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No place like home? – Care and disability in the inclusive elementary classroom – A consideration of the Ethical Conundrums amidst disorienting intersubjective encounters

Maria Karmiris 

ABSTRACT

In order to trouble the rhetoric of caring spaces like home that are taken for granted in schools, I consider how the western neoliberal subject remains tethered to normalcy in ways that sustain practices of conditional inclusion. I My aim is to persist in questioning normalcy, while also endeavouring to reimagine distinctly different relational encounters amidst embodied differences. The first part of this paper will consider how current inclusionary school practices sustain normalcy by both refusing to confront, while also concealing, the ways public education was shaped by the eugenics movement. The second part will explore the works of Michalko [2002. *The Difference That Disability Makes*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press] and Yergeau [2018. *Authoring Autism: On Rhetoric and Neurological Queerness*. Fordham: Duke University Press] and the ways narratives situated within disability have sought to resist the hegemony of normalcy while also provoking the possibilities of reimagining our human relations both within and against western colonial logics. The last section of this paper will consider how narratives told and embodied through disability, might pursue foregrounding disorienting intersubjective encounters as a necessary move intended to amplify the possibilities of displacing normalcy while reimagining what it means to be human with each other.

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I want to go home
but home is the mouth of shark
home is the barrel of a gun
and no one would leave
unless home chased you to the shore
unless home told you to quicken your legs
leave your clothes behind. (Shire 2015)

My homeland was furnished with all sorts of references to the ‘goodness’ of a ‘normal body’ and the ‘suffering’ that was the consequence of an abnormal one. (Michalko 2002, 43)

Being home refers to the places where one lives within familiar, safe, protected boundaries; ‘not being home’ is a matter of realizing that home was an illusion of coherence and safety based on the exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance, the repression of differences even within oneself. (Mohanty and Martin 2003, 90)

The intention of this paper is to inhabit the provocations from the poet Warsan Shire (2015), the disability studies scholar Rod Michalko (2002) and the postcolonial feminist work of Mohanty and Martin (2003), in order to consider the ways in which current inclusionary policies in public education continue to be encountered as places of precarious belonging if not completely exclusionary of embodied differences. Similarly, this paper seeks to address, Slee's (2018, 12) provocation that: 'Inequality and its fellow traveller, exclusion, are woven so tightly into the fabric of education, it often goes unacknowledged'. Through the provocations from postcolonial and disability studies scholars, one of the aims of this paper, is to address this relationship between exclusion and inequality (Slee 2018) in order to confront and acknowledge the dilemmas within inclusion policies and practices. I want to trouble the ubiquitous presence both in school spaces and policy documents, throughout district school boards in the Global North, that often talk about making inclusive classrooms as welcoming as home. For example, a Toronto District School Board (TDSB) report entitled: *Inclusion: Creating School and Classroom Communities Where Everyone Belongs. Research, Tips, and Tools for Educators and Administrators* states: 'All successful education environments are caring spaces'. (Parekh and Underwood 2015, 3). There is a rhetoric of nurturing and care that often accompanies the sense that an inclusive classroom should feel like a welcoming home. Yet, countless accounts from disability studies scholars (Ellis 2019; Yergeau 2018; Michalko 2002), demonstrate that public education's conception of who is welcome at home, how home is constructed and what attributes are cultivated and valued at home, represent varying degrees of rejection and exclusion for countless of racialised, classed and/or disabled students. I wonder here about how calls for inclusion in public education rhetoric continue to sustain the conditions whereby school is encountered as 'an illusion of coherence and safety based on the exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance, the repression of differences even within oneself' (Mohanty and Martin 2003, 90).

Therefore, it is one of the aims of this paper to show that, both despite and perhaps because of the statement that: 'All successful education environments are caring spaces'. (Parekh and Underwood 2015, 3), students in public education experience varying degrees of care, and a varying sense that their classroom is a welcoming home where they feel a sense of belonging and inclusion. In order to trouble the rhetoric of caring, safe, nurturing spaces like home that are taken for granted as a component part of inclusive school policies, I consider how the western neoliberal subject remains tethered to the script of normal in ways that ensure the resiliency of structures that sustain the conditional inclusion and/or exclusion of disabled, classed and/or racialised bodies. The terms normal or normalcy in this paper are understood to refer to the male, middle class, Eurocentric, heteronormative figure that remains hegemonic as the standard other versions of humanity are measured against. In part, it is my aim to contribute to the work of numerous disability studies scholars, researchers and activists in order to persist in questioning and resisting the mythic figure of normal, while also endeavouring to reimagine distinctly different relational encounters amidst embodied differences of disability, race, gender, class and/or sexual orientation. This paper consists of three parts. The first part of this paper will consider how current inclusionary school practices sustain normalcy by both refusing to confront while also concealing the ways public education was shaped and remains shaped by the eugenics movement of the early twentieth century. The second part will outline some specific examples from the works of Michalko (2002) and

Yergeau (2018) of the ways narratives that foreground the perspectives of disability have sought to challenge and resist the hegemony of normalcy while also provoking the possibilities of reimagining our human relations both within and against western colonial logics. The last section of this paper will consider how narratives told and embodied through disability might pursue foregrounding disorienting intersubjective encounters as a necessary move intended to amplify the possibilities of displacing normalcy while reimagining what it means to be human with each other. Through the questioning of inclusionary policies and practices, the aim of this paper is to trouble the conception of the classroom as welcoming as home in order to confront the persistent mechanisms of conditional inclusion.

The homeland of normal: confronting and troubling the impressions of eugenics within public schooling

As Slee (2008, 107) reminds educators: ‘Schooling was never meant for everyone’. Education has a long history of conditional inclusion that has impacted disabled people in ways that cannot be refuted or ignored (Slee 2008, 2013, 2018; Baker 2002a, 2002b). A significant part of the tainted historical legacy of public education is the deep impact of eugenics in shaping conceptions of the normative body and mind that continue to sustain practices of conditional inclusion within the ‘regular’ classroom. A historical monograph by Jason Ellis (2019) focuses on the public education of children and youth with disabilities in Toronto. He outlines the ways eugenicists played an integral role in orienting teaching and learning practices in public schools towards the management of embodied differences. For example, Ellis (2019), points to the advent and wide dispersal of assessment materials for the purposes of intelligence testing in the early twentieth century that foregrounds the ways disability, race, class, gender and/or sexual orientation intersected so as to sustain practices of conditional inclusion and/or exclusion. According to Ellis (2019, 83): ‘Intelligence testers claimed that group variations in IQ tests results not only demonstrated that there were real differences in the intelligence of various racial, ethnic and class groups but also that such difference were inherited and innate’. These kinds of racist, ableist and classist assessment tools and evaluative practices were integral in the development of separate classes and the subsequent sorting of students referred to in the 1920s as ‘subnormal’ (Ellis 2019, 84). The current rhetoric of inclusion present both in policy documents and teaching practices, neither confronts nor acknowledges the ways in which labeling and placement practices, continue nearly a century after the initial implementation of these practices under the influence of eugenic logics. In following the work of disability scholars such as Slee (2008, 2013, 2018), this paper suggests that the rhetoric of inclusion both evades a confrontation with and subsequently conceals school policies and curricular orientations that sustain unjust exclusionary practices.

There are numerous examples of taken for granted statements of inclusion, in policy documents such as TDSB’s report entitled: *Inclusion: Creating School and Classroom Communities Where Everyone Belongs. Research, Tips, and Tools for Educators and Administrators* (Parekh and Underwood 2015). For example, this report on inclusive education holds up the inclusive classroom as: ‘a space where all identities and cultures (including disability culture) are celebrated’ or as ‘celebrat[ing] diversity and creat[ing] a space where all students with disabilities can feel a sense of pride’ (Parekh and Underwood

2015, 4–5). These kinds of statements about inclusion simultaneously conceal and reveal the hopeless hope that by focusing on tips and tools for managing differences within the ‘regular’ classroom, that the homeland of normal (e.g. a Eurocentric curriculum that sustains western colonial logics) can sustain its hegemony. It is a hopeless hope that leaves unacknowledged the gatekeeping role of the inclusive classroom that takes for granted that some bodies are always and already at home, while other disabled, classed and racialised bodies, experience the classroom as a place of conditional belonging and/or exclusion (Slee 2008, 2013, 2018). This TDSB report on inclusion, for example, does not mention children labeled with intellectual disabilities like developmental delay (DD), nor the way these disabled children, who often communicate nonverbally, might contribute to a necessary rewriting and rereading of how we might become differently human with each other amidst and through our embodied differences. Similarly, excluded from reports and policy statements on inclusion are the historical legacies through which exclusion in its spatial, onto-epistemological and embodied relational manifestations continues to be sustained both despite and perhaps because of ubiquitous statements that extoll the virtues of inclusion.

According to Slee: ‘Exclusion resides deep in the bones of education ... After all, antiquity and ubiquity are the agents of its resilience ... our interventions ... at best seem to have little impact and, at worst, strengthen or sustain it’ (2018, 1). This insight from Slee points towards the necessity in attending to how processes of outlining and sustaining the boundaries of normalcy remain part of the legacy of education. Ellis’ (2019), account of a century of rationalizations amongst Toronto’s educational experts in sustaining the criteria ascribed to normal childhood development, both foreground the role of eugenics in shaping school policies and practices as well as indicate the ubiquity of racist, ableist and classist logics embedded within western colonialism. For example, Ellis quotes Angus McLaren, one of the leading figures at the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene (CNCMH): ‘It is important not to exaggerate the gap that separated the eugenicists and the environmentalists. Although their methods differed, their goals of efficient social management were similar’ (2019, 185). As Slee (2018) indicates and Ellis (2019) demonstrates, part of confronting and questioning the resiliency of normalcy is finding ways to call attention to its ubiquity as part of the western colonial logics within which eugenics is one component part. In other words, while current policy documents and teaching practices no longer use eugenics to justify practices of conditional inclusion, it remains incumbent upon teachers, students and parents to continue to wonder about the current set of logics that foreground inclusion while sustaining practices of exclusion.

According to Dolmage (2018, 64), who also quotes McLaren view of eugenicists’ ‘chief success was “in popularizing biological arguments”’. This insight is significant as it demonstrates what at one time may have been explicitly called a eugenic practice, is now taken for granted as the medical and psychological diagnoses that sustain processes of labeling and sorting in the TDSB as well as other school boards across North America. Ellis (2019), points to the ways educators in North America, Great Britain and Western Europe shared management practices with each other and implemented similar exclusionary policies in public schools based on similar beliefs about ‘normative’ childhood development. His work is substantiated by the work of Baker (2002a, 2002b) and Mitchell and Snyder (2003) whom also demonstrate how the narrow conception of normalcy was both sprawling and invasive in the ways educators and eugenicists exchanged information

about shaping the conception of what it meant to have a normal body and mind. Dolmage's work (2018, 60) *Disabled Upon Arrival: Eugenics, Immigration, and the Construction of Race and Disability*, exposes the ways persistent anxieties and fears about immigration were expressed by the Toronto Board of Education to immigration officials who in their complaints demonstrated their beliefs 'that a tightening border could be used to reject and remove a wide variety of "undesirable" bodies'. Fears about immigration throughout the history of Canadian settlers also show the ways in which embodied differences of disability, race and class have been intertwined in distinct yet linked ways that depended on the 'eugenic rhetoric that invoked the idea that certain bodies were a contagion' (Dolmage 2018, 60). In other words, unhindered by borders, or oceans, western European white, able-bodies can spread in space both rhetorically and tangibly while, 'certain bodies' that are read as disabled, racialised and/or classed, encounter outright rejection as well as regimes of extensive monitoring and assessment for even the smallest prospect of accessing the homeland of normalcy.

I return to the provocation from Shire (2015) within which I situate this paper's inquiry: 'I want to go home but home is the mouth of shark'. This small fragment from Shire's poem entitled 'Home' (2015), serves as a reminder that one of the continued impacts of sustaining normalcy is generating the conditions where school is encountered as the mouth of the shark. While inclusive rhetoric and policies may seek to conceal the presence of the shark's mouth, practices of diagnosing, sorting and labeling students remain one of the primary functions of education. Therefore, when policy statements like: 'All successful education environments are caring spaces' (Parekh and Underwood 2015, 3), are situated alongside continued special education practices of labeling, diagnosing, and sorting students based on their differences, readers might consider taking a moment to stop and wonder about how care is being deployed in educational spaces. Similarly, Dolmage (2018) makes note of the ways Canada's reputation as a welcoming nation conceals a long historical legacy of injustice to both indigenous peoples and 'new' immigrants. Dolmage (2018, 71) explains:

Importantly, 'old' Western European immigrants, even though they literally brought with them to Canada diseases and agricultural practices that systematically contaminated the country, eradicating First Nations, were constructed as bodies natural to this world, while 'new' immigrants could be constructed as climatically unsuitable.

Here Dolmage (2018) creates a distinction between the rhetoric of inclusiveness that surrounds Canada as a nation and the racist, ableist and classist immigration and settler colonial policies that have shaped Canada. In reading inclusive school policies alongside the inclusive rhetoric that Canada uses to represent itself, while also juxtaposing the concealment of unjust practices both along the nation's border as well as the border of the regular classroom, the striking parallels demonstrate how inclusion acts as a concealment of exclusion.

Stories through disability that trouble the homeland of normal

Throughout this next section, I wonder about how to tell stories differently amidst disability while refusing and resisting the hegemonic tactics of normalcy's both pervasive and illusive attempts to contain and restrain who belongs where, while using inclusion as a

cover for its exclusionary tactics. In considering the power imbalances between counsellors and families of children with autism, Hodge (2013, 106) 'wonder[s] if ableism puts some sort of ceiling on the development of empathy ... perhaps we can only imagine what it means to be in the world within the boundaries of existences that are already known to us'. Here, Hodge expresses a concern in the very real impossibility of reimagining human relations within the hegemonic confines of normalcy. His concerns are substantiated by disability scholars such as Slee (2008, 2013, 2018) who reveal the ways in which inclusionary policies and practices have been coopted by a neoliberalist agenda that counts human life as valuable based on its productive potential. This way of counting some kinds of human life as valuable based on productive needs also sustains the conditions of discounting human lives in ways that continue to disproportionately impact disabled, racialised and classed bodies. As Mohanty and Mart (2003) and Shire (2015) intimate, there is an impossibility of feeling like the homeland of normal is a place of belonging when the price of belonging means adhering to the principles of inclusion that are based on the kinds of colonial western logics that sustain the privilege of the few. Between the impossibilities of reimagining human worlds differently while at home in normalcy, and the impossibilities of remaining at home when 'home ... [is confronted as] an illusion of coherence and safety based on the exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance' (Mohanty and Martin 2003, 90), I want to suggest that there is an importance in engaging in a reorientation towards the small spaces where stories embodied and told through disability continue to survive and thrive. Turning towards these stories, not only points to the fundamental dilemmas within rhetoric and practice of inclusionary policies but also suggest the possibilities in inhabiting disability while in between the homeland of normal and the always and already occurring reimagining of human relationships outside of the ubiquitous illusion of normal.

In Michalko's (2002), narrative account of confronting both his relationship to disability and to normalcy he writes:

Before my congenital 'eye problem' expressed itself, I was ensconced in the homeland of sightedness in the way everyone else was. I was so at home there that I took it for granted and trusted it with my life; it was my life. Even though my severe visual impairment shook my trust in my homeland, I continued to live there. But now, out of necessity, I would watch sightedness, imitate it and no longer take it for granted (21).

Michalko's recounting of his growing awareness of the homeland of normal, serve as a reminder that home, perhaps both because of and despite the connotations of comfort and care embedded within it, remain both precarious and conditional. His story is a representative example of numerous stories about the encounters of disabled children and youth within the normative demands of schooling that trouble inclusionary policies oriented towards the homeland of normal. Michalko's (2002) narrative account of his lived experience serve to remind us that school spaces that some call home, that some call caring and successful environments, continue to remain disorienting, discomforting and even hostile to differences (Ahmed 2006, 2012). Michalko (2002, 21) indicates how he inhabits his disabled difference in a manner that displaces and disrupts the homeland of normal so that he and those of us who read with him 'can no longer take it for granted'. This move of 'no longer taking it for granted' is a move that Michalko (2002, 21) describes as being born 'out of necessity' even as he 'continued to live there' is indicative of the

possibilities that inhabit the seemingly impossible tangible realities of a homeland that is hostile to your embodied difference.

The narrative possibilities encountered through the necessities of inhabiting a homeland that is hostile to embodied differences, may offer small spaces whereby people with disabilities and their nondisabled allies, can both trouble the hegemony of normalcy while also finding ways to inhabit human relations through disabled differences in distinctly different ways. The need to continue to trouble normalcy through disability remains acutely necessary in the sphere of public education and its sustained orientation towards pursuing inclusive policies that preserve the homeland of normal. For example, Yergeau (2018) describes numerous concerns with the kinds of stories that are persistently told and recirculated about autistic people. Yergeau (2018) conveys frustration about the literal descriptions of autistic children and the excretion of feces that occupied the mind and circulation of stories told by Yergeau's own parents as well as the blogs and support groups of parents of autistic children. The rendering of the autistic body as a spectacle through stories of failing to properly excrete feces subsequently reinforces the category of normal and the desire to strive towards belonging within this category. As a self-identified autistic, Yergeau's (2018, 3) work endeavours to not only critique 'the figurative shit that contemporary autism discourse has flung onto autistic bodies', Yergeau also endeavours to tell different stories about the ways autistics can contribute to the transformation of the human imaginary. Through her own dependence on the work of autistic and queer activists, Yergeau (2018) foregrounds the ways embodied autistic stories are also redefining rhetoric in ways that trouble its western colonial adherences. Yergeau (2018) justifiably reads the homeland of normal and its numerous uses of rhetorical mechanisms of diagnoses, labeling and sorting as hostile to the survival of autistic, disabled and queer embodiments and yet, Yergeau tells stories that persist in finding spaces and places to survive and thrive.

Distinct yet linked, Yergeau (2018) and Michalko (2002) tell stories through disability that are embedded in the necessity of being troubled by and subsequently troubling the homeland of normal. Just as Goodley and Runswick-Cole state (2016, 2): 'Disability has the radical potential to trouble the normative, rational, independent, autonomous subject that is so often imagined when the human is evoked'. Routed and rooted through distinctly different storytelling methodologies Michalko (2002) and Yergeau (2018) demonstrate how normalcy remains an untenable hostile homeland to differences both despite and because of the rhetoric of inclusion that it depends on for its sustenance. Michalko's (2002) stories foreground sociological and phenomenological embodied sensibilities in questioning the false dichotomy posed between segregated special education classes and regular classes. He states (Michalko 2002, 66):

Both types of education participate in and promote the collective understanding that the only 'reality there is can be found in 'the world of the normal' and since this is the only homeland, disabled students should receive all the help they can get in preparation for 'fitting in.'

When Michalko's insight is contextualised within current directions of inclusive education that are being deployed to: justify cutbacks in services for disabled children and their families (Runswick-Cole and Goodley 2015), rename segregated classes and regular classes as inclusive (Slee 2018) as well as, enact processes of continuous monitoring of student (mis)behaviour (Manolev, Sullivan, and Slee 2019), what is brought into stark

relief is that there is little difference between inclusive school policies and sustaining the hegemony of normalcy. Indeed, current inclusive school policies, appear to conceal strategies to manage differences rather than learning from, with and through disabled embodiments.

The inclusive policies and practices of this contemporary moment no longer use words like ‘subnormal’ or ‘feeble-minded’ as was the case a century ago both in the context of managing public education (Ellis 2019) and in managing Canada’s border (Dolmage 2018). However, in situating the analysis of the rhetoric surrounding, labeling and impacting autistic peoples within queer studies, disability studies and rhetorical studies, Yergeau (2018) shows that current inclusive practices sanctioned by both educators, psychologists and medical professionals remain as dehumanizing and objectifying as the explicitly ableist rhetoric of previous generations. In offering a critique of both Theory of Mind (ToM) and Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) Yergeau (2018) demonstrates how these diagnostic and treatment regimens often referred to in education and the medical community as the ‘gold standard’ are oriented to gradations of managing and/or curing autism in striving towards arriving at normalcy. ‘Taken together, ToM and ABA construe the autistic as involuntarily willed, involuntarily drafted – beholden not only to neuronal desires but to the desires of therapists, caregivers and social norms’ (Yergeau 2018, 11–12). The orientations of ToM and ABA towards sustaining normalcy, are not only critiqued by Yergeau (2018), they are also shown to have harmed autistic adults whom count themselves amongst those who have recovered from the impacts of these diagnostic and treatment regimens. The stories through disability that Yergeau (2018) foregrounds in the work *Authoring Autism*, continue to be needed as Ministries of Education such as the one in Ontario, continue to subscribe to practices like ABA as a component part of current education policy (Ontario Ministry of Education, PPM 140, 2007). What is also needed, is a reconsideration of what kinds of practices count as inclusive when considering the ones currently calling themselves inclusive, merely intend to sustain the homeland of normal.

According to Yergeau (2018, 180): ‘if we are seeking to build a world in which neuroqueer people are respected and seen as wholly human, then our frame of reference cannot ... rely on a sliding-scale conception of disability and normalcy’. It is this sliding scale of who counts as human that remains as Slee (2018, 1) suggests: ‘deep in the bones of education’ in ways that have neither been adequately confronted or acknowledged as integral to sustaining normalcy under the guise of inclusion. For disabilities scholars like Yergeau (2018), for whom the homeland of normalcy remains hostile to queer and autistic bodies, there is a necessary urgency to the work of reimagining both the category of the human as well as our human relations with both human and non-human life. Michalko’s work (2002), though distinct from Yergeau (2018), also provokes the urgent reconsideration of what it means to inhabit a homeland that remains hostile to your existence. Michalko (2002, 90) considers:

what if blind people actually believed what they saw? What if we thought we were actually seeing the true thing? Then there would be two true things ... as radically different as these two worlds would be (are?), they would both be true things.

In telling stories through disability both Yergeau (2018) and Michalko (2002) are troubling and refusing the claim to a Eurocentrically conceived version of universal humanism

that is characterised by ‘convincing others that I am human too “just like you”’ (Titchkosky (2016, 129). Unlike being oriented towards extoling the virtues of the hegemony of normalcy, Michalko (2002) and Yergeau (2018) foreground their humanity within embodied human differences that continue to persist and thrive both despite and because of inclusive school policies and practices. Thus, stories told and embodied through disability can be read as always and already reconfiguring what it means to be human both within and against the homeland of normal.

What happens when you encounter home as an illusive myth (Mohanty and Martin, 2003) intentionally placed out of your grasp? What happens when as Shire (2015) conveys ‘home is the mouth of the shark’? In the case of Michalko (2002) and Yergeau (2018), you share stories about embodying disabled differences in ways that provoke the possibilities of finding ways to trouble normalcy while inhabiting our human relations differently. In sharing these stories from Michalko (2002) and Yergeau (2018) the aim here is to shake educators out of their complacency in a manner that might serve to provoke inclusive school policies and practices to reorient their aims to learning with and from varying embodied differences. This hope for a reorientation in school curricula, policies and practices, is steeped in two key understandings of current inclusionary policies. The first is the ways inclusionary school policies sustain and preserve an orientation towards normalcy through a strategy of concealment that represents inclusion as caring, welcoming and even celebratory of difference. The second is in sustaining the homeland of normalcy, public education generates the conditions whereby children and youth encounter teaching and learning as hostile to their disabled, gendered, raced and/or classed embodiments of differences. In this sense schools and communities become both illusively out of reach and tangibly unjust. Thus, wondering about different orientations with and through our encounters with embodied differences entails a consideration of how disorientations might comprise a component part of reimagining our human becomings amidst disability. Therefore, in the next part of this paper, I wonder how stories told and embodied through disabled, raced, classed and gendered differences might find ways to thrive amidst disorienting intersubjective encounters in ways that might generate possibilities of teaching and learning differently with each other.

No place like home? – embodying and telling different stories through disorienting intersubjective encounters

As the work from Michalko (2002) and Yergeau (2018) demonstrate, encountering your school and/or your broader community as hostile to your embodied presence is unusually common for children and/or youth whom identify as disabled. Yet, as I have also foregrounded throughout this paper, the homeland of normal within which public schools are one component part, conditionally include or outright exclude children and youth based on race, class, gender and/or sexual orientation. For example, Ahmed (2012, 2), recalls a moment walking along the streets of her home and being stopped by police to ask if she was Aboriginal. She states (Ahmed 2012, p. 2):

Having recalled this experience of not being white, of being made into stranger, the one who is recognized as ‘out of place,’ the one who does not belong, whose proximity is registered as crime or threat! As memory, it was of becoming a stranger in a place I called home.

To feel strange or be a stranger in a place/space that is supposed to be home as Ahmed (2012) so vividly accounts invariably provoked a disorientation with the place she knew as home. I tether this moment of displacement and disorientation to Shire's (2015) vivid account of refugees being displaced from their homes and being encountered as strangers in pursuit of another home. I also tether Ahmed's account of displacement and disorientation to Mohanty and Martin's (2003) return to a place they called home only to be confronted with the stark realization that the place they used to call home, only serves as a reminder of the exclusions and injustices that paradoxically generated the illusory sense of comfort and care. In this way, the distinct yet linked work of Michalko (2002) and Yergeau (2018), Ahmed (2012), Shire (2015) and Mohanty and Martin (2003) come to be tethered together in ways that generate disorienting intersubjective encounters.

For the purposes of this paper, disorienting intersubjective encounters follows the work of Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2016), Goodley, Lawthom, and Runswick Cole (2014) and Ahmed (2006, 2012) to foreground both the risks and possibilities in embodying and telling stories both within and against the hegemony of normalcy. Disorienting intersubjective encounters simultaneously keeps in the foreground the risks of telling stories that merely sustain normalcy as the measure of what it means to be human, while also insisting on the possibilities of embodying and re-storying what it means to become human differently amidst disability. According to Ahmed (2006, 160):

Disorientation involves failed orientations ... Bodies that do not follow the line of whiteness, for instance, might be stopped in their tracks, which does not simply stop one from getting somewhere, but changes one's relation to what is simply here!

Being here, stopped in our tracks, amidst past and present injustices require a commitment to teach and learn with one another in ways that preserves life while refusing to celebrate or centre the self in ways that limit who is valued/counts as human. Similarly, it involves rejecting 'the line of whiteness' and its defining function for humanity. When this insight from Ahmed (2006) is read with and alongside Goodley, Lawthom, and Runswick Cole (2014, 344) insight through Braidotti that: 'the old modernist idealisation of the unitary, rational, independent, dislocated, solitary, able-bodied human subject has been revealed as a fiction', it suggests that current inclusive policies that remain oriented towards normalcy also continue sustaining a myth of what it means to be human that is no longer tenable. In turning towards each other through our varying embodiments, there remains the ever-present risk of being swallowed whole by the demands of normalcy even as we question, wonder and imagine what other worlds and/or human relations might possible.

We describe this reality as dis/human one which, we contend, simultaneously acknowledges the possibilities offered by disability to trouble, reshape and re-fashion traditional conceptions of the human (to 'dis' typical understandings of personhood) while simultaneously asserting disabled people's humanity (to assert normative, often traditional understandings of personhood). (Goodley and Runswick-Cole 2016, 2)

I quote Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2016) at length in order to emphasise the everyday dilemmas encountered within the homeland of normal that readily excludes and/or conditionally includes humans based on ableist, racist, classist, heteronormative logics.

What if the homeland of normal remains the only place you can call home despite its both implicit and explicit hostilities oriented towards your way of being and becoming in the world? In this sense the disorientation Ahmed (2006) refers to in her work is both a source of hope in the possibilities of substantial transformation as well as hopelessness within adhering to the mechanisms of normalcy in order to survive. Adjei's work (2016) offers an example of the disorienting everyday impacts of insisting on your own humanity while simultaneously encountering the demands of normalcy within the classroom. Adjei (2016) recounts the experiences of a Nigerian family whose daughter was read as black and disabled and subsequently implicated in the dehumanizing discourses entailed in not measuring up to normalcy. Through the work of Fanon, Adjei (2016, 282) points out how Vida a young, black Nigerian student is read by her teacher Mr. Collins as not belonging 'because normalization only exists in those who embody white middle-class heteronormative identity'. This reading of Vida as not belonging subsequently implicates her parents and Vida in telling a distinctly different story about her, while simultaneously navigating the bureaucratic processes initiated by Vida's teacher, in reading her as out of place (Adjei 2016). As Titchkosky (2007, 2011) and Dolmage (2017) have also demonstrated, bureaucratic mechanisms of management read disability as a problem that individuals must identify, justify, prove and account for in order to access an educational system that remains oriented to sustaining and preserving normative minds and bodies. As long as the homeland of normalcy continues to sustain its hegemony, it remains an inescapable everyday reality that disabled people must confront in order to struggle for access that normative bodies take for granted.

In part, the ongoing persistence in public schools as well as in institutions of 'higher' education, in conceptualizing disabled peoples as problems that need to be managed through bureaucratically reasoned allocations of access (Slee, 2018; Baker 2002a; Ellis 2019; Dolmage 2018), contributes to disorienting intersubjective encounters. While the homeland of normal sustains and insists on its hegemony, disabled children and youth, as well as their families, are confronted with charts that endeavour to capture their humanity by itemizing strengths (can do's) with needs (can't do's). When recounting the misreading of Vida's inability to hold scissors as indicative of disability rather than a cultural taboo practiced in Nigeria, Adjei's (2016) foregrounding of Vida's story exemplifies the implication of such lists. Disabled people and their nondisabled allies inhabit these disorienting impossibilities of fighting for access within institutions like schools, while also simultaneously confronting the injustices of conditional access and endeavouring to reimagine and reorient what it means to become human with and through disability. Goodley, Lawthom, and Runswick Cole (2014, 352) quote a mother from one of their research projects as saying:

'I can't keep chasing the normal. I mean I've done so much to try and make my son normal, but I can't keep that up. ... I need to accept him in the ways that he is and just enjoy them and him.'

Encountering the homeland of normal as both ubiquitous and illusive generate the conditions where your home is actually not a home. Rather, it is confronting the tangible realities of repeated disorienting encounters that inhabit the impossibilities of the small spaces between dis/ability.

In situating the current moment within the posthuman, Goodley, Lawthom, and Runswick Cole (2014, 348) state: ‘disability is the quintessential posthuman condition: because it calls for new ontologies, ways of relating, living and dying’. Here Goodley, Lawthom, and Runswick Cole (2014) evoke how the turn towards the posthuman intersects with disability studies and the project of reimagining what it means to become human with each other in ways that refuse and refute western colonial onto-epistemologies. While neither Yergeau (2018) nor Michalko (2002) characterise their work as posthuman, both offer distinct yet linked stories that contest normalcy while embodying the kinds of ‘new ontologies’ that Goodley, Lawthom, and Runswick Cole (2014, 348) refer to in their work. Also significant in the stories embodied by scholars like Yergeau (2018) and Michalko (2002), are the ways in which the risks of sustaining the dehumanizing practices of normalcy remain tangibly present in the foreground. Ahmed (2006, 159) states ‘that disorientation is unevenly distributed: some bodies more than others have their involvement in the world called into crisis’. When this insight about inequality from Ahmed (2006), is read alongside the work of Yergeau (2018) and Michalko (2002), it suggests the import of telling stories differently while also attending to the risks within the hegemonic abuses of power that are inextricably linked with normalcy. Therefore, in pursuing ‘new ontologies, ways of relating, living and dying’ (Goodley, Lawthom, and Runswick Cole 2014, 348) disabilities studies must continue to pursue alliances with postcolonial, decolonial, critical race theory, queer theory and indigenous studies. Thus, in seeking to inhabit the small spaces where new ontologies are possible, it is also necessary to reach out amidst disorienting intersubjective encounters towards other marginalised groups who are also disoriented in the aim of pursuing ‘productive alternatives [that] might emerge in response to the oppressive nature of humanism’ (Goodley, Lawthom, and Runswick Cole 2014, 343). In this way, the turn toward the posthuman might also evoke the hopeful possibilities of inhabiting our embodied relations through disability differently.

Concluding thoughts

This paper has taken the position that the ubiquitous and illusive homeland of normalcy continues to thrive under the guise of inclusive rhetoric and policies like those public education continues to the foreground. One of the focuses of this paper has been in endeavouring to show how the abuses of power wrought within hegemonic orientations toward normalcy in public schooling were shaped in the era when eugenics was viewed as a legitimate branch of science that subsequently imbued its ethos of diagnosing, sorting and labeling humans within an education system that continues to adhere to these racist, ableist, classist and heteronormative logics under the guise of inclusion. Through foregrounding provocations from poets like Shire (2015) and postcolonial feminist scholars like Mohanty and Martin (2003) to the embodied lived and narrated realities of disability scholars like Michalko (2002), Yergeau (2018) and Adjei (2016), this paper also endeavoured to demonstrate the necessity of reorienting current onto-epistemological aims of schooling towards practices of disorientating intersubjective encounters. Inhabiting and pursuing disorienting intersubjective encounters is not offered as a strategy situated within a utopic or naïve reimagining of the future. Rather, the strategy of inhabiting disorienting intersubjective encounters is situated within a confrontation and a persistent remembering of past and current injustices, while also inhabiting present and future onto-

epistemological shifts that are being embodied in the everyday lives of disabled peoples and their nondisabled allies. This entails as Goodley, Lawthom, and Runswick Cole (2014) and Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2016) contend a continued fight for access (as upsetting and frustrating as this continues to be) within a framework of inclusive education that only conditionally allocates access to normalcy. In order to avoid the risks of sustaining the unjust legacies of colonial western logics, disorienting intersubjective encounters subsequently entails reaching out towards other marginalised communities that also encounter the homeland of normalcy as disorienting and hostile. Both despite and because of the embedded risks and dilemmas of inhabiting and pursuing the small spaces where ‘new ontologies, ways of relating, living and dying’ (Goodley, Lawthom, and Runswick Cole 2014, 348) might thrive, perhaps it is time for public schools to become no place like home.

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