children *attempt to figure things out*; they consider phenomena and deduce or induce *what a given thing might mean*; it is the stomping ground of the scientific method and "hypotheses" testing (Hakkarainen, 2006, p. 189). It starts with eyes, ears, and fingers, collects mental notes of observations and ventures hypotheses and propositions. The learning process is life-long, replete with wins and losses, satisfactions and disappointments. Play earmarks a phase of development in which the vital lesson is first learned that cowardice stifles, while courage – in one way or another – always rewards. Play builds the reflex to try, try and try yet again, and demonstrates that, as I was taught, *practice does not make perfect, only perfect practice makes perfect*. The pursuit of understanding builds learning dispositions, attitudes and orientations (Kennedy, 2005). Play is the process of the hunt, not the catch; play cultivates a learning mentality driven and conditioned by a system of rewards delivered by the hunt itself, including growth in cognitive skills, acquisition of more effective strategies and

increasing self-knowledge. Gratification is derived from authentic interaction between the learner and the problem-solving scenario, not from incentives; the reward stems from internal rather than external validation. Successful problem-solving must be approached with "effortful thinking" and the ability to modulate attention and focus (Sternberg, 1994, p. 410); it requires the ability to retrieve and act on information, and to extrapolate from often limited information; to innovate or troubleshoot, as the situation demands; and a requisite for success is early training in all these aspects of problem-solving skills. This is the province of the three problem-solving scenarios of episode one of *Sana-Arkku*.

The End of a Journey

In my final days in Helsinki, I enjoyed several farewell lunches and dinners with colleagues, during which time I had the occasion to reflect on and revisit several of what were then formative thoughts and insights about culture's role in mediating play-based learning and its part in hatching particular cognitive effects. My colleagues had grown accustomed to listening to and responding to my thoughts and manner of thinking. In fact, they seemed to derive immense enjoyment, even amusement, from listening and helping me for hours day after day as I worked through my understandings, developments, confusions, epiphanies, and life changes. I repeatedly returned to several stories and considerations from Finnish folklore collected in the *Kalevala*. Sometimes my clarifications would emerge at unforeseen times and places, for example, from *Blue Wings*, a FINNAIR airline publication, while in flight to Germany. I recall sharing how an article in *Blue Wings* titled "Mirroring Finland's Soul" helped in the refinement of my understanding of the essential *Kalevala*, its principle character Ukko (*Blue Wings*, 2014, p. 54), and the cultural behavior of social distance and aloneness. Ukko is a white-bearded fellow; tall, slender, wise, solitary. His eyes peer; they know. He is often depicted alone, or gazing into the deep distance

with a telescope. He sits atop houses or mountain cliffs, and can sometimes be found seated just beyond the opening of a cave. Ukko is recognizable by many features and behaviors: pointed shoes, wizardly hat, white beard, and arctic stare; he is contemplative; he is often alone. Today's children might perhaps recognize Ukko in J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* beloved character, Gandalf. I also recognize his broad outlines in Tove Marika Jansson's Moominpapa.

Tove Marika Jansson's Moomin work is in part biographical, though it is also social, environmental and cultural commentary. Moomins are an anthropomorphic family of characters which resemble the hippopotamus, but I was unsure, and bothered by this uncertainty. I contemplated Moomins' biological classification quite a bit, and so much so that it led to returns to the Finnish Natural History Museum. On May 18th I journaled:

> In search of Moomi, I traveled each floor of the Natural History Museum. There I met Fox, Wolf, Walrus, Cow, Brown Bear, Giraffe, Squirrel, Elephant, Bat, Lynx, potentially sea-monster Triceratops; Pearl, or bird eggs quite possibly; Moose; Hare; Chamois; Cat; Sea shells; reindeer. A passerby became fascinated by the apparent ferocity of my search and asked what I was looking for. I explained, and in delight he exclaimed, "How fun!" He decided to join me and offered a handy clue, "Don't forget, your Moomi had a tail, it's a mammal."

The Jansson exhibit at the Ateneum also offered tips about Moomins' biological origin. For one, its extreme popularity led to its commercialization and frequent appearance on commercial products such as early aluminum milk cartons featured in a display case titled "Hur gick det sen? 1952 and kuinkas sitten kavikaan?" In either case, Moomins comprise a fairly sizeable cast of characters. There is Moominpappa, Moominmamma, and a host of other nuclear and extended family members and Moomin friends. Moominpappa, like Ukko, wears a hat, though a different one, a top hat. He is not exclusively alone, though often so. Sometimes he appears beside a little ice pool, or inside a light house as in Jansson's "Moominpappa, 1985." Moomins are country characters, simple folk. In this way they are a direct reference to Finland's not-so-

distant agrarian past (Simola, 2005) and its adjustments to the industrial present of the 1930s and 1940s. Moominpappa dons a top hat, rather than say, a straw hat. The top hat, to my mind, signifies an emergence into a more sophisticated, quick paced, urban landscape; it is a footnote to a cultural shift. Moominmamma provides similar commentary as she rarely, if ever, appears without her *Sunday finest*, a black purse which is featured in Jansson's "Moominmamma and Little My 1984" or "Taikurin hattu 1988 'finn family Moomintroll'." To be sure, the top hat and black purse reference *cultural adjustment* to Finland's and the Finnish people's newfound position within a newly and greatly complicating continental Europe, but certainly not *abandonment* of traditional cultural values. The top hat is in this way a possible Janssonian nod to Ukko's wizard hat, but is also artistic acknowledgment of the relationship between Finnish people and their reverence for *forest, farm and water*. The social lessons of these places are not to be forgotten in a march toward a newer world order quite different from the one previously known.

Jansson's first book, *The Moomin and the Great Flood* was published in 1945. At this point Finns had only twenty-eight years' experience with independent nationhood. In 1917 Finns gained independence from Russia, as a former Grand Duchy (Siikala, 2006). Jansson was at this time only four years of age, and was thirty-one at the time of her first Moomin publication. Independence, identity, national autonomy, freedom, and perhaps concern for sustaining culturally binding practices might have been significant for her. Jansson's work is therefore characteristically neoclassical, preserving the old in the new.

Sometimes the lines between Ukko, Moominpappa and other Finnish fictive characters blur, as when Jansson decides to, in my interpretation, replace Ukko's wizardly hat with a top hat as in "Taikurin hatt 1988"; the top hat seems to rematerialize also in the contemporary Finnish children's production called *Pikku Kakkonen*, first produced in 1977, in which *Sana-Arkku* is much

later included (2006). *Pikku Kakkonen* "is the most popular children's program in Finland" and it "is not only an educational program, but an all-inclusive packet of contents targeted for children under school age" (Correspondence with Participant 2, May 21, 2014). Here the top hat appears on the head of Rolli, a beloved early character in Finland's longest-running children's program. Rolli can be observed participating in a tradition of hat wearing, a lineage of which begins first as Ukko's wizardly hat, and then as Moomin's top hat. The hat continues to signify wisdom, knowledge bearer and protector. Indeed, on my near daily walk to Market Square for morning fried *venci* (fish), I was stunned to find a hat store called *Tohtorinhatut*, where bold signage advertised a top hat (PC); I walked in. I was greeted by a saleswoman to whom I directed my top hat inquiry. I mentioned that in my own cultural context top hats, worn by early American and European statesmen and gentleman, connoted wealth, class and power. The salesperson was a hat aficionado; here stood deep knowledge about hats and their many curious semantic and cultural significations. There were fine hats of all types secured to lasts along the walls of what seemed a quaint hat vineyard, as I later called it. She pointed out the top hat; her remark was that it was unlike the others; Finns call it "silinder" or "silinteri"; it is "the most classic hat"; "it is the hat worn by PhD's," "our PhD ceremony is distinct in this way" (PC). Our conversation brought closure to my search for understanding of yet another of Jansson's Moomin motifs. The top hat, and its curious genealogical significance, which I believe may begin with Ukko, ends with the PhD hooding ceremony. This revelation confirmed how various Moomin qualities were built on archetypes of revered cultural traits, in this case wisdom, and the behaviors which nurture it: contemplation, stillness, silence, and aloneness.

And then while sipping a bowl of *lohikeittoa ja paahdettua ruisleipää* (salmon soup with toasted rye bread) (Elite Ravintola Menu, 2014), I invited my colleagues into yet more thoughts

about connections I had been making about Finnish children's television programs, cognition and cultural behaviors: I remembered noticing an affinity for Charlie Chaplin's silent films and I learned of an exhibit at the Tennis Palace with the title theme "The Alone Exhibition" (Helsingin Taidemuseo.Fi, 2014, p. 4); the Suomenlinna doll and toy collection and its invaluable insights into Rousseau's impact on conceptions of western childhoods; the consistent parallels found between Finnish art, culture and natural environment and the material and stylistic preferences apparent in Finnish architecture; the sounds and lyrics of traditional Finnish folk music; particular themes and topics captured in Finnish early and contemporary poetry; food choice and mealtime manner; the figures celebrated in Finnish national monuments; the turbulent Finnish social and political history; and yet, with all this cultural dynamism, the existence of the cultural behavior of "'*torikahvit'* (a coffee at the market)" – the very simple act of enjoying a coffee – where it is advisable to "lay back and even get a little bored" at Market Square (HelsinkiThisWeek, 2014a, p. 35). People may be engaged in *torikahvit* at Kamppi (the largest shopping center in the heart of Helsinki) or while seated on a bench watching passersby along Galleria Esplanade, "known as the design showcase with boutiques from all the main Finnish design names, such as *littala, Arabia, Marimekko*," "*Aarikka*" and, notably, "*Kalevala Koru*" and "major international brands" (HelsinkiThisWeek, 2014b, p. 78). In all these and others instances, I witnessed behaviors and tendencies which seemed aggressively loyal to certain cognitive themes.

My hunches about the cognitive targets of *Sana-Arkku* are based on intensive observation, rigorous questioning of people, objects and ideas, and by arduous attempts at breaking down my own national cultural skin, in order to empathetically participate with another's. The most obvious and clearly discernable cultural skins tend to be music and language and I made the conscious decision to abstain from listening to American music; there were of course exceptions to this which

ultimately became related to my study. Speaking English could not be helped but, even so, it was not the English of home. My Finnish language abilities are limited, and though Finns are on the whole multilingual, speaking Finnish, Swedish and English, their English is not native. Hence our English interactions were not authentic American English exchanges. Interactions with my colleagues and others happened through a type of triangulated English. By triangulated I mean that my attempts to simplify and be understood forced me for nearly seven weeks to strip my language to its bare bones. Their spoken English was the English of second and sometimes third language learners. We were always on vigilant watch of meaning-matching and meaning-missing. It was usually by this laborious process that our discussions resulted in understanding. I gained a different and unexpected appreciation for language through this process. My words were not theirs nor theirs mine. I've since developed a deeper appreciation for language and realize more than before that words are not empty vessels but are filled with blood; they emote; they carry memories; they seem to have a scent; they are alive to wherever they were first learned or heard, from mother, father, uncle, aunt, grandma or grandpa, teacher, brother, store keeper, bus driver, or friend; the unknown lady or the man who simply happened to be kind to you when kindness was sorely needed. Perhaps they are reminiscent of a word or phrase used particularly well, perhaps by Shakespeare, Pushkin, or Tolstoy for me, and Eino Leino (PC, June 9), Lars Hulden (PC, May 21), Aaro Hellaakoski, Saima Harmaja, and Pentti Saaritsa for another (PC, June 17).

Along these lines I recall having had a very peculiar response to a televised concert of Simon and Garfunkel one night while in Germany. I listened and cried for quite some time with a pain quite unfamiliar to a lifetime of avid concert going. It soared from a very deep place of familiarity as though remembering the loss of a close friend. My cry reflected intimate understanding of the words, sounds and meanings of each song. In the end, it proved to me that

my goal for cultural immersion was being met with some level of success. On June 1st I journaled from Munich:

> My evening closed with none other than a televised concert of Simon and Garfunkel. I listened with a different joy, pain, longing and understanding than before. It is unusually familiar to me; ….I experienced tremendous pride in both my language and its relationship to the often stormy journey of my country, and in the ability of songs to mend, build and unite. While on tram # 17, I recalled having asked several passengers for assistance with a ticket purchase; few understood me and looked at me with sadness. I recalled giving this look, never receiving it. I was unable to help myself, given language restrictions, for the first day or two of a 4 day stay. On the two occasions I was helped in broken English, I inquired with great fascination about where they managed to pick up English. "I listen to your music; English is not taught intensively in German schools." I was a bit spoiled by the presence of English subtitles all over Finland, on doors (entrance/exit; toilet), on restaurant menus, etc.

This idea of language extended to the dimension of the emotional for me. My growth in this way helped to clarify a conversation that I had had a year ago with one of my dearest friends whose first language is not English. She often needed breaks after intensive days of classes; our program is quite challenging so I found this completely understandable. What I could not have anticipated was that a break was also needed from me; I too spoke this language she needed a break from; I was this language. She would say, "I need a break friend; tired of English, hearing it, speaking it, thinking between it and my own; I can't hear home; meanings are so different; please don't be offended" (PC, 2013); I wasn't offended, but now I understood that homesickness is a condition which looms larger than people, places and things. Language itself was being redefined for me by these experiences. It was intellectual, national, cultural and, all of it, entirely and utterly personal. *Cecilia* and *Bridge over Troubled Water* are classic tunes and indeed appreciated and adored by many the world over, but it's a song about my home; and I missed it, its challenges, victories, faults, standstills, worst and very finest moments; they were all my own.

This process revealed how Finland's physical, cultural and socio-political environment have interacted with its social development and heavily influenced its early educational approach. Of course, this may have been a discovery for me, but it is not a novel find; a voice from my early life would say, *new to you but not new*. I was scheduled to depart the next morning, and became quite sad when the simple phrase, "what would you like for dessert friend," signaled a field period definitively drawn to a close. And with every spoon full of *vanhan ajan vaniljäätelöt mansikka* (old fashioned vanilla ice cream) (Elite Ravintola Menu, 2014), I was awakened to memories of summers in South Carolina visiting my grandmother and great-grandmother; I recalled in this brief moment their smiles, their matronly cotton floral dresses, simple clothes, house shoes, and loving ways grinding away at the handle while churning peach ice cream. And then in a single instant I returned from my Grandma's plastic backyard patio chairs to an insight voiced by my colleagues: "Perhaps you see these things clearly because you are an outsider." "Your challenge will be if you can return home as an insider and see with the acuity of the outsider. You seemed to have found what you were looking for; you found Moomin in *Sana-Arkku*. Now you will have to figure out who or what your Moomin is; you will have to find your forest and your water"; "That will be much harder." My colleague read the disquiet in my eyes and recommended that I arrange forest visits for urban low income children. Urban children have no forests, I said; not really; not within immediate reach. This is not quite relatable for my children. "Then you will have to figure out the forest in your own culture; the binding cultural element." In effect, I was served the toughest *Finnish Lesson*, which is to search for *my own*.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

My overarching goal in this intercultural study has been to extend Schmidt and Maier's (2009) Opportunity to Learn (OTL) framework by research findings which illuminate the capability of the televised learning environment to supplement core educational values and practices toward development of a culturally relevant cognitive attribute. The authors examine whether US students have had the opportunity for sufficient engagement with content, or learning opportunities, given the "tremendous variability in what is taught," the "general characteristic" of "the lack of coherence in U.S. curricula" (Schmidt & Maier, 2009, p. 551). My claim is that two televised learning environments, and by example of a single episode of each produced within two separate national settings, exemplify how OTL articulates through a cultural medium to perpetuate particular cognitive behaviors. My findings suggest that the characters Click, Cliff and Bunny, in episode one of *Between the Lions*, which includes the segments "Night Shift" and "Under Construction," demonstrate the problem-solving strategy of *cooperative inquiry*, which targets prosocial skills. This instructional strategy seems to promote the specific prosocial skill of benevolence in support of the American democratic goal of unity among diversity. In another way, I find that episode one of *Sana-Arkku*, "Lepakon Majassa" ("In the Forest Hut with the Bats") shows a *play-based approach* to problem-solving, which emphasizes deductive thinking and cultivates the metacognitive skill of self-awareness. This instructional strategy aimed at self-awareness appears to support a preference for individuality and aloneness.

Benevolence and self-awareness, while clearly distinct, are in no way mutually exclusive; nor do I mean to imply that either term in any way definitively characterizes either of the two national populations under consideration. My research aims only to identify the predominant instructional strategies, and their cognitive targets, in a single episode of each of two children's

educational television programs in two national settings; and, if my analysis revealed distinct differences in educational approach, to determine how these differences might relate to differing sociocultural preferences. At the same time, my study has endeavored to show how culturally informed televised learning environments makes use of pedagogy to disseminate culturally valued cognitive skills.

My discussion begins with an examination of cooperative inquiry, which is a group approach to problem-solving that requires prosocial skills. Psychological researchers argue that prosocial skills are really social constructs and, therefore, can be taught, enhanced and learned. The idea of prosocial behavior has been discussed, considered, interrogated, and consulted for its role in regulating social competencies and problem-solving behaviors (Eisenberg & Fabes, 2006). Discourse on prosocial competencies often takes its starting point from work on empathy and empathy-related responses such as sympathy and personal distress (ibid). Helping, sharing, and empathy (Knafo & Israel, 2012) belong to a general altruism whose origins have been traced to both biology and culture (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989; Eisenberg et al., 2006). Sociocognitive functioning and processing have been described, more or less, as cues of socially competent children and generally point to empathy-related responses (Eisenberg et al., 1997; Eisenberg et al., 2006; Eisenberg, 2005). The learning space of *Between the Lions* provided additional time and encouragement, for example, for the development of this skill, which, in theory, enables the growth of a habit of mind of particular use to American society and the peculiarities and complexities of its cultural dynamic. Prosocial emphasis is the cognitive message throughout problem-solving scenarios in the *BTL* episode considered here.

Problem-solving is ubiquitous in human life. It is relevant to school, work and more generally to everyday routine. Problems large and small appear all the time, in all times and in all

places. They are occurring at this very moment, puzzling or frustrating people. But – with the exception of the methodology of the sciences – the way we approach everyday problems is not universal, but quite particular. The capability brought to their resolution differs widely from relative competence to incompetence. Problems can range from the transparently simple to the insolvably complex. Problems differ in quality and kind, with some diagnosable as real and others as merely felt or perceived. I hope it is clear that some problems may be solved best through a cooperative strategy while others are better solved alone. Whatever the case may be, arriving at the appropriate solution requires aptness in attention skills, memory, logic and reasoning, auditory and visual processing, information recovery, and flexibility to changing circumstances (LearningRx, 2015). Each cultural setting emphasizes these skills in its own distinct way, with various aspects of culture shaping decisions about what is logical, what is reasonable, what is appropriate and how exactly to proceed to a solution. My thesis suggests that empathy and benevolence, by example of the three problem-solving scenarios featured in episode one, season nine of *Between the Lions*, are the implied pedagogical targets.

In *Between the Lions* Click, the puppet computer mouse, signifies the usefulness of shared information through technological power. Click represents, in many ways, the indispensable life-line: he is the voice of reason. In this case, an unforeseen lesson in an unusual brand of empathetic prosociality stems from technology. Cliff Hanger dramatizes social dependence even for the self-reliant individual. As usual, Cliff consults his survival manual for advice on how to overcome a tricky situation which ultimately results in yet another epic disappointment. Opposite Bunny enacts rescue, or deliverance from an apparently intractable dilemma. Bunny ably steps into a tradition of super heroes by bringing aid when others are in need. The teamwork approach and the reliance on help from others, evident in the problem-solving strategies of Click, Cliff and Bunny serve to

highlight strategic weaknesses in cooperative learning; learning and literacy skills are forwarded through a division of cognitive labor which results in cooperative assignment of tasks. The consequence of this approach might result in a cognitive denial of the individual learner. But there are also strategic advantages to a K12 public educational academic environment, which expects considerable prosocial skills given its curricular emphasis on group projects.

Group activities and exercises involving two or more individuals often require that students of varying abilities, socioeconomic backgrounds, life experiences and exposures, or of different ethnicity, cultural origin or religion operate within a context of assigned (i.e., enforced) proximity. The solidarity-building facet of this approach is obvious. The technological aspect of Click, and the growing codependency between human beings and machines adds a layer of complexity to discussions about prosociality. These are the social pre-conditions of American classroom learning, and conditions which simultaneously hold strong implications for the performance conditions of various levels of the labor market. However, there is unequal opportunity to acquire these skills.

Much of the American day, week, and year is spent in spaces shared with other people, or within the inner mind-space where we contemplate our commitments and accountabilities to people or projects. The successful American personality possesses agility in prosocial competencies, which can be exercised with nimbleness under pressure, can set and adhere to time-frames in cooperative projects, and can find a way to communicate well with most individuals across the spectrum of personality types. Even such a successful personality may fall short when confronted with individuals from different cultural, ethnic, or socioeconomic backgrounds. Cooperative inquiry, or what is variably referred to as “group-work,” “participatory interactions,” or “shared-learning experiences,” refers to forms of team-work required for the maintenance of

the ‘corporate normal,’ which defines much of the American work environment. There can be little surprise, then, that cooperative inquiry would be the instructional strategy emphasized by an example of a children’s educational television program to help children develop the prosocial cognitive skills common to the successful personality described above. In our work and public interactions American culture requires less think-within than think-aloud; less independent-work, than group-work; not independent projects, but group-projects and group-assignments. Cooperative inquiry seems the chosen strategy because it represents a work-force-related imperative, and perhaps adds little more than a page to economic explanations for the purposes of education. Cooperative inquiry represents a Progressive era tradition. Creating agreement about this strongly preferred practice is a critical function of any consensus space, and across a tremendously varied set of cultural norms, values, beliefs, personal preferences, habits, traditions and personalities. At the very center of cooperation resides the problematic relationship between the individual and the collective, which the U.S. Constitution attempted to accommodate.

Life before and during the American Revolution and under the inadequate Articles of Confederation was marked by countless factions unsatisfied with the status quo; it has been said that resistance to either federal or state control was one of the few unifying attributes of Revolutionary America (Cohen & Moffitt, 2009). Nation-building both requires and breeds a population of hardy, forward-looking and forward-thinking individuals who value their personal freedom as well as their freedom to act collectively with other like-minded individuals. The Framers of the Constitution, clear-sightedly recognizing these and other tendencies and desires of their fellow citizens as characteristics of human nature, sought a dynamic form of government that could effectively preserve the exercise of the inalienable rights announced in the Declaration of Independence, as well as the specific freedoms specified in the Bill of Rights, including freedoms

of speech, assembly and religion. They gave the U.S. and the world the first successful example of a federal government; at the national level strong but limited powers balanced among three branches; states that are self-governing within the limits of national law, each of which also functions as a federation of counties and municipalities, self-governing within the limits of state laws. They also launched the great experiment in representative government by popular ballot at all these levels of government, through which the "consent of the governed" is expressed. The Framers could not anticipate what freedom of expression has become in a technological age in which an individual can virtually instantly express an opinion to an elected representative through a variety of electronic means. Nor, I think, could they ever have imagined that out of "the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances" (Hamilton, 1937, p. 598) there would exfoliate uncountable organizations of like-minded individuals formed to lobby government and public opinion on a wide spectrum of points of view including, but hardly restricted to, political, philosophical, professional, practical, humanitarian and religious concerns. The point proposed is that cooperation is necessary but legitimately difficult in the American context. In such a context, resolution of the longstanding tension between educational policy and educational practice will remain an aspiration; but within this context, *Between the Lions* manages to create a consensus space for transmission of an utterly American approach to problem-solving and decision-making.

Cognitive perspectives generally part ways with sociocognitive viewpoints when we add a second individual. The cognitive perspective on "learning processes" considers "social interaction as only one factor influencing learning" (Slavin, 2011, p. 171). Sociocognition, by contrast, foregrounds interpersonal interactions in the learning process (Slavin, 2011). Tomasello (2009) describes sociocognitive skills as abilities necessary to "participate with others in joint attention,"

to “learn from others, to understand the communicative intentions of others, to take the perspective of others in interpreting and using language, and to collaborate communicatively” (Slavin, 2011, p.171). Public education toward these ends is a daunting challenge in the face of U.S. cultural diversity; this is a simple statement to make, but its significance is driven home by a recent Census Bureau analysis of 2010 Census data (Census, 2013), which presents a snapshot of the children in our classrooms and watching our educational television programs.

- 77.7%: those who “claim” that they are white, which denotes “having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. It includes people who indicate their race as "White" or report entries such as Irish, German, Italian, Lebanese, Arab, Moroccan, or Caucasian.”
- 13.2%: those “claiming” that they are Black or African American alone; “any of the Black racial groups of Africa” which “includes people who indicate their race as "Black, African Am., or Negro"; or report entries such as African American, Kenyan, Nigerian, or Haitian.”
- 1.2%: American Indians and Alaskan Native populations; “reflects” “any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment. This category includes 1.2% of people who “identify” as "American Indian or Alaska Native" or report entries such as Navajo, Blackfeet, Inupiat, Yup'ik, or Central American Indian groups or South American Indian groups.”
- 5.3%: Asian; those “having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam, along with who identify as "Asian Indian," "Chinese," "Filipino," "Korean," "Japanese," "Vietnamese," and "Other Asian" or provide other detailed Asian responses.”
- .2%: Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders; “any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands." Included are those who identify themselves “as "Native Hawaiian," "Guamanian or Chamorro," "Samoan," and "Other Pacific Islander" or provide other detailed Pacific Islander responses.”
- 2.4%: Individuals who claim two or more national or ethnic origins.
- 17.1%: Hispanic or Latino; includes those “who classified themselves in one of the specific Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino categories listed on the Census 2010 questionnaire - "Mexican," "Puerto Rican", or "Cuban," as well as those who indicate that they are of "another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin." People who do not identify with one of the

specific origins listed on the questionnaire but indicate that they are "another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin" are "those whose origins are from Spain, the Spanish-speaking countries of Central or South America, or the Dominican Republic."

- 62.6%: those, excluding "Spanish/Hispanic/Latino," who reported "White" as their only entry in the race question … make-up the second largest population in the US," (US Census, 2013).

An extraordinary landscape of cultural and parenting values, educational outlooks, student capability and enthusiasm for the learning process, is represented in this analysis as is a, perhaps, under-acknowledged diplomacy on the part of teachers whose charge is to build perspectives and competency in perspective among students, as well as to create "interest" and "pique" the "curiosity" in a range of subject matter among an unprecedented child-diversity (Kennedy, 2005, p.7); this charge is shared by a nation's televised classroom.

The sociocognitive perspective acknowledges the "intentional" nature of culture and its perceived necessity in the "development of children" (Slavin, 2011, p. 171). The motivation behind "participatory-interactions" in forwarding *cooperative inquiry* is much the same; as Nelson explains it, participatory-interactions become a mechanism of culture because "children taking part in activities" do so "without fully understanding them" (ibid). Nelson's explanation points to the unseen effects of culture; because it is everywhere in the learner's environment its effects are insensible. This recalls Dewey's "learn by doing" or, in this case, learn to do *as society does,* which means that learning is linked to specific contexts and points in time. Dewey's conceptions of schooling developed within the tumultuous social and political environment of the Progressive Era. Tozer and colleagues (2006) explain the "primary" drivers behind Dewey's educational concerns as stemming from "urbanization, immigration, and industrialization" (ibid, p. 110). In Dewey's view, democratic problems "were being solved non-democratically" (ibid). In fact, "Dewey believed that the schools could be part of, but not the whole, solution to this pervasive political, economic, and ideological problem" (ibid). The televised learning environment, by

example of *Between the Lions*, as evidenced within the episode studied here, dramatizes an attempt to accommodate the needs of its society.

My analysis of "Lepakon Majassa" ("In the Forest Hut with the Bats"), the first episode of the Finnish educational television program, *Sana-Arkku*, draws on the work of Zimmerman (2002), which divides the student learning process into three phases: 1) Forethought Phase; 2) Performance Phase and 3) and Self-Reflection Phase. The claim I put forward is that play-based activities have the potential effect of collapsing Forethought and Performance phases into a single learning level, which enhances problem-solving capabilities quite early in life. Problem-solving scenarios 1-3 in the first episode of *Sana-Arkku*, demonstrate how metacognitive attributes might strengthen a sociocultural tendency toward self-awareness, and by buoying up self-control through a play-based tactic I refer to as the challenge course.

In the final analysis, the object lessons of each scenario cue the problem-solver to at least three skills which build toward heightened self-awareness: self-control, attentional focus and cross-check. Essentially, it is play which has the capability of revising the forethought phase in which a cognitive switch has been cultivated to flick on the investigative and forensic capacities otherwise disturbed under pressure. As formerly noted, play initiates a mental *process* which arguably collapses Zimmerman's (2002) phases one and two so that the abilities to exert self-control and task-analyze are combined, and consequently enhance self-awareness. I also move to suggest that play-based teaching practice and learning are given to producing a cognitive attribute consonant with Finnish culture. Scholars in communication apprehension state that Finland presents an especially good example of "silent cultures" (Sallinen-Kuparinen et al., 1991, p. 56). Indeed, "Finns are perceived as silent, timid, taciturn, shy, and introverted" (ibid, p. 57) and "are asserted to appreciate and tolerate silence" (ibid). What became increasingly fascinating to me as

my research progressed was that each of these behaviors appeared to signal a presence of mind and a psychology comfortable with aloneness; my underlying question became what, if any, mediating role these behaviors might play in the learning process.

Sana-Arkku provides insights into what might be considered the architecture of play, and a concrete mapping of a mechanism for a central metacognitive effect. It is possible within this programmatic setting to observe how culture, environment, and deductive teaching work through play to achieve a single metacognitive event. Play-based pedagogy was formally adopted in Finland's approach to early education in the 1970s, but it is perhaps highly unlikely that a nation so appreciative and protective of its cultural heritage would invent an entirely new approach to education; play might bear deeper cultural origin in Finnish social tradition. I strongly suspect that play-based child culture has a venerable presence in Finland's past and that its incorporation into the educational system about forty-five years ago was potentially undertaken because of its demonstrated effectiveness in child development. My argument builds from behavioral observations and consideration of cultural products and practices. Just as the practice of sauna is, arguably, one of many "life-long [Finnish] traditions that go back hundreds of years" (Sauna from Finland, 2012, p. 11), I suggest that other such institutions could be responsible for bringing about an especially acute sense of "self-knowledge" (Televizion, 2005, p. 38). Children's play-time, and the generational transmission of manifold play-activities is a matter of Finnish tradition. The historical depth of play activities was, I was told, not a matter often thought about (PC). It may be the case that a quite venerable Finnish play culture, complete with activities not unlike those engaged by today's children, and recognizable in broad outline by parents and grandparents, operates as an institutional form with sustainable practices which assure generational transmission of the very cognitive attributes highly valued by the present academic enterprise: self-knowledge,

self-awareness and a suite of other skills related to self-regulatory abilities that together constitute the metacognitive faculty (Zimmerman, 2002; Pintrich, 2002).

My argument has been that play-based pedagogy, by example of *Sana-Arkku*, works to heighten a cognitive behavior which seems to optimize learning and achievement, and which might constitute a behavioral quality which fosters Finnish societal cohesion. Sauna approaches ubiquity as a cultural practice; and television, an all-pervading cultural medium; both are cultural forms. In the instance of television, "The purpose of art and media education programmes," according to the Finnish National Broadcasting Company, is to serve as "instruments for," among other things, the development of children's "self-knowledge" and "the discovery and strengthening of one's own personality" (Televizion, 2005, p. 38). *Sana-Arkku* magnifies children's interaction with cognitively enriched content in a manner which strengthens academically and culturally favored cognitive abilities. My research has striven to demonstrate the multiplier effect of cultural forms by two examples of the televised learning environment, and the cognitive behavior it aims to elicit. I have endeavored to show that children's opportunity to learn particular cognitive behaviors are different, as are the cognitive behaviors learned; and that the scale of opportunity might be distinct given the degrees to which the lessons are present in cultural forms. In the case of *Between the Lions*, the matter of American diversity and the challenges of stark socioeconomic, sociopolitical and socio-historic differences between child sub-populations charges the televised learning environment differently from that of *Sana-Arkku*. *Between the Lions* belongs to a longstanding tradition of compensatory education, which works to supply multiple literacies and is contextualized to particular cognitive content appropriate for American early learners. *Sana-Arkku* is nested in a very different sociocultural milieu and is therefore purposed quite differently.

In terms of policy, my research perhaps delivers a word of caution to those scholars with interest in the international educational community. I ask: at what point of knowledge is it appropriate to launch a comparative investigation? Is it responsible positivism to compare, infer, rank, even suggest one nation emulate the educational models of another without attaining sufficient knowledge of sociocultural context, or without an interdisciplinary interpretation of data; or when the environments between the home doorbell and the school bell are dissimilar, and when both home and school are fundamentally informed by different sociocultural, socio-historical, sociopolitical, and socioeconomic factors? Indeed what constitutes sufficient knowledge? I hope to strike a chord among educational policy scholars and decision makers about the imperative of sociocultural context in interpretation of academic outcomes. I hope that in some small way my work fosters recognition among decision makers of the *usefulness* of nuanced knowledge of the sociocultural contexts which variably affect academic performance.

My work originates in a concern for the limited scope of what constitutes the preschool experience, and its consequences for early learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. In this way, I hope to expand the notion of learning environment to more meaningfully link formal and informal learning experiences. My work borrows in broad outline from Zigler's "Schools of the 21st Century model, which links health care, education, child care, and other family services, and demonstrates how the ecology of schools and society can be better integrated" (Beatty & Zigler, 2012, p. 6). To achieve such an integration in "the ecology of schools and society" in the present-day US would entail a radical correction of the structural and material inequities facing the "73%" of non-Hispanic black children born to unmarried women (NVSR, 2012, p. 8), including the 305,388 born in 2012 alone to teen mothers "aged 15-19 years"; such an integration would also need to be forward-looking to engage the fact that the "non-Hispanic black and Hispanic teen birth rate…[is]

more than two times higher than the rate for non-Hispanic white teens" (CDC, 2014). To consider the black population alone, some of these black children are parented by the 15.8% unemployed (DOL, 2011), and many of these parents are among the "nearly 1 million" blacks of "the total 2.3 million incarcerated population" (NAACP Criminal Fact Sheet). They are the siblings of brothers, sisters or cousins who "represent 26% of juvenile arrests, 44% of youth who are detained, 46% of the youth who are judicially waived to criminal court, and 58% of the youth admitted to state prisons" (ibid). The immanency of the school-to-prison pipeline is clear: "35% of black children grades 7-12 have been suspended or expelled at some point in their school careers compared to 20% of Hispanics and 15% of whites;" and there is an established link between trouble at school and entry into the criminal justice system (ibid; Winn & Behizadeh, 2011). It would be misleading and grossly uninformed to suggest that simply attaining cognitive skills, literacy, or even overall academic achievement could rescue or protect more than a few of these children from the harsh realities of race and deeply embedded structural inequity. My point is simply to suggest that insight into the nature of problems of every scale and informed response to them begin with the development of clear thinking.

Seventy-three percent is a daunting proportion of unmarried black mothers, given the known importance for cognitive development of the presence and stability of child/parent attachment dyads; incomplete nuclear families diminish the opportunities to acquire such cognitive skills as attention, memory, logic and reasoning, as well as auditory and visual processing (LearningRx, 2015), metacognition and prosocial skills. During the first three years of life young "brains" are "undergoing rapid changes" and "critical" "synaptic development [is] occur[ing] in direct response to external stimuli and sets patterns for lifelong function" (Christakis & Zimmerman, 2009, p. 1178). My research does not encompass this earlier developmental period,

but is concerned with preschool and early elementary school populations, whose individual case histories so often display the developmental issues to be expected from the fractured family circumstances under discussion. The children targeted by my research are those for whom "Estimates of media usage in children younger than the age of 3 suggest that children watch on average about 1 to 3 hr per day"; the same children for which the startling find puts forward "that children younger than the age of 3 are awake for only 10 to 12 hours per day, suggesting that as much as 30% of their waking hours may be spent in front of a monitor"; and these are the very children who, at a slightly earlier point of development, have been described by "numerous studies" as representing the critical phase at which "appropriate viewing of high-quality content can improve children's cognitive and behavioral development" (ibid). Without a doubt, "The influence that television might play in" "neuro-maturational process should not be understated," nor should its continuity (ibid). My research aims to move the question from "*Is* enough being done for these children?" to "*Can* enough be done for these children?"

A truer representation of the child's academic diet must take both formal and informal learning environments into account and, in particular, consider the televised learning environment. The learning environment of many children in top scoring settings such as Japan, Korea, and China includes input from multiple resources and contributors, rounding out their education beyond the comparative flatness of strictly classroom curriculum. Until recently, Finland's young learners experienced a coordinated participation of educational radio and television, expanding curriculum engagement beyond the school into the home (Correspondence with Participants 3 and 6, May 21, 2014; Correspondence with Participant 4, June 10, 2014; PC). The educative experiences for young people in these settings seem to accelerate rapidly from emergent literacy experiences into concrete achievement; in other words, a positive Matthew effect rather than a negative one

(Butkowsky & Willows, 1980). Stanovich (1986) introduced this concept in terms of reading skill development which led to the implicit question of what might be the critical mediating variable and driver of overall reading comprehension, which sparked a scholarly whirlwind of suggested candidates.

In the present case, I venture the Matthew effect to imply that "The critical mediating variable," indeed a potentially "strong bootstrapping mechanism that causes major" "differences in the development of" a variety of academic "skill[s] is the volume of" cognitive "experience[s]" available from the wider sociocultural environment, including televised learning opportunities (Stanovich, 1986, p. 380). Episode one of *Sana-Arkku*, "Lepakon majassa" ("In the Forest Hut with the Bats"), operating within the wider sociocultural milieu of its setting, demonstrates how the building blocks of academic development encompass more than just teacher quality, are strongly hinged to culture, and contribute to Finnish educational outcomes. Episode one of *Between the Lions*, operating within a very different sociocultural milieu, tells a different story, one which Mintrom (2001) succinctly summarizes: "In a democracy, the primary function of public schooling is to impart a democratic education to the young" (ibid, p. 623). My analysis suggests that the characters Click, Cliff Hanger and Opposite Bunny in *Between the Lions*, demonstrate the problem-solving strategy of *cooperative inquiry,* which requires prosocial skills. Cooperative inquiry seems to promote the specific prosocial skill of benevolence in support of the American democratic goal of unity among diversity.

Over a century ago "Dewey (1916) encapsulated the basic requirements of democratic education when he stated the following: A society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic…must have a

type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social change without introducing disorder" (Mintrom, 2001, p. 624). Nearly a century later Gutmann (1987) weighed in with five components described as "necessary" features "of democratic education in contemporary society, doing so with reference to education in the United States" (Mintrom, 2001, p. 624). One of Gutmann's five components is especially relevant to the present discussion: "democratic education must teach mutual respect and the value of working through differences in deliberation" (ibid); "Of course, for citizens to be able to contribute equally to processes of deliberation" they must have "the intellectual skills and the information that enable [citizens] to think about democratic politics and to develop their deliberative skills and their knowledge through practical experience" (ibid). Season nine, episode one of *Between the Lions* shows how the televised learning environment can serve as a democratic vessel for civic engagement, by reinforcing a quintessentially American instructional strategy (Sahlberg, 2011a) and pursuing a requisite cognitive ideal.

At the same time, the constraints of my methodological approach are readily identifiable, while my interpretive stance clearly disciplines any far-reaching claims or generalizations. Orland (2009) has in many ways forewarned those of us whose educational policy scholarship leans in the direction of qualitative rather than quantitative design. To this end, I anticipate questions about the relevance of knowledge borne of this study, and its overall usefulness. After all, "For an educational research activity to serve [its] function successfully" (ibid, p. 115) it must demonstrate what are believed to be the hallmarks of scientism, "rigor, relevance, and usefulness" (ibid, p. 116). And in light of the "some 100-year history" in which "educational research has not enjoyed a reputation for scientific rigor," this skepticism is fair, but here, invalid (ibid). The rigor of my study is soft; this is true. However, my intention was not to carry out a rigorous study, but an informative

one; an under-informed study is the same as a misinformed study; both render erroneous or, at best, unreliable data. I stopped in the earliest phase of my research when I realized that my working knowledge was insufficient to produce a reliable comparative quantitative inquiry.

The long and the short is that my research adds perhaps another link to the already long chain of scholarship querying the responsibilities between pedagogy and culture. Indeed, what is pedagogy's responsibility to the inimitably diverse American setting? My own work began with the question whether the Finnish televised learning environment, by example of a single episode of *Sana-Arkku*, possessed any teachable moments for the American televised learning environment. Indeed, are there teachable moments available in the American televised learning environment, by example of a single episode of *Between the Lions,* which would advance the Finnish televised learning environment? These are questions which must be posed in light of the fact that both televised learning environments are produced in Western settings grappling – admittedly, to very different degrees – with how to best acknowledge, meet the needs of, satisfy, contend with, and properly represent diverse groups, and how to socialize and educate these groups into a given national setting. Perhaps the question should be reframed as how best to socialize and educate groups *with* each other, rather than as *one to another*, a process which typically validates a power dynamic, leaving one group privileged and the other marginalized. My reconceptualization of this question aims to settle an old score with hegemonic approaches to socialization while improving upon strategies targeting the development of cooperative, indeed benevolent, prosocial behaviors. The problematic issue – multiculturalism – has been faced by every major geopolitical power, East and West, throughout human history and now, in a *very* New World, rests squarely on the shoulders of the United States, the standard-bearer of the modern democratic experiment.

My Finnish Lesson was in culture and pedagogy and the art of educating the young through the play-based teaching strategy of narrative learning. I was taught that all learning, at all stages of development begins with the story; and that the story can be happy, sad, or exciting, but the story must be told in order for information to be memorable and its application meaningful. Every nation's story presents difficulties and triumphs; this is also the case for mine, but I fear that the real story is not being told, that "We the people of the United States" in 2015 would be unrecognizable to "We the people" of 1789. While we have arrived at the "many" of "E pluribus unum" we are still far from achieving the "one."

So, who tells America's story? The dominant narrative is the one that begins with Plymouth Rock, continues through young George Washington and the cherry tree and on to the Boston Tea Party, Paul Revere and the Revolutionary War, to … where? To a steadily increasing number of U.S. citizens this story carries little or no emotional weight and excludes their own historical narratives of struggles to attain the freedom to advance their own and their family's lives. These real stories can be told and investigated in our university departments of women's studies, African American studies, LGBT studies, etc.; but getting these real stories to early learners where they might have some positive impact on individual development is more than a little difficult. The path to early education, both public and private, is frequently blocked by parents, organizations and political coalitions uncomfortable with other races, ethnicities and religions. This is the story of a nation in flux, and constantly coming of age. Perhaps my most important *Finnish Lesson* is having learned the necessity of identifying the *binding cultural element*: building a narrative around the cultural material that might effectively facilitate the process of empathetic coherence among the Western world's most diverse population of children. This is certainly a pressing question to be asked of a nation uncertainly motivated to forward its stated mission to create unity from diversity,

and to enable empathetic coherence amid growing ethnic and socioeconomic pluralism; it is the unavoidable, quintessentially American question. I have found that the educational television episodes under consideration, each operating within its distinct "ecological environment," display "nested structures" of sociocultural content which behave as "a set of Russian dolls," "each inside the next" (Bronfenbrenner & Bronfenbrenner, 2009, p. 3). It may be the case that the next step forward in addressing a significant "American question" lies within the purview and power of children's educational television programming.

My research has led me to the broad question of how exactly the agenda of pedagogy is proportioned in a particular setting between academic and societal objectives, and what the possible consequences of a given proportion may be to the learner. As I consider the prevalence of cooperative approaches in the US I am newly sensitive to what may be unintended consequences of this approach with respect to both teaching and learning, and numerous particular and interrelated questions come to mind. Might there be in the cooperative approach a missed opportunity for the development of individual cognitive resources? Would teamwork be strengthened by greater uniformity rather than variability across team members' skill sets? Do cooperative approaches represent, perhaps, an additional variable in the aggregate of factors contributing to classroom disturbances? Is it possible that parasitic rather than symbiotic team-based habits might be developing among learners? Indeed, would students be better primed to meet the expectations of the three most "persistent reform ideal[s]" if individually better enabled cognitively (Kennedy, 2005, p. 6)? Would student receptivity to "'more demanding" or "more challenging" content'" be strengthened if greater attention were given to the cultivation of individual cognitive resources (ibid)? Could teachers deliver on the second "persistent reform ideal," which is to "increase students' interest, capture their imagination, or pique their curiosity"

and help students to become more "actively engaged with important ideas" if pedagogical steps were taken to nurture individual thinking, learning and problem-solving (ibid, p. 7)? Would "The third persistent reform ideal" of "making school knowledge accessible to the full range of students attending American schools" become the dream realized rather than deferred if vigorous steps were taken to *upwardly* level the cognitive playing field across student subpopulations (ibid, p. 9-10)? Should cooperative teaching approaches and learning strategies be used with lesser frequency? Do cooperative approaches belong to a higher or lower level of difficulty in terms of teaching and learning exercises; and, based on the answer, should cooperative approaches be more strategically distributed throughout the academic day, week, semester, or by grade level? Do these questions belong to the exclusive domain of earlier stages of learning, or do they have saliency throughout the academic process? And not least important is the question of whether there may be a discernable consequence from a high degree of cooperative teaching and learning to homework completion and test taking outcomes, when individual competency is left to its own devices, without the aid of the group.

My research has raised many questions about pedagogy; it has also indubitably reawakened for me a dialogue between the twin giants thought fast asleep and perhaps widely preferred in that state: Progressivism and Neo-Progressivism (Sedlak & Schlossman, 1985; Kliebard, 1995; Carlson, 1995). Finland's play-based pedagogical approach produces learners who, from crib to cap and gown, backpack through a system of pedagogical experiences with emphases on the whole child and the idea of "human becomings" (Turunen et al., 2012, p. 595) from which they emerge as the champion academic achievers of the Western world. The implications of this phenomenon reify late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century curricular deliberations, whose reverberations still animated 1980s reform efforts. The urgency of arriving at some closure with respect to this

corpus of questions was made quite plain long ago in Frederick Douglas's legendary statement of the obvious and simple fact that it is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men. My objective is therefore to encourage more scholarship along these lines, and to design metacognitively enriched classroom exercises in collaboration with early childhood education practitioners, and test them across student demographics. Based on positive outcomes, my next step will be to design and produce metacognitively enriched children's educational television programs and similarly test their effectiveness across student demographics. The implication of positive outcomes might eventually warrant a re-visitation of key works of legislation targeting the level and type of cognitive content required in children's educational television programming.

APPENDIX

Protocol

It is while I was viewing the episodes of the two educational programs under study for the purpose of determining analytical categories that I realized that something else was happening that deserved more than a simple quantitative approach. Thus I expanded the research design to include in-depth cultural immersion, observation, content analysis and open-ended questionnaires designed for the express purpose of gaining familiarity with the Finnish televised learning environment (Yle) and the specific Finnish program under study, as well as questionnaires designed for understanding of play-based learning in relation to the early educational environment. Each type of questionnaire is included in the protocol section. The decision to exclude *Between the Lions* from scholarly engagement through a questionnaire, is based on the ready availability of scholarship on the program, the existence of online materials, and the availability of materials provided me by the generosity of the producer, which adds to the already extensive materials available about this television program. Knowledge about *Between the Lions*, and my understanding of the underlying educational motivations driving children's educational programs within the US context far outweighed that of my Finnish understanding. Therefore I designed questionnaires with intent to bridge this gulf in my knowledge.

The two programs seemed so different in approach that I "wanted to understand [the] real-life phenomenon in depth" which drove these distinctions (Yin, 2009, p. 18); my suspicion was that some broader motive distinctive to their cultural settings was at work in each of them. The case study approach emerged from this realization. And while I have a firm grip on the culture of urban low-income early learners in the US I realized that I needed to understand the sociocultural setting of early learners in the very different culture of Finland, in which I have no lived experience. The approach that seemed necessary was one of immersion in the daily life and culture

of Finland. I have been prepared to undertake this case-study approach by my past experiences in anthropological field work in Africa and Asia, by my work with the Illinois Department of Human Services on the near South Side of Chicago, serving young unwed mothers and their partners, as well as by participation in domestic and international humanitarian endeavors throughout my life. It has been lamented that "the skills for doing good case studies have not yet been formally defined" (ibid, p. 16) but I have to believe that at the very least it begins with the ability to see, to hear, to listen (Yin, 2009), to synthesize, and to modify ones understanding when information becomes available in real-time, as well as over time; indeed to disregard some information, and to reconsider prior information should it appear valid or invalid (ibid) based on new information or experience.

On a fundamental level my study is an elaborate intercultural study of two programs within two Western educational television environments. At the same time, the study is delineated (Yin, 2009) by the identification of the cognitive assets brought to the task of problem-solving in one episode from each of two separate children's educational television programs produced in two different sociocultural settings. First I begin with a basic definition of problem, and then second problem-solving. Here Mayer's (1992) definitions apply. The author characterizes problem(s) by the following specifications, "Givens," "Goals" and "Obstacles" (ibid, p. 5). Givens refer to "certain state[s] with certain conditions, objects, pieces of information, and so forth being present at the onset of work on the problem" (ibid). Goals describe "The desired or terminal state of the problem" and the "thinking" "required to transform the problem from the given to the goal state" (ibid). Obstacles are what "The thinker has at his or her disposal" "to change the given state or the goal state of the problem. The thinker, however, does not already know the correct answer; that is, the correct sequence of behaviors that will solve the problem is not immediately obvious" (ibid).

Because the term "problem-solving" is so often conflated with the idea of "thinking" and "cognition," the author chose to employ each without distinction (ibid, p. 7).

Others have attempted to tease apart problem-solving from thinking, acknowledging their shared kinship with terms such as "*reasoning*" and "*decision making*" (Sternberg, 1994, p. 410). Still, thinking and problem-solving are treated as separate matters though "closely related" (ibid, p. 409). As it is explained, "Thinking may be done for the express purpose of finding the solution to a problem" with the caveat that it can also take place "without having any particular problem in mind" (ibid). Problem-solving in the same way, "sometimes, but not always, requires intense cognitive effort" (ibid). A nice reconciliation of terms follows from this fairly straightforward consideration of thinking as "what happens when a person solves a problem, that is, produces behavior that moves the individual from the given state to the goal state - or at least tries to achieve this change" (Mayer, 1992, p. 8). In the end I am referring to the type of problem-solving which expects "effortful thinking" (Sternberg, 1994, p. 410).

Next, I identify the problem(s) to be solved in each episode followed by a consideration of the tactical approach to generating a solution. I ask the question, is the learner's intellectual disposition within a given problem-solving scenario active or passive? Is the learner active or passive in contributing to problem-resolution? If active, why? If not active, why not? The predominant instructional strategies as well as their cognitive targets provide snapshots of the culture of expectation of a given educational environment, which in this case are the US and Finland. Precisely what is either intercepting or encouraging the task of learning in settings A or B become possible explanations for the decision to use a particular instructional strategy, and help to rationalize why a given approach to problem-solving might be preferred. The answers to these questions provide hints about underlying sociocultural preferences; consequently, this work of

educational scholarship must consult relevant scholarship in sociology and anthropology, especially where these two disciplines necessarily overlap.

Educational programs are typically designed with advisement from educational consultants with considerable general and content area knowledge in a given educational domain. Educational advisement is also a byproduct of training that is usually particular to a specific national educational and institutional culture. Because national educational culture falls along a spectrum from uniformity to variability in terms of its educational policy, practice and curricular decisions are the end products of sociocultural norms, permissions, taboos and the values embraced within a particular setting. Each program under study here originated from the expertise of its nation's best educators or educational scholars. *Between the Lions* builds from the strength of a project team comprised of many leading literacy and reading scholars (Sirius Thinking Project Proposal, 1996, p. 32-34). *Sana-Arkku* is also a product of considerable capability. The program developed from the experience of two trained early elementary practitioners, one of whom is to be credited for establishing the intellectual premise of *Sana-Arkku*, which originates from a dissertation scholarship: *Reading Games for Children in Day Care Centers – the Development of Reading Ability and Reading Awareness in an Intervention Study* (2005), Jyväskylä University (Karvonen, 2005).

The content, style and instructional approach presented within the relatively short running time of an episode of each of these acclaimed programs provide a mirror reflecting the preferred problem-solving strategies and cognitive goals of the nations that have vetted and approved them. The obvious question is *so what? Why does problem-solving matter?* To which the less obvious answer is simply that "problem solving extends to essentially all of the topics that can be encompassed by thinking and problem solving" (Sternberg, 1994, p. 410). To my mind this is *The*

Question. In the US there has been a notable decline in the quality of thinking and problem-solving abilities at the school level (Sternberg, 1994), which is evident in the performance trends of American students at "all levels of formal education" (ibid, p. 411). Any compelling educational, sociological or sociocultural explanation for any significant aspect of this decline will be a meaningful contribution to education policy.

Content Analysis

Step 1. Cultural immersion in the case of Finland and Cultural Reflection in the case of the US

Step 2. Identify the central problem-solving scenarios for each program.

Related questions: Who is the instructor in the scenario and why is this the instructor? Who is the learner?

Step 3. Characterize the instructional strategy

Step 4. Determine whether the instructional strategy elicits active or passive learning on the part of the learner

Step 5. Identify the cognitive or metacognitive behaviors prompted by the instructional strategy

Step 6. Characterize the cultural underpinnings of the particular instructional strategy and cognitive target

Yle Questionnaire

1a. What are the goals of children's programs?

1b. What is the process that determines these goals and who participates? (National, regional, local organizations? School administrators, teachers or the teachers' union, parents?)

2. What guidelines are in place to realize goals?

3. How would you define language learning programs?

4a. What are the differences between educational, learning and general programs?

4b. What percentage of programs are:

Educational:

Learning:

General:

5a. What percentage of programming is devoted to:

Science:

Math:

Language:

Literature:

History:

Social studies:

Other subjects:

5b. How are these percentages decided upon?

5c. What programs are now being produced; who developed each program; and how is each program funded?

6a. Approximately, what is the cost (or range of costs) of initiating a new program?

6b. Approximately, what is the cost (or range of costs) of producing one episode of a program?

7. What is the decision-making process that determines the content and creative design of a program?

8. What /when was the first children's learning program produced in Finland?

Sana-Arkku Questionnaire

1. What other Finnish programs target language development?

2. During what years was Word Chest produced? What is/was program's intent?

3. How is Word Chest different from other programs targeting language development?

4. What cognitive skills is Word Chest intended to developed?

5. How were the featured vocabulary words selected, and what was the learning objective?

6. Was there a particular method used to determine the educational effectiveness of Word Chest?

7. At what age do students begin viewing Word Chest?

8. Describe the online materials for Sana-Arkku

9. Why is the program length nine minutes?

10. What aspects of reading skill development are not featured in episodes 1, 4, 5, 17, 19?

Between the Lions Episode 904.1

Problem (6:52): Click must unexpectedly shut down for scheduled computer maintenance when Lionel and Leona request to re-watch River Story by Meredith Cooper. Lionel and Leona voice their enthusiasm for this book. Lionel shouts "Wow, that was really cool, Click!" and Leona exclaims, "Yeah! Hey, can we watch it again?" Click disappoints, "Request denied. Computer mouse must shut down computer for scheduled maintenance" (Transcript 904, p. 8).

Solution (7:10): The solution in this case is to activate the imagination. Leona asserts a bright idea, "Hey, wait! How about if we imagine we're in a boat, on a river!" and Lionel agrees, "Hey, good idea!" "Okay! Let's start imagining! Imagining …" (Transcript 904, p. 9). Here, Lionel and Leona had to resort to recreating elements of the story in their minds in the absence of the computer video. Story recreation is a creative process that introduces light variations to the original storyline, which arguably requires activation and extension of spatial orientation, and among other things, image formation. In short, by unforeseen circumstance, they were forced to volunteer their minds to a creative task which builds up certain core metacognitive capabilities such as "self-awareness," and even "self-reflection" (Pintrich, 2002, p. 219). In the present case, the lion children seem to activate "cognitive imagination" and integrate themselves into what was formally a fiction. Instead, through "cognitive imagination" they produce "an integrated picture of the world" (Diachenko, 2011, p. 21).

Episode 904.2

Problem/Solution (15:42): A feature presentation about Fish Camp titled "Salmon in Alaska," introduces child-viewers to the cooperative food procurement and preparation practices of an indigenous Alaskan Indian family. The problem/solution scenario is in this case blended into

the idea of extracting resources from relatively restrictive environmental constraints. Salmon harvesting and drying and smoking requires team work.

Episode 905.2

Problem (14:59-19:29): The book "Stop that Pickle" by Peter Armour offers a clear demonstration of the prosocial behavior of empathy. "It was lunchtime when Ms. Elmira Deeds waddled into Mr. Adolph's deli" (Transcript 905, p. 40). She really wanted to buy a pickle. And after the storekeeper "unscrewed the lid on the giant pickle jar" "There was only one fat pickle left floating in the brine" (ibid, p. 41). As it happened, though Mrs. Elmira Deeds might have wanted the pickle, "This pickle did not want to be eaten!" (ibid, p. 42). The pickle ran away. Multiple characters were in pursuit of the pickle from "a peanut butter and jelly sandwich" (ibid, p. 44) to and army of "raisins" (ibid, p. 47). The chase ends when the pickle "collided with a young boy" (ibid, p. 48). The pickle-thirsty crowd of pursuers cheered, seethed, "gathered around" and urged him to claim his prize (ibid, p. 49). After all, "He's just a silly pickle" (ibid).

Solution (19:47): But the boy, "looked at the pickle, who immediately began to cry big, briny tears" and let him go (Transcript 905, p. 50). In the final analysis the young boy demonstrated the ability to counter familiarity bias, or to help a stranger in a time of need, and even when surrounded by the taunts of bullies. He made the unpopular decision. This is an example of empathy.

Episode 909.1

Problem (2:19): The episode begins with an animation of the lion family enjoying a day out and about for a picnic. All was well, until a thunderous burst of wind blew and disrupted the "Absolutely idyllic" day, disrupting the picnic setup, causing the entire family to scrimmage about with arms and hands extended to collect the swarm of paper plates (Transcript 909, p. 3). No one

was happy about this, including Click who declared after the incident that, "Mouse does not like picnics" (ibid, p. 4).

Solution (3:08): And after a failed attempt at making the most of adverse weather conditions, the most lasting solution to a windy day comes by recommendation of mother lion. Cleo says, "I have an idea" and suggests that the family listen to her read a book about a windy day by Frank Asch and Devin Asch with a plot aimed at placing a positive spin on windy conditions (Transcript 909, p. 6). In this case, and as distinct from episode 904.1, when lion cubs resort to using their imaginations as a result of a scheduled computer maintenance, shared book reading communicates something different. The book Cleo suggests works to rescue the lion family's attitudinal disposition toward disappointing weather. Attitudinal dispositions are a type of learning skill with relation to task persistence both of which regard "self-regulation" as concerns the ability to exercise "*behavior control", i.e. "*attentiveness, execution, persistence, and monitoring of strategic and nonstrategic responses in specific contexts" (Zimmerman, 1989, p. 332). This is an example of a metacognitive skill.

Episode 909.2

Problem (15:04): Winter is the Warmest Season articulates a similar lesson as 909.1. Lionel and Leona enjoy sledding. A problem arises when Leona falls into the snow, and suddenly, sledding was of questionable fun. Lionel was concerned, "Leona! You okay?" (Transcript 909, p. 28). And she was, except, "I'm cold" (ibid).

Solution (16:15):Ultimately, Lionel suggests returning to the inside to sit in front of "A nice toasty fire" and read the book, "Winter is the Warmest Season" by Lauren Stringer (Transcript 909, p. 30). Again, as with the prior read, the aim is to train attitudinal dispositions with an eye toward positivity.

Episode 910.1

Problem-Solution (2:54): The problem-solution scenario featured in this episode is complex, but prosocial in origin, and has much more to do with the challenges of cultural accommodation. However, in the case of "Angelina's Island," by Jeanette Winter, the challenge concerns cultural adaptation to a new sociocultural setting. The story is about a little Jamaican girl who misses the familiar. She "dream[s] that the airplane that brought [her] is taking [her] back home to Jamaica" (Transcript 910, p. 5). In the end, Angelina's mother's encouragement of her participation in Carnival, proves a successful antidote for her homesickness. The next segment opens with Lionel and Leona. Leona's enjoyment of the read inspired her own desires for cultural connection. She wanted to "celebrate where lions come from" (ibid, p. 13). Soon after, a cast of characters join her, and espouse similar hopes. First, "A Scottish Monkey" who exclaims, "I want to celebrate…Scotland" and then a "Swedish Duck" who doesn't want to be counted out says "Vot about Sweden? Don't vee get a party?" (ibid, p. 14). And then a "Bolivian Chicken" (ibid). Click wanted to "celebrate Silicon Valley" (ibid, p. 15). The problem here is one of societal proportion, which is distinctly American. *What about me*, is the question? One of America's most pressing, and ongoing challenges is animated by these segments. And the solution is, arguably, yet to be found. But the episode highlights one of its most common approaches for nation building amid an ever expanding, multicultural populace, which is to celebrate. This strategy is considered insufficient by many, though it does reflect a tactic found at every scale of American society including its classrooms.

Sana Arkku Episode 4

The problem-solving scenarios of *Sana-Arkku* involve playful solution paths. For example, in "Runopolku" ("Poetry Path"), The Bat Team has "been given" another "rigorous task to

complete" (Transcript 4, p. 1). The theatrical setting is night time. The object is to seek and find four "poetry scrolls" which have been "taken at night" from a birds' nest (ibid). The goal is to "compile a funny poetry book from them for the forest inhabitants" (ibid). The team of child-detectives follow the rise and fall of an owl's hooting sighs signaling whether the "poetry scroll may be found above," as with "The owl's high sound," or when the owl's sound is low, "the poetry scroll [is] close to the ground" (ibid). The mystery involves engaging riddles, a matching activity, and a variety of listening skills from "listening comprehension, perception of meter" to "deduction from linguistic hints" (Correspondence with Participant 1, June 4, 2014). This episode features two obstacle courses involving a deck walk and beam walk.

Episode 5

"Varastetut eväät" ("Stolen Lunch"), takes place in the day time. The object of the mystery is to identify the animal to which "a paw print" belongs. In this episode, the "Chief of Police Jänö Jarru says he has received a mysterious message from an anonymous animal" but that it "is hard to trace down [the print] to any one animal" (Transcript 5, p. 1). A further complication is to seek and find "with the help of the prints," "the missing food mentioned in the message: Sieniä (mushrooms), munia (eggs) and pähkinöitä (nuts)" (ibid). The solution path will involve among other skills "Listening, listening comprehension, understanding of picture + word + first phoneme," (Correspondence with Participant 1, June 4, 2014). This episode features three obstacle courses, a slide, an edge walk and hopscotch; the paw print belongs to orava (squirrel).

Episode 17

"Ketun herkku" ("The Fox`s Delicacy") takes place in the day time and involves solving a "crossword puzzle" and emphasizes "Listening, listening comprehension, letters are 'puppies' of a word so that letters form a word; modeling writing behavior; perspective; body-awareness"

(Correspondence with Participant 1, June 4, 2014). The object of the mystery is to locate the "names of foxes' delicacies" which comprise the crossword puzzle words (Transcript 17, p. 1). In order "To find today's crossword puzzle words in the forest, one has to find the figures drawn by the fox and the letters corresponding to them" (ibid). The solution path involves a series of obstacle courses more challenging than previously mentioned, beginning with a paw walk, then a backward paw walk, a one leg paw hop and finally, a backward beam walk.

Episode 19

"Muurahaisen jäljillä" ("On the Ant`s Trail") takes place during the daytime, and emphasizes "Listening, listening comprehension, connecting phrase and picture," skills involving "connecting occurrences in a correct temporal order," and map reading (Correspondence with Participant 1, June 4, 2014). Once again, "our Group of Bats has convened in the mysterious forest hut" (Transcript 19, p. 1). The mystery involves the case of lost photographs. "Felix Fasaani says he has been hiding in the forest for weeks behind trees and bushes photographing the life of an anthill" (ibid). But in a twist of plot, "a dog running around nearby got hold of Felix's tail feathers" and although "Felix narrowly escaped," the photographs "were lost" (ibid). The Bat Team must solve a mystery more complex than the three described above, using "a map" "Felix has drawn" "of the places where seven photographs and the seven stories related to them might have fallen" (ibid). The obstacle courses include a scooter ride along a path of rope, a scooter ride in twists and turns along a path of tires, a repeated scooter ride along the path of rope, and again, a scooter ride following the path of tires.

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