De-centering the Myth of Normalcy in Education:
A Critique of Inclusionary Policies in Education through
Disability Studies

Maria Karmiris[*]

Department of Social Justice Education, University of Toronto,

maria.karmiris@alum.utoronto.ca

Abstract

The intention of this paper is to inhabit a mode of exploration that foregrounds the hopeful possibility that teaching and learning might be otherwise than the continued perpetuation of hierarchies of exclusion. In focusing on this hopeful possibility, this paper focuses on two related questions. First, how does the story of normalcy continue to maintain and sustain its grip on education through inclusionary policies and practices? Second, what are the effects of this domineering narrative upon the lives of children with disabilities in our public schools? Numerous scholars in the field of disability studies with a wide array of backgrounds and research interests have offered considerable insight into how education works very hard to represent itself as a smooth road of progress and success. In part, this paper will offer a review of the literature within disability studies. The work of scholars such as Baker (2002, 2015), Nirmala Erevelles (2000, 2011, 2013) and Roger Slee (2008, 2013), who offer insights into the systemic pervasiveness of exclusionary practices in schools, will be examined as a method of exploring the tactics of the hegemonic narrative of normalcy. This paper will also offer a literature review of the work of disability studies scholars such as Annamma (2014), Hodge and Runswick-Cole (2013) and Connor (2009), who offer insights into the harm that maintaining normalcy continues to perpetuate through narratives from the perspective of disabled youth and children. In examining how hierarchies of exclusion manage to be continually reformed from the varying perspectives of these scholars, my hope is to discuss how, despite appearances to the contrary, possibilities remain for undoing the grip of normal by considering the ways in which disability studies contributes to our understanding of teaching and learning with and through differences.

Keywords: inclusion, normalcy, disability, narrative, education

* Maria Karmiris is a PhD student at OISE in the Social Justice Education department whose research interests include disability studies. She is also an elementary school teacher who has been teaching in the Toronto District School Board since 2002.

Décentrer le mythe de la normalité dans l'éducation: Une critique des politiques d'inclusion dans l'éducation à travers les études sur le handicap

Résumé

L'intention de cet article est d'habiter un mode d'exploration qui met en avant la possibilité d'espoir que l'enseignement et l'apprentissage pourraient être autrement que la perpétuation des hiérarchies d'exclusion. En mettant l'accent sur cette possibilité d'espoir, ce document se concentre sur deux questions connexes. Premièrement, comment l'histoire de la normalité continue-t-elle à maintenir et à soutenir son emprise sur l'éducation à travers des politiques et des pratiques d'inclusion? Deuxièmement, quels sont les effets de ce récit dominateur sur la vie des enfants handicapés dans nos écoles publiques. De nombreux chercheurs dans le domaine des études sur le handicap avec un large éventail des milieux et d'intérêts de recherche ont offert un aperçu considérable de la façon dont le travail de chercheurs comme Baker (2002, 2015), Nirmala Erevelles (2000, 2011, 2013) et Roger Slee (2008, 2013), qui offre un aperçu de l'omniprésence systémique des pratiques d'exclusion dans les écoles, sera examiné comme une méthode d'explorer la tactique du récit hégémonique de la normalité. Cet article offrira également une revue de la littérature sur le travail des spécialistes des études sur le handicap comme Annamma (2014), Hodge et Runswick-Cole (2013) et Connor (2009), qui donnent un aperçu du mal que le maintien de la normalité continue de perpétuer du point de vue des enfants et des jeunes handicapés. En examinant comment les hiérarchies de l'exclusion peuvent être continuellement réformées à partir des perspectives variées de ces chercheurs, mon espoir est de discuter comment, malgré les apparences du contraire, des possibilités demeurent pour défaire l'emprise du normal en considérant comment les études sur le handicap contribuent à notre compréhension de l'enseignement et de l'apprentissage avec et à travers les différences.

Mots clefs

Inclusion; normalité; handicap; récit; éducation

> At the core of 'cosmic fear' lies, let us note, the nonentity of the frightened, wan and mortal being compared to the enormity of the everlasting universe; the sheer weakness, incapacity to resist, vulnerability of the frail and soft human body that the sight of the 'starry heavens' or 'the material mass of the mountains' reveals; but also the realization that it is not in human power to grasp, comprehend, mentally assimilate that awesome might which manifests itself in the sheer grandiosity of the universe. That universe escapes all understanding. Its intentions are unknown, its next steps are unpredictable… And so cosmic fear' is also the horror of the unknown: the terror of uncertainty. (Bauman, 2004, p. 46)

I cannot resist being captured by Zigmunt Bauman's description of human vulnerability within the context of the awe-inspiring universe. I feel humbled by the vastness of the unknown and unreachable that is beyond the knowing of my "frail and soft human body" (Bauman, 2004, p. 46). Laced within Bauman's description of the vulnerability of human life is the "cosmic fear", which he links to the human desire to escape into certainty (Bauman, 2004, pp. 46-47). To escape the fear of the unknown, Bauman (2004) indicates that humans have deployed, in a variety of forms, a notion of "us" versus "them". At different points in history and in different contexts, the "us" is depicted as being on the side of God, on the side of the Law, and on the side of Science (Bauman, 2004). "Them" are the abject Others "who are the true planetary 'parasites', 'scroungers' and 'spongers'" (Bauman, 2004, p. 44). "Cosmic fear" of the vastness of the universe slips very quickly into an (un)reasonable fear of "them". Fear as embedded in experience of the universe and in experiences of "us" versus "them" feels "natural" and "normal" (Bauman, 2004). Yet, within Bauman (2004), there is a recognition that this belief is a social construct whose capture we must strive to resist so as to avoid being enclosed in a "circle of certainty" from which escape may not be possible (Freire, 2000, p. 38). Similarly, beyond the fear depicted in Bauman's description of the universe, his

words also seem to point to the beauty that lies within this uncertain and vulnerable

space through which we experience the awe and wonder of the unknown "of the starry

heavens" (Bauman, 2004, p. 44).

Inspired by Bauman's evocation of both fear and wonder amidst our social

relations, this paper considers the hopeful possibility that teaching and learning might be

otherwise than the continued perpetuation of hierarchies of exclusion. In focusing on this

hopeful possibility, this paper will primarily explore two related questions. First, how

does the story of normalcy continue to maintain its grip on education through

inclusionary policies and practices? Second, what are the effects of this domineering

narrative upon the lives of children with disabilities in our public schools? Numerous

scholars in the field of disability studies with a wide array of backgrounds and research

interests have offered considerable insight into how education works very hard to

represent itself as committed to progress and success. It would not be feasible or

possible to include a thorough literature review of these contributions here.[1] However,

this paper attempts to focus on two intermeshed components of this scholarship as a

way to both consider the pernicious effects of maintaining normalcy, as well as the

ongoing resistance to "normal". The terms normal or normalcy in this paper are

understood to refer to the male, middle class, Eurocentric, heteronormative figure that

sustains its hegemony as the standard other versions of humanity are measured

against. One component to be considered in this section resides within the work of

disability studies scholars such as Baker (2002, 2015), Erevelles (2000, 2011, 2013)

and Slee (2008, 2013). These scholars offer insights into the systemic pervasiveness of

exclusionary practices in schools that continue to sustain their adherence to "normal"

despite or perhaps because of attempts to reform policies and practices. The second

component to be considered resides within the work of disabilities studies scholars such

as Annamma (2014) and Connor (2009) who share narratives from youth to convey the

harm that maintaining normalcy continues to perpetuate. In foregrounding the work of

disability studies scholars, I consider how narrative remains a critical tool in the

continued efforts to undo the grip normalcy sustains upon teaching and learning

practices. Through this analysis, I contend that Bauman's evocation of both wonder and

cosmic fear is a call to embrace one another amidst our partialities and vulnerabilities as

we reimagine how we might teach and learn with and through disability.

**The Story of Normalcy: Tactics of Reforming the Processes of Hegemony and
Marginalization through the Rhetoric of Inclusion**

Coming to know what constitutes the "normal" human remains a pervasive and

ubiquitous focus of educational policies and practices. According to Tanya Titchkosky

and Rod Michalko: "normalcy matters because it is understood as the legitimate way of

being in the world and the only version of the good life" (2009, p. 5). To adhere to a

belief that attaining and maintaining normalcy is the most valued human aspiration has

resulted in multiple professional institutions, including special education, to remain

devoted to curing and rehabilitating disability (Titchkosky & Michalko, 2009). For

example, *Education for All (2005)*, a policy document guiding teaching practices in

Ontario, describes the present context for students with disabilities in schools.

> According to school board statistics, most students with special needs spend at
> least 50 per cent of their instructional day in a regular classroom…It is imperative
> …that teachers assist every student to prepare for the highest degree of
> independence possible. (p. 2)

This statement is asserted without question, and thus within the first two pages of this

policy document, the story we are told about students with disabilities begins to take

shape as one of partial, if any, presence within the regular classroom. Not all students

are part of the regular classroom all the time. We are also told that attaining "the highest

degree of independence possible" is not only the most valued aim of education, but it is

also a goal that values a version of selfhood that refuses to acknowledge its

inescapable dependencies and vulnerabilities. The insistence in educational policy

documents that some humans are valued more than others are, perpetuates a belief in

normalcy that places disability in the category of unwanted "other". The notion of

academic goods and progress, so highly monitored and revered within schools, can

ultimately be seen as rooted in a fiction based on a perpetuation of the status quo that

ensures the group defined as "us" maintains their access to power and privilege, while

the group defined as "them" is perpetually deemed surplus and expendable (Bauman,

2004; Titchkosky & Michalko, 2009).

Questioning the ways in which educational policy and practices adhere to

sustaining the hegemony of normalcy, which offers conditional inclusion by degrees,

requires exploring how subjectivity continues to be embedded in a Western regime of

power/knowledge that values some ways of being human while fearing others. Focusing

on how mechanisms of power/knowledge perpetuate hierarchies of exclusion by

recirculating the story of normal, Baker (2002) succinctly states:

> The mutually constituting effects of power/knowledge and their subjectivity and
> internalization effects inhere in the well-intended evaluation efforts and
> classificatory practices of major social institutions of schools and universities and
> in the very efforts to rethink and reshape them. (p. 696)

Along with the keen influence of Foucault in her analysis, what is expressed in this

quotation, are the ways in which much of Baker's work has questioned how the

narrative of normal has managed to reform and sustain itself, despite the enormous cost

to those who find themselves at the intersections of race, gender, class, disability,

religion, and/ or sexual orientation. One of Baker's (2002, 2015) key contributions is in

demonstrating the acute and undeniable linkages between the striving for superiority in

mind, body, and social behaviour with the eugenics movement and the subsequent

presence of these logics in public schooling. One of her strategies in interrogating the

hegemony of normal is tracing a timeline going back to the 19th century and the

eugenics movement of Sir Francis Galton (Baker, 2002). While following the reshaping

of this movement from the negative associations of its past (e.g. sterilization programs),

to its taken for granted presence as necessary "quality control of the nation's

population" through which public education plays a key role (Baker, 2002, p. 664), she

convincingly argues that the eugenics movement of the nineteenth century remains

active in current public-school policies and practices. She also points to what she terms

"the cultural biases inherent in perfecting technologies for helping to develop

appropriate skills and values" as sustaining the special education model in public

schools through a rhetoric of care that in actuality relies on the racist hierarchies of

eugenicists from the 19th century up until our own time (Baker, 2002, p. 683). As part of

tracing this seemingly never-ending, reforming line of normalcy, Baker (2002) applies

Foucauldian concepts such as "superiority effects", "dividing practices", and

"governmentality" to both interrogate and critique what she terms "the hunt for disability"

that schools remain engaged in as part of their "segregationist function" (pp. 669-681).

Baker (2002) interrogates the "power/knowledge nexus" to ask, "after the diversionary

function of the exam and the normalizing function of schooling is exposed…is it…ever

okay to think of some humans as normal and some humans as not?" (p. 697).

Baker's question is not new. Yet, despite the fact that numerous people both past

and present have contemplated what it means to be human, the question remains in

need of continual renewal due to the pernicious ways both the field of education and

society as a whole engage in the ongoing reproduction of normalcy that generates the

conditions of exclusion and marginalization of disability. The domineering nature of this

narrow/slim path of success, has paradoxically dispersed and enforced itself upon

virtually every corner of the globe. Mitchell and Snyder (2003), offer a distinct yet linked

contribution to Baker's (2002, 2015) analysis of exclusionary school policies and

practices. To the extent that Mitchell and Snyder (2003) and Baker (2002) respectively

have contributed to the understanding in disability studies of the historically rooted

intersections between categories of disability and race, their work can be seen as

allegiant to the cause of attempting to loosen the grip normalcy has on schooling and

society. However, Baker (2002, 2015) is rooted in the fields of educational history and

Foucauldian analysis to support her contributions to disability studies in ways that

Mitchell and Snyder are not. Mitchell and Snyder tend to favour the scholarly fields of

cultural studies in their research and analyses. For example, their piece entitled, "The

eugenic Atlantic: Race, disability, and the making of an international eugenic science,

1800-1945", applies the work from sociologist and cultural studies scholar, Gilroy to

emphasize the domineering logics of oppression and exclusion that found/finds routes

of dispersal and continue to have devastating effects for disabled and black bodies on

both sides of the Atlantic (Mitchell & Snyder, 2003). While broaching the ramifications of

eugenics by drawing upon different fields of study from that of Baker (2002), Mitchell

and Snyder (2003) also work to demonstrate the devastating linkages between the field

of eugenics, the medical community, and scientific discourses around the "ideal"

human. According to Mitchell and Snyder (2003), cross-border connections amongst the

medical community and scientists promoting eugenics persisted throughout wartime.

"Even among countries who were engaged military enemies at the time, scientific and

cultural agreement about the menace of 'defectiveness' transcended battlefields and

diplomatic impasses as an ideological formation" (Mitchell & Snyder, 2003, p. 846).

Mitchell's and Snyder's (2003) insights regarding the evident acceptance and dispersal

of a domineering logic intent upon marginalizing and or erasing from view anyone who

was placed in the category of disability or racial inferiority both before and during World

War II, remains relevant today due to the undeniable educational push in both policy

and practice to value some humans more than others in ways that continue to

negatively impact the lives of disabled peoples. The racist, eugenicist logics of the 19th

and early 20th century that foregrounded a fear of the "other" remain sustained through

educational practices and policies that only include disability by conditional degrees and

that serve to safeguard normalcy. Normalcy as able-bodied, heteronormative, middle

class, white, and male, remains the measure of conditional inclusion for other versions

of being and becoming human.

In offering his analysis of social exclusion, Slee (2013) notes that "… it is

everywhere and it has been there for a very long time. In this way, the fact of exclusion

has come to be seen as natural; it is a part of the order of things" (p. 897). Slee's insight

about how exclusion is taken for granted as "natural" might help to explain the way in

which independence makes an appearance in the regular classroom as a "natural"

criteria for certain inclusions. Similarly, Erevelles (2011) also points out the ways that

the rhetoric of inclusion is actually used to perpetuate continued practices of

segregating students with disabilities. Erevelles (2011) states, "Inclusion presupposes

what the "regular" student is like, against which the Other student is measured and

found wanting… [and] serve[s] to unwittingly construct certain student subjectivities as

deviant, … thereby justifying their exclusion" (pp. 2157-2158). Through his own analysis

of the "paradigmatic rhetoric of inclusion" within the lens of the expressed desire of the

fields of rehabilitation and special education to fix and cure disability, like Erevelles

(2011) and Slee (2013), Michalko (2009) also questions the taken-for-granted notions of

what appears to be "natural", "normal", and "regular". According to Michalko (2009),

"despite the commitment to inclusion, the very idea of "special education" is built upon a

sense of exclusion. Ironically, disabled students are excluded from their non-disabled

peers by invoking the paradigmatic ideology of 'inclusion'" (p. 71). Though they analyze

the dilemma of conditional inclusion of disability in schools from distinct contexts and

circumstances, when read in conjunction with one another, Slee (2013), Erevelles

(2011), and Michalko (2009), foreground how the narrative of normalcy is deeply

implicated in the ongoing efforts to exclude to disability.

Public schools, it seems, are always in need of (re)form. Yet oddly enough,

Baker (2002, 2015), Slee (2008, 2013), and Erevelles (2011, 2013), among others,

contend that efforts at reforming schools to include children with disabilities have led to

little if any substantive improvements in their experiences of schooling. Titchkosky

(2011) asks, "How might we deal with the paradoxical fact that bureaucratic changes regarding access and disability policy can actually be a time of no change within some structures?" (p. 93). Titchkosky (2011) considers this question within the context of her analysis of institutional policies and procedures at the post-secondary level of education. However, it also appears relevant to the work of disability studies scholars who focus on elementary schooling. This is especially relevant as it relates to current popular terms and policies in the areas of inclusion and brain-based learning. The work of Slee (2008, 2013), Erevelles (2011, 2013) and Baker (2002, 2015) are offered here as representative examples of the critique of inclusionary school policies that perpetuate rather than diminish the dominating cultural belief in normalcy by demonstrating that criteria for inclusion into the mainstream system has not changed. Assessment and evaluation policies continue to compare children based on abilities deemed as normal for a particular age and gender of a child, while somehow disproportionately placing black students as well as students from lower socioeconomic classes into special education with more frequency (Baker 2002, 2015; Erevelles, 2011, 2013; Slee 2008, 2013). Alongside the seemingly warm and welcoming use of the word "inclusion" in school policies, another popular term circulating in schools is "brain-based learning". Baker (2015) demonstrates how the rhetoric around building and improving on brain capacity is directly linked to the history of the eugenics movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. She states, "[C]hildren labeled as having 'severe cognitive impairment' as well as children coded as 'the indigenous child' and the 'urban child'…become stereotypes, figures and fantasies within the body politic, subtly presumed to be 'holding the nation back'" (Baker, 2015, p. 188). It seems that both the

terms inclusion and brain-based learning are masks intended to maintain the privileging

of normal while marginalizing any "other" deemed outside this narrow band of attributes

that comprises normalcy.

Thus far, this paper has outlined the work of some disability studies scholars who

have demonstrated the ways in which current educational policies and practices

continue to adhere to and reform an educational structure that perpetuates hierarchies

of exclusion. A great deal of effort is required to sustain and continually reform the

hegemonic placement of normalcy. However, one of the reasons the story of normal

must constantly seek to assert its hegemony is because, ultimately, this story remains a

partial and inadequate frame through which to know and be in the world. Normalcy's

hegemony is justifiably questioned and precarious due to its inescapable partiality that

insists on masking itself as an objective standard of measure for humanity. "It is the

mission of stories to select, and it is their nature to include through exclusion and to

illuminate through casting shadows…. Without selection, there would be no story"

(Bauman, 2004, p. 17). This insight from Bauman (2004), serves as a reminder that the

conundrum of a story, a policy document, and/or an educational structure is that it

requires exclusion through selection. The conundrum becomes a blatant injustice when

one version of being human (e.g., Western Man) imposes a belief in its own superiority,

while diminishing the multiple ways of being in the world that are embodied as lived

realities among those who find themselves at the intersections of race, gender, class,

disability, religion and/or sexual orientation. This is evident in the work of Chimamanda

Adichie (2009), among others[2], who criticizes the hegemony of Western stories that

have colonized the globe both in the realm of theory and in the daily practice of living. A

critique of the hegemony of Western Man is also evident in the work of Critical Race

scholars, such as Richard Delgado (1989), who have long seen the power within the

inherent partiality of stories to both oppress and emancipate humans. "Counter stories,

which challenge received wisdom…can open new windows into reality, showing us that

there are possibilities for life other than the ones we live" (Delgado, 1989, p. 2414).

Through the de-centring of the story of normalcy as epitomized in the depiction of

Western Man as the objective measure of what it might mean to be human, Delgado

(1989) and Adichie (2009) invite us to reimagine our relations amidst one another

through a plurality of stories.

Many Stories: The Role of Disability Studies in De-Centring Normalcy

        The work of disability studies scholar Annamma (2014) exemplifies the ways in

which narratives from marginalized groups continue to erode the import of normalcy and

contribute to the plurality of stories that insist upon the de-centring of Western Man as

the measure of humanity. In her narrative and intersectional analysis of young women

of colour with disabilities, Annamma (2014) offers a significant critique of the role of

normalcy within the lives of her research participants.

> Erykah thought the special education label was a mechanism for exclusion and
> increased surveillance. She believed it allowed her teachers to watch her
> closely and send her away whenever they did not want her present. Whether or
> not her perceptions were accurate, when girls are already being surveilled
> because they are of color and incarcerated, a disability label allows the lens of
> surveillance to focus on them, increasing the risk of discipline. (p.6)

Annamma (2014) insightfully suggests that the principles responsible for segregation in

education are intended to foreground as normative a version of the human—that not

only persists in marginalizing difference(s), but also implicates education as a mode of

discipline and surveillance. Elsewhere, Annamma (2014) foregrounds the necessity of

educators to learn with and from the narratives of disabled youth so as to refuse the

hegemony of normalcy. According to the Annamma's (2014) findings: "If a teacher took

a relational approach to discipline, one characterized by care and attention to student's

needs, there was less student defiance" (p. 2). Annamma here considers the possibility

that being human with each other might entail finding ways to converse through

difference with the desire for difference. Her analysis prompts me to wonder: what if the

child identified and labelled with a Developmental Delay, Mild Intellectual Delay,

Learning Disability, Autism Spectrum Disorder, etc., was viewed not as a child in need

of reform or rehabilitation, but as a human becoming human with other humans? What if

we could (re)imagine teaching and learning as multidirectional rather than as a

unidirectional flow from adult to child, abled to disabled, rich to poor, West to the rest?

What if, as Michalko (2009) poignantly articulates, we "engage with the disabled body

as an occasion to theorize and to re-move 'normalcy' to the place to 'think with' rather

than a thing to 'thoughtlessly be'" (p. 73)?

The unfortunate reality for many children and adults who live with disability, is

that the fields of education, medicine, science, and the law keep renewing their

commitment to a version of normalcy based on unjust frameworks of exclusion. Within

the last three decades or so, disability studies has continued to use the tool of narrative

to question the certainty that comprises the discourse of normalcy as a way of resisting

institutional and systemic (re)formations of "normal".[3] In addition to the work of

Annamma (2014) outlined here, examples of some of the uses of narrative can be found

in the work of Connor (2009), as well as in that of Hodge and Runswick-Cole (2013).

Connor's (2009) piece applies the narrative tool of portraiture, along with insights from

scholars in the field of Black Feminist Thought, to centre the stories of eight students

labelled learning disabled at the secondary level. Connor (2009) shares "Michael's"

story, whereby Michael offers the following description of his experience with special

education: "I say…it's like prison, once you learn your lesson, you should be released.

When I was in there, I really wanted to kill myself, because that's the most

embarrassing thing to a kid" (p. 456). As Connor (2009) demonstrates, Michael's story

of disappointment and marginalization is one of countless others who remind us of the

consequences of exclusionary schooling practices. Within the context of the

experiences of elementary age children, Hodge and Runswick-Cole (2013) share

narratives of families and their disabled children and the limited opportunities for

recreational play. This work serves as a reminder of the ways community recreational

programs intended for public use are implicated along with schools in excluding

disability. What I hope these short narratives from disability studies represent is the

ever-present possibility of undoing the domineering presence of normalcy even while

normalcy continues to (re)form itself. The power of multiple narratives to de-centre the

hegemony of normalcy remains a profound tool of resistance both despite and because

of its foregrounding of the exclusive partialities that narratives depend upon to function.

The fact that the hegemony of normalcy has to work so hard at remaking itself is an

indicator of its fragility even as it attempts to mask itself as impenetrably strong.

Concluding Thoughts

In order to outline some of the key methods used by the narrative of normal to

replicate and reform itself, this paper has focused on a literature review of some of the

work within disability studies. In large part, the institutional/structural perspectives

offered by Baker (2002, 2015), Slee (2008, 2013) Erevelles (2000, 2011, 2013) and

Mitchell and Snyder (2003) were intended to offer a glimpse into the ways in which

regimes of power/knowledge that comprise normalcy use a variety of tactics to continue

to keep retelling its story. An enormous amount of work goes into sustaining the

narrative of normal. But it seems that one of the reasons the story of normal works so

hard is due to the efforts to resist its grasp. There are numerous counter-narratives, as

evidenced in the work of disability studies scholars such as Annamma (2014) and

Connor (2009) that demonstrate how the regime of normalcy impacts disability across

many intersecting vectors of oppression such as race and class. Delgado (1989) states,

> Reality is not fixed, not a given. Rather, we construct it through conversations,
> through our lives together. Racial and class-based isolation prevents the
> hearing of diverse stories and counter stories. It diminishes the conversation
> through which we create reality, construct our communal lives. (p. 2437)

Despite the apparent sense of hopelessness that characterizes the lived reality of many

humans and in particular, humans labelled with disabilities who find themselves

conditionally included and/or marginalized, Delgado's (1989) words here outline a

hopeful belief in the power of narrative in all its partialities. The possibilities of the next

moment or series of moments amidst one another are simultaneously infused with both

the hope and fear of uncertainty. How might we engage in teaching and learning with

one another in ways that thrive through and in our differences? How might educational

structures, policies, and practices be reconfigured to avoid unidirectional impositions of

knowledge while cultivating multiple intersecting vectors of living and being in the world? How might we ensure that our social structures are accessible to varying embodiments in ways that foreground our mutual responsibility to one another? Inevitably, disability scholars, among other scholars such as Delgado (1989), Adichie (2009), and Bauman (2004), invite us to engage in the realm of the social, where building community amidst partialities requires engagements with differences as an integral and desirable component in thriving and sustaining one another.

To conclude, the insistence of reforming hegemonic structures of normalcy that continue to oppress, marginalize, and exclude within educational policies and practices allows for a single story and the dangers of its domination (Adichie, 2009) to be lived far too often as harsh realities for disabled peoples. In his work, *Wasted Lives* (2004), Bauman offers a poignant analysis of the "cosmic fear" referred to at the start of this essay. He notes the ways "cosmic fear" has driven the project of modernity to value some humans more than others while rationalizing (as if that is possible) the dehumanization and expendability of other humans who find themselves excluded from the "us" category. The vastness of the "starry heavens", Bauman (2004) contends, has led to an awe and wonder of the unknown and to an awareness of "vulnerability and uncertainty" that human beings have sought to and continue to seek to escape. He relates this escape to a desire to build structure and quotes from an allegory written by Franz Kafka: "[T]he building that one generation after another constructs is sinister because this structure is to guarantee a security that men cannot attain…" (as cited in Bauman, 2004, p. 50). In many ways, the maintenance of the status quo in school structures can be seen as an attempt to find security in the fiction of normal that cannot

be attained. As Erevelles (2000) states, "that these assumptions of 'normalcy' or

'wholeness' are themselves illusions becomes vividly apparent when one examines how

constructions of the normative self are in fact predicated on the existence of the

disabled Other" (p. 35). What if instead of seeking escape into a false sense of security

in which some (but not all) are included, we began to live and breathe in the awe and

wonder of our vulnerability and uncertainty within ourselves and each other? It seems

that to live up to its claims, calls of inclusionary policies that express their intent to

provide an education for all need to reconsider the hardness and supposed certainties

of perpetuating the hegemony of normalcy. Perhaps our educational policy and practice

might begin to accept its own "frail and soft human body" among the multitude of other

bodies (Bauman, 2004, p. 46) in ways that foreground our inescapable partialities, as

well as the uncertainties embedded in the next moments of learning with one another.

Notes

[1] There are several scholars within the field of disability studies who are applying the
work of post-structuralism to reconsider the notion of what it means to be a "subject"' or
what it means to have an "'identity" predicated on a Eurocentric version of the "human".
The scholarship in this area questions what is meant by "human" and how we might
seek to reimagine the "human" beyond binary, fear-based, exclusionary practices of
rejecting "others" due to disability, race, class, gender identifiers. See: Mollow, A.
(2004). Identity politics and disability studies: A critique of recent theory. Michigan
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[2] Adichie's (2009) and Delgado's (1989) provocation to infuse the world with a plurality
of stories that embody a range of lived experiences as a call to de-centre the hegemony
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[3] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2011) states "embodied life has a narrative storied quality; the shifting of our shapes knits one moment to the next and one place to another" (p. 595). Similarly, Garland-Thomson (2011) credits Caroline Walker Bynum for the phrase: "Shape carries story" (p. 595). Garland-Thomson's work with disability through a methodological framework of embodiment and feminist materialism offers an important contribution to de-centring the narrative of normal. For a feminist-materialist perspective on narrative see Garland-Thomson, R. (2011). Misfits: A feminist materialist disability concept. *Hypatia, 26*(3), 591-609.

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