DISABLING RELATIONSHIPS: EXPLORING ENCOUNTERS IN SEGREGATED SPECIAL NEEDS CLASSROOMS

By

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Abstract

This work addresses how encounters between teachers, students and the researcher within segregated special needs classrooms both perpetuate and resist the normalizing narrative of schooling. In this study, I aim to demonstrate how subjectivities, onto-epistemologies and varying embodiments impress upon one another in ways that both shape and refuse to shape our relationships. My participatory classroom exploration took place during 15 weekly visits (Fall 2017) in a Primary Learning Disability (LD) class and a Primary Mild Intellectual Delay (MID) class at “Up North Public School.” Guided by disability studies, post-structural feminisms decolonial studies as well as postcolonial studies, I make a case for a methodology I refer to in this study as reading and being read in disabling ways. The intent here is to explore inhabiting our interpretive relationships with each other differently amidst disability through telling stories embedded in everyday classroom moments between teachers and students. In Part I of this study, I outline the theoretical and methodological orientations that allowed for my reflexive relations to my participant observations within two segregated special education classrooms. Part II addresses the ‘who’ (subjectivities), Part III addresses the ‘what’ (knowledges both vocal and silent), and Part IV addresses the ‘where’ (embodied and contextualized relations). By contending that disability impresses in ways that continue to challenge and transform, my study contributes to a much-needed critical engagement regarding what it means to teach and learn as we reimagine our conception of becoming human amidst disability.
Acknowledgements

I want to take this moment to acknowledge the seemingly endless labour of my parents Athanasia (Soula) and Elias (Louis) Karmiris. They immigrated to Canada with the expressed goal of contributing to the well-being of the family they left behind in Greece and subsequently made countless sacrifices to support myself and my sister Alexandra. My mom passed away in 2010 yet, her life has left a permanent impress on my own that mark this work in significant ways. I also want to acknowledge the patience of my sister and my father as I have committed my time to the reading and writing processes that are represented in this study.

As an elementary school teacher since 2002, there are far too many students, colleagues, parents/ caregivers that have nudged me in the direction of this project through both gentle and not so gentle methods. It is in large part due to my numerous encounters with students, colleagues, parents/ caregivers, that I continue to be perpetually unsettled by the social inequities and injustices sustained through policies and practices in public education. These many encounters haunt this study and have been instrumental in provoking the questions that guide this study.

Last, I want to acknowledge the efforts of my thesis committee: Tanya Titchkosky, Heather Sykes and Jamie-Lynn Magnusson as well as the external examiners Diane Farmer and Lisa Farley (York University). I especially want to thank my thesis supervisor Tanya Titchkosky for her timely feedback and guidance throughout this process. Tanya’s support of my research interests in disability studies and specifically in researching with disabled children and their teachers, helped me to hope in the transformative potential in reading differences differently.
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This project is entitled, “Disabling Relationships: Exploring Encounters in Segregated Special Needs Classrooms.” In the coming chapters, I hope to demonstrate how subjectivities, onto-epistemologies and varying embodiments impress upon one another in ways that both shape and refuse to shape our relationships. Through the work of disability studies scholars such as Goodley and Runwick-Cole (2013, p. 2), who provocatively ask about “readings of intimate accounts of bodies of disabled children,” I have been guided to ask my own questions about how readings of disabled children in segregated special needs classrooms impress on the teaching and learning relationship. I use the phrase disabled children rather than the more commonly used term children with disabilities as a way to perpetually trouble my own readings of disability (Chapter 3 offers a more detailed consideration of the use of the phrase disabled children). The main question I will be exploring in this dissertation is: how do encounters between teachers, students and the researcher within segregated special needs classrooms, both perpetuate and resist the normalizing narrative of schooling? My goal in Part I of this study is to orient readers to the theoretical framework, methodology, methods and reflexive practices that I am engaged with here. Chapter 1 will introduce readers to the rationale and purpose of this study as it relates to my own positionality. This includes considerations of how my concerns can be linked broadly to both the theory and practice of teaching and learning in a manner that intends to intervene critically while, foregrounding the import of social justice. Chapter 2 will outline the methods as well as the reflexive tools used to engage in my research relationships. Ultimately, I hope this study contributes to a growing body of work that insists on the necessity of disability in the reimagining of what it means to become human.
Chapter 1—Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Rationale and Purpose of the Study

“one cannot “unsettle” the ‘coloniality of power’ without a redescription of the human outside the terms of our present descriptive statement of the human, Man, and its over representation”
(Wynter, 2003, p. 268)

“staying with trouble requires learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures but as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings” (Haraway, 2016, p. 1)

“How can we provide readings of intimate accounts of the bodies of disabled children that evoke the wider considerations of the politics of disability?”
(Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2013, p. 2)

I begin here with Wynter (2003), Haraway (2016) and Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2013) for several reasons. The first reason being, to foreground the transformations in my own understanding of who I currently am and the types of knowledges I would like to participate in co-constructing with my fellow humans. When I first applied to the PhD program with a stated interest in developing school communities, I was in a state of trouble—I felt troubled and I was in the midst of deeply troubling encounters with disability. At the time critical theorists and scholars like Sylvia Wynter, Donna Haraway, Dan Goodley, Katherine Runswick-Cole among others, were unknown to me. While I had some small sense of how scholars in postcolonial studies and post-structural feminisms offered pointed critiques of teaching and learning in public education systems like the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), I had no idea that the field of disability studies existed. Now, as a teacher, student, and novice researcher, I cannot imagine a way forward without inhabiting the fields of postcolonial studies, decolonial studies, post-structural feminisms and disability studies as integral to the project I will be representing in this dissertation. As Haraway (2016) marks in one of her most recent provocations, we are in trouble, are troubled and need to continue troubling our understanding of what it might mean to be human with one another amidst our dependencies on this planet we share. Wynter (2003)
reminds us that much of the trouble we are in is embedded in the ways the hegemony of Western epistemologies, remain routed and rooted through colonialism and how it has shaped and continues to shape our conception of the subjective self. Wynter (2003, p. 303) reminds us that the “Man [is] overrepresented as if its referent were the human” and as such, continues to shape our relations with one another in ways that sustain current unjust social structures. Within the provocative question quoted above, Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2013) remind us that our relationships with, to and in the midst of disability are deeply implicated in how our society continues to use the referent of white, able-bodied, middle class manhood as the measure of who counts as human. The work of Haraway (2016), Wynter (2003), Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2013) are of course representative examples of the numerous readings within postcolonial studies, decolonial studies, post-structural feminists and disability studies that have transformed my orientations amidst my fellow humans. These distinct yet linked fields of study are integral to the critically interpretive methodology I refer to throughout this study as reading and being read in disabling ways.

This brings me to the second reason for situating this study amidst these fields and the scholars within these fields. I am here in the middle of this because numerous students in my sixteen-year long career as an elementary school teacher, both literally and figuratively poked and prodded me into this study. It embarrassingly took sixteen years of poking and prodding for me to notice that the policies and procedures of teaching and learning that I am supposed to adhere here to, continue to sustain unjust practices of conditional inclusion in ways that substantively impact the lives of disabled children and other marginalized groups (Baker 2002, 2015; Slee 2008, 2013; Erevelles 2011a, 2013; Stephens & Cryle, 2017). Throughout my career, it seems that my students have intervened in my life in ways that have prompted me to ask
questions about how the daily practices of teaching and learning in schools are implicated in the perpetuation of social injustices found amidst the taken for granted labelling, categorizing and comparing practices we engage in amongst each other for the purposes of attaining normative standards. The use of the words, ‘normative’, ‘normalcy’, ‘normal’ and ‘normalizing’ follows the work of numerous scholars who point to the ways the western, heteronormative, white, male, able-bodied, middle class subject remains the standard measure of how gradations of the human come to be counted as human (Baker, 2002, 2015; Connor, 2009; Erevelles, 2000, 2005; Mitchell, Snyder and Ware, 2014; Michalko, 2002; MacLure et al, 2010; Stephens & Cryle, 2017; Wynter, 1984, 2003). Needless to say, the school system is deeply engaged in the processes of sustaining ‘normal’ and thus, as a teacher, I too have been a participant in these processes in both explicit and implicit ways. Along the way, there have always been numerous students present in my life whose interventions have refused to allow me to continue to engage in these normalizing practices. The numerous gifts of these student interventions have also provoked me to ask a different set of questions about teaching and learning. Though you will never know any of their names, I hope the work in this study remains haunted by their presence in ways that will help all of us work with one another to reimagine the world both within and against “Man, and its over representation” (Wynter, 2003, p. 268).

This leads me to the third reason I have chosen to situate this study within a critically interpretive methodology. My intention throughout this study is to refuse the storyline so common in school policies and practices that attempt to connect ‘problems’ with ‘solutions.’ You only need to make a quick visit to the Ontario Ministry of Education’s or the TDSB’s Special Education websites for a list of the numerous policies and procedures that outline ‘best practices’ in teaching and learning. One such set of ‘best practices’ is referred to as “The Tiered
The tiered approach outlines categories of intervention strategies that are supposed to support students in achieving curriculum standards (See Figure 1). Foregrounded in each of the three tiers is the description of the teacher’s role. “The teacher observes, monitors student progress and notes which students may be experiencing difficulty” (Learning for All, 2013, p. 24). Within this description of the teacher’s role, assuring an adherence to progress is tethered to notions of observing and monitoring for the purposes of determining how close or far away a student might be from demonstrating success. If interventions to assure successful achievement of progress are not attained in Tier 1, the student moves up the triangle to further, more intensive methods of intervention and increased scrutiny. I have taught at each of the three tiers (Tier 1/ ‘regular’ class, Tier 2/ partially integrated interventions, Tier 3/ segregated special needs class) and within each tier, children with problems are invariably the focus of concern for the ways they refuse to be shaped by ‘best practices’ nor follow the storyline of progress. Within education, students with problems that refuse to be connected to the solutions, progress promises, remain very troubling indeed.

Figure 1. (Learning for All, 2013, p. 24)

![Figure 1. The Tiered Approach](image)

What is to be made of this ongoing trouble, troubling and troubled educational structure that insists on identifying children with problems in order to align them with solutions in the
name of progress? Within the first few lines of this introduction I mentioned my own deeply troubling relationship with disability. In one sense, the trouble I am referring to here is the trouble of being oriented towards my relationship with my students within a mode of assessing and monitoring problems. Within the current educational structure, disability is a problem in need of solutions. Titchkosky (2011, p. 71) refers to this process of lining up problems with solutions as having “stories-at-the-ready” which are used as rationalizations for sustaining inaccessible environments for disabled peoples. It seems that the longer I have remained embedded in teaching and learning practices constrained by the foregrounding of observing, monitoring and identifying children with problems, I have become not only unconvinced but, troubled by my own role in sustaining the progress of normalcy as the primary objective for learning. In another sense, my troubling relationship with disability foregrounds my joining in the engagement of the necessary work inhabited by critical scholars in the areas of disability studies, postcolonial studies, decolonial studies and post-structural feminisms. These fields of study are in the middle of the ongoing displacement of normalcy in ways that continue to jump off, out, around, into and through Western modernity’s storyline of progress. I would like to contend in this study, that disability studies and disabled peoples are integral to reimagining new stories that refuse the hegemony of imperialisms and the unbalanced power relations that persist in dehumanizing and objectifying those who refuse and refute normalcy.

Thus far in this introduction, I have been focused on outlining some of the ways I am implicated, complicit and indeed tainted by own involvement in education. My intention here has been to both orient the reader to the trouble I am in the middle of, as well as to foreground the non-innocence and partiality of my research project. The project of education within the Western modern context is inextricably linked to sustaining and preserving a status quo routed and rooted
through a narrow conception of who counts as a ‘normal’ human (Baker 2002, 2015; Slee 2008, 2013; Erevelles 2011a, 2013; Stephens & Cryle, 2017). As I attempt to explore the question, how do encounters between teachers, students and the researcher within a segregated special needs class both perpetuate and resist the normalizing narrative of schooling, it seems rather important to point out that Western research practices are also implicated, complicit and tainted in their role in preserving Western modernity’s knowledge making and dispersing practices. In Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s oft cited work Decolonizing Methodologies, she astutely points out that “Research is one of the ways in which the underlying code of imperialism is both regulated and realized” (2012, p. 8). Elsewhere the work of, Acker-Verney (2016) and Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2013), as representative examples, serve as a reminder that, similar to indigenous peoples, disabled peoples have been objectified and dehumanized by research practices. Taken together the work of Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012), Acker-Verney (2016) and Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2013) foreground the ways that there is no escape from the impacts of social injustice sustained in the current manifestation of Western Imperialism. This project remains in trouble, troubled and troubling as it attempts to find, explore, and tell other stories amidst disability and with the intent of questioning and contributing to the work of displacing the progress of normalcy’s seemingly never-ending hegemonic storyline. By situating this project in the middle of the dehumanizing discourses of western epistemologies, this project borrows inspiration from Haraway (2016), with the intention of “Staying with the Trouble,” as I seek to inhabit the world differently amidst disability and perhaps in the process, find other stories to tell.

The next part of this chapter will address the more specific commitments I make in this study in terms of the methodological choices and accompanying ethical dilemmas. Specifically, in an attempt to answer the question, how do encounters between teachers, students and the
researcher within a segregated special needs classroom both perpetuate and resist the normalizing narrative of schooling, I will offer my methodological justifications for the application of participant observation for this study. I will outline in more detail the ways that this study intends to foreground the research relationship by evoking modes of reading and being read with one another. Throughout this process I will continue to demonstrate my commitment to intertwining critical concepts and theories in order to engage in a reimagining of the world both within and against “Man, and its over representation” (Wynter, 2003, p. 268).

**Methodological Commitments: Amplifying the Trouble with Participant Observation Through a Consideration of Reading and Being Read**

Before outlining in detail, the processes and enactments of the methods of this research project in chapter 2, the intention of this section of the introduction is to offer a justification for the use of participant observation as the method of this study. I do so by considering the framework within which this method is situated as it relates to the import of research relationships and the subsequent ethical dilemmas that are explicitly and intentionally amplified at every turn of this project. By focusing on a methodology which allows me to attend to reading and being read in disabling ways in the midst of an affective assemblage, the purpose here is to situate participant observation differently amidst disability. I contend that even a justifiably critiqued research method such as participant observation can contribute to different storytelling practices by confronting its own trouble, troubled and troubling relationships amidst the hegemony of normalcy in schools. Indeed, the disabled children and their teachers as well as the theorists and scholars that have shaped this project will insist throughout this study that participant observation enacts, interacts and encounters relationships amidst disability differently. Participant observation as method embedded in the theoretical framework proposed
here, offers the productive possibilities of confronting rather than escaping from the trouble that adhering to the hegemony of normalcy continues to pose in our teaching, learning and researching practices.

The method of choice for this study foregrounds for me one of the many ways that this project has been in the midst of trouble all along. Admittedly, the choice to use the qualitative method of participant observation is riddled with dilemmas and significant critiques across several disciplinary fields (Angrosino & de Perez, 2000; Jones et al, 2010). Perhaps one of the most poignant critiques can be found in the work of indigenous scholar and ethnographer Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012), who foregrounds the ways Western research practices continue to be implicated in projects of imperial domination and colonization. She states: “research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions” (Smith, 2012, p. 5). The social and political context of the segregated special needs classrooms I inhabited for the duration of this project, are simultaneously highly scrutinized spaces as well as spaces that isolate some students marked and labeled with disability. Observation of disabled children in these spaces is not only a regular occurrence, it is often implicated in attempts to excessively monitor ‘problems’ in need of the ‘solutions’ of which normalcy remains the measure of success (Annamma, 2014; Connor, 2009; Gabel et al, 2013; Van Hove et al, 2012).

There is a risk, a rather considerable risk, that my project might be swallowed whole by the demands of normalcy; demands, policies and procedures I have been trained to follow for the last sixteen years of my professional teaching career. A similar set of demands, in the fields of research have justifiably led numerous scholars to point out the risks and limitations as well as legacy of harm through which the method of participant observation remains tainted. As both an
experienced teacher and novice researcher, these risks of perpetuating harm, remain in the foreground as I inhabit my research relationships with participants while also remaining tethered to my own history of teaching and learning relationships. As mentioned earlier in this introduction, the act of observation and its non-innocence, is an act I have been engaged in for the purposes of assessing and evaluating difference for nearly my entire adult life. Both disability and the demands of normalcy have perpetually inhabited how I have encountered both teaching and learning. Focusing on ways to reconfigure participant observation within this project for me has been an act of questioning long engrained practices. Similarly, this project foregrounds the ways that students labelled with disabilities, have impressed upon me the import of engaging in a re-imagining of what it means to teach and learn with one another that includes what it might mean to become human with one another differently. The school research site, where the children, teachers and Special Needs Assistant’s (SNA’s) encounter one another in the fall of 2017, is a space that has been part of my life for several years. The public school where this research study took place was a former work site for me. I taught the Primary Mild Intellectual Disability (MID) class at this school between 2012- 2014. I have remained in contact with my colleagues ever since and I have also continued to develop relationships with children in both the Primary MID and Primary Learning Disability (LD) class prior to engaging in this research project with them. In other words, the trouble with participant observation in this project is that, it has been and remains, in the middle of the demands of normalcy and disability as well as in between both complicity in the status quo and a hopefulness in the possibility of reimagining our humanness with one another.

Therefore, the method of participant observation I inhabit for the duration of this research study, is impressed upon and tethered to several significant relationships that amplify the ethical
dilemmas in both the representation and storytelling practices composed within this project. There is my relationship with the disabled children that are between seven and nine years of age, in my roles as both a teacher and a researcher. Both the teaching and researching role involve considerations of power imbalances both perceived and real between myself and the disabled students in these two classrooms. There is also my relationship with the teachers and SNA’s that are also participants in this study whom I regard as both my colleagues and friends. Concerns of power are troubling here as well because there are moments throughout this study where challenging participants is challenging because of relationships that I was embedded in before this study occurred and that continued with both the disabled children and their teachers after the formal conclusion of the ‘data collection’ phase of the project. Within the context of my commitment to these relationships, the troubling legacy of objectifying humans through the method of participant observation is simultaneously rejected, confronted, and tethered to an entirely different set of troubles. In returning to the provocative quotes from Wynter (2003), Haraway (2016) and Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2013), I am reminded that both the tangible and theoretical attachments that shape the mode of participant observation I am engaged with here, involve three simultaneous moves of reading and being read. First, there is confronting the trouble of how student, teacher and researcher relationships are embedded in the normalizing narrative of schooling. Second, there is the questioning and resisting of the hegemony of normalcy. Third, there is the hopeful possibility that by staying with the trouble, this project can contribute to the collective work of the “redescription of the human” (Wynter, 2003, p. 268). Both together and apart, each of these modes of reading and being read implicate this study in the risks of contributing to rather than mitigating harm amidst my relationships with participants.
Researcher Refusals as Confronting an Ethical Commitment to Minimize Harm

I remain uneasy and troubled by nearly two decades of conflicting commitments amidst my teaching and learning relationships. Perhaps, I am so uneasy with the act of researching because this is a first for me. Perhaps, I am so uneasy, because it reminds me so much of the power embedded in the production and consumption of knowledge that is so deeply entrenched in teaching and learning. Perhaps, it is the numerous stories of harm, stories too numerous to recount here, that research has perpetuated that cause both my hesitation and my intention to tread gently and carefully with both the selection of and representation of the stories recounted in this dissertation. According to Acker-Verney:

Disability research has a history that includes colonial practices and processes situated in material and geopolitical contexts. As with my experience, people with disabilities have been largely reduced to sources of data by academic researchers and served as test sites for medical intervention in relationships structured by dominance and subjugation. (2016, p. 413-414)

Acker-Varney’s articulation of the ways research has harmed disabled peoples through a process of objectification helps me to understand that this project must find ways to both resist and refuse the demands of being a research product whereby, the participants that consented to my presence in their space are reduced to nothing more than data that was collected, gathered and taken. To inhabit people’s lives and to have people inhabit your life, even for as short a time as fifteen afternoons, where the participant observation occurs for 20-30 minutes during small group instruction in reading, entails a subsequent commitment to the process of becoming human with one another, that necessarily exceeds the scope of the production and consumption of more knowledge. Therefore, the knowledge produced in this dissertation must constrain and limit itself through more than a declaration of my own partiality and non-innocence as a researcher. In an effort to sustain the trust imparted to me through both the formal and informal daily processes of
consent within the research relationship, and in following the work of both Simpson (2007) and Tuck and Yang (2014a, 2014b), this dissertation intentionally engages in some acts of refusal.

Simpson (2007, p. 72) says that refusal “involves a calculus ethnography of what you need to know and what I refuse to write in.” Elsewhere, Tuck and Yang (2014a, p. 239) state: “a methodology of refusal regards limits on knowledge as productive, as indeed a good thing.” From their respective positions as indigenous scholars, the point of refusal articulated by Simpson (2007) and Tuck and Yang (2014a, 2014b), is significant for the ways it foregrounds how research has harmed the interests of indigenous peoples through processes of objectification that both run parallel to and intersect with the methods used to objectify disabled peoples. Therefore, in an effort to avoid the path of harm through the objectification of the lives of disabled peoples as mere research products, there are two significant refusals being enacted in this study. The first is a refusal to apply the method of participant observation in a voyeuristic manner that might foreground disability as a site of suffering, pain and lack of normalcy. Titchkosky (2001), insightfully outlines the ways language in policy documents perpetually seeks to separate what it means to be human from disability that subsequently shapes our relations with one another in ways that persist in marginalizing disabled peoples through narratives of suffering, lack and limits. In analyzing the ongoing injustices in race relations, Spelman (1997, p. 5) uses the term “economies of attention” to contend that how, where, who and to what degree we focus on particular ‘tragic’ events are rooted/ routed through relations of power that often work to sustain an unjust status quo. Thus, the rhetoric of compassion and empathy come to be critiqued as complicit in sustaining the gaze of whiteness and its power in ways that centre story of the empathizer/colonial-settler as the good citizen/researcher (Spelman, 1997; Ahmed, 2004; Kennelly; 2014). Taken in tandem with one another, the distinct yet linked
positions of the feminist, indigenous, post-structural and postcolonial scholars mentioned here, point toward refusal as a necessary component in unsettling western knowledge claims and indeed the claims of western epistemologies to determine what it means to be human. If, as I am trying to contend here, disability is embedded in how we might engage in the reimagining of becoming human with one another, then de-centering normalcy through a refusal of the rhetoric of disability as lack and/or less than normal, is an integral part of this project.

In practical terms for this project, this refusal manifests itself in a focus on the mundane everyday interactions between teachers, students and the researcher. According to Walcott (1994, p. 70), “It is in problematizing the everyday world that the task of critical pedagogy lies.” Walcott’s contention of the import of seeking to question and trouble the small moments between us is echoed by scholars such as Halberstam (2011) and McRuer (2006) whom also attend to the seemingly mundane in their work. In making a commitment to attend to small everyday moments between us, my project also seeks to acknowledge and contribute to the work of scholars who manage to de-centre western epistemologies and subjectivities through their work (MacLure et al, 2010; Davies, 2014; Johansson 2016; Sellers, 2010; Mulcahy, 2012; Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2013; Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2012). Since the focus in this study is on the small and perhaps what might be considered taken for granted kinds of interactions, the second refusal that is basically a close corollary of the first, is that this study refuses to centre any one voice or conception of an independent self. There are no spectacular accounts of individual overcoming stories, nor stories of triumphs, joys, tantrums, outrage, anger, sadness or shame. The inclination of this project to endeavour to refuse the ‘self’ a spotlight, I hope serves to foreground the import of relationships with participants as well as both the
explicit and implicit ways I as a researcher am situating myself amidst my own partialities and complicities within western colonial logics.

I hope that the refusals outlined here serve two additional goals. First, the constraints and refusals this study endeavours to inhabit intend to, in the words of Tuck and Yang (2014b, p. 817): “turn the gaze back upon power, specifically the colonial modalities of knowing persons as bodies to be differentially counted, violated, saved and put to work.” By focusing on the ways normalcy both persists and is disrupted in the everyday moments of small group reading instruction, I hope to contribute to the work of unsettling and de-centering normalcy and its hegemonic claims to power. Second, the parameters of this study allow for an application of what Halberstam (2011, p. 21) calls “low theory” as a way of attending to stopping and wondering at the small moments we make in between us that tell other stories then, the persistent retelling of the narrative of normalcy in school. One such example of exploring different readings of disabled children within the everyday can be found in the work of Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2012, 2013). They pursue their question of “readings of intimate accounts of bodies of disabled children” by representing disabled children through different readings (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2013, p. 2). In an effort to foreground the subjective force of disability, Goodley and Runswick-Cole reject the language of Person with Disabilities (PWD’s) language. With a similar goal, I too follow the same commitment (for further discussion of this point, please see chapter 3). While remaining concerned about the ongoing risks of objectification of participants in research, Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2012, 2013) continue to remain committed to readings of disabled children that convey the import of disability as a subjective force. Their work also seeks to question the concept of the normative self (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2012, 2013). In following their work along with the insight from Tuck and
Yang (2014b), this project hopes to deploy a mode of participant observation that confronts the ethical dilemmas embedded within research amidst disability. By contending that disability impresses in ways that continue to challenge and transform our understanding of what it means to be human with one another, I hope my study contributes to a much-needed conversation about how we might reimagine what it means to teach and learn as we reimagine our conception of becoming human amidst disability.

**Reading and Being Read in Disabling Ways: Participant Observation and the Ongoing Dilemma of Disabling Relationships**

What I hope I have made clear thus far, are the ways this project intends to situate itself amidst the troubling ethical dilemmas of knowledge, unjust power structures and subjectivities that the method of participant observation amplifies. The amplification of these dilemmas serves the purpose of both refusing to ignore the trouble we are in while also constraining the impulses to objectify the stories that are recounted, analyzed and theorized in the upcoming chapters of this study. In addition to the refusals already stated which include not employing the method of participant observation in a voyeuristic and/or objectifying manner, the intent is to inhabit this method in a manner the de-centres the self and its knowledge claims. Therefore, an integral part of this methodology is what will be outlined here in the term reading and being read in disabling ways. Considering participant observation in the midst of reading and being read in disabling ways arises from the work of Titchkosky (2008), Butler (2015) Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) and Wynter (2003). For the purposes of this study, I intend to show how reading and being read in disabling ways is a significant part of the methodology of this study for three reasons. First, this methodological move to focus on reading and being read foregrounds the negative impacts in the lives of disabled peoples when impositions of normalcy, as conceived through our hegemonic
western epistemologies, sustain the conditions for conditional inclusion in our social structures and relations with one another. Second, this move is significant for the way it works to question the hegemonic power of normalcy and thus as quoted earlier, “turn the gaze back upon power” (Tuck and Yang, 2014b, p. 817). Third, reading and being read in disabling ways is an important move that aims to reconfigure the method of participant observation by amplifying the way reading is situated both socially and in relation amidst other humans in both its active and passive manifestations. Subsequently each of these three moves emphasize the significance of reorienting our relations, and in this case more specifically our research relations, amidst disability.

According to Titchkosky: “reading continues to be individualized without consideration for what it means to live in a community that reads others in the ways that we do” (p. 349, 2008). Significant in what Titchkosky (2008) points to here is the import of the socio-cultural context within which we read each other as living breathing texts and how that reading is interconnected with the act of reading text on a page. Contrary to the variety of assessment tools that seek to isolate the problem of reading in the individual, engaging in reading and being read is inescapably social (Titchkosky, 2008). Elsewhere, Michalko (2002, p. 144), reminds readers that: “How society is organized, shapes the appearance of disability.” These insights from both Titchkosky (2008) and Michalko (2002) point to how each of us is implicated in creating the conditions for how reading and being read and more specifically, how reading and being read through disability, is tangibly encountered and experienced. This is particularly significant within the context of public education as disability continues to appear and be read as a problem in need of solutions and/or at the very least management. Along with the work of Titchkosky (2008) and Michalko (2002), another more recent work in disability studies from Stephens
Cryle (2017) offers a historical analysis of how images grounded in the eugenics logics of the nineteenth century have worked to limit who is read as worth counting as fully human when normalcy is sustained as the measure. Unfortunately, the accounts of injustice perpetuated through sustaining readings of disability as a problem to be solved or managed, continue to be encountered, experienced and retold. In writing about his blindness Michalko (2002, p. 94) says: “Despite the radical difference of my ‘look’ no difference is made; the world remains the same. Blindness is thrown on the heap of ‘useless difference’.” For the purposes of the methodological commitments of this study, Michalko (2002) here points toward the importance of foregrounding how the unbalanced power relations imposed and sustained in current Western-centric social structures, consistently refuse to engage in a substantive dialogue with difference in a manner that would commit to a substantive transformation of our social relations and structures.

Therefore, in this sense a methodology of focusing on reading and being read in disabling ways evokes the ever-present injustice of the power in reading disability along a gradient of who and to what degree human counts as human.

We should all be troubled by the ongoing presence and appearance of this form of reading and being read in disabling ways as it substantiates the most troubling aspects of how the method of participant observation continues to be enacted in both research and educational settings in ways that harm participants and students. This form of reading and being read continues to cause trouble. I hope that this project will in some small way contribute to revealing, confronting and troubling this mode of reading that sustains rather than questions injustices. In keeping with this intention, it is important to consider how a methodology of reading and being read in disabling ways is also a move that not only questions, critiques and confronts the mechanisms normalcy deploys to objectify and dehumanize disabled peoples, but also conveys
the myriad of possibilities of reading differently through embodied differences. Reading and being read in disabling ways is also a move that enacts the inhabiting of disability as a subjective force that persists not only in being read but in offering diverse and impactful readings of what it means to be human. This mode of reading and being read in disabling ways borrows from the work of Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) and Mitchell and Snyder (2015), to foreground how inhabiting embodied differences entails inhabiting new readings and new stories. For example, in following the work of Halberstam (2011) and McRuer (2006), Mitchell and Snyder conceptualize cripistemologies (2015, p. 16) in order to outline the fruitful possibilities amidst “disabled people’s productive failure to adhere to the unrealizable projects of neoliberal body normalization schemes.” Mitchell and Snyder’s (2015) use of the term cripistemologies is borrowed from the work of Johnson and McRuer (2014) who provoke scholars to critically examine epistemological commitments through crip theory. Through the reading of Mitchell and Snyder (2015) amidst disability, failure is reconfigured as offering opportunities to evoke a different human imaginary while also confronting the ways neoliberal management regimes merely succeed at perpetuating injustice through mechanisms of free market exploitation. In a distinct way, indigenous scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) also laments how Western research practices have commodified, exploited and coopted indigenous knowledges while consistently engaging in the objectification and dehumanization of indigenous peoples. Smith (2012, p. 36) is a proponent of acting “to hold alternative knowledges. The pedagogical implication of this access to alternative knowledges is that they can form alternative ways of doing things.” The significance here for this study of the work of both Mitchell and Snyder (2015) and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) is the importance of not only decentering normalcy as the only force
engaged in reading but also, to engage in an imagining of new stories being read through disabling ways, understood here as a subjective force, engaged in enacting reading differently.

In following Dorothy Smith, Titchkosky suggests: “If every act of reading risks capture, then attending to the act of reading maybe a way to resist such capture” (2007, p. 103). Ultimately, this description aptly describes how the methodology of reading and being read in disabling ways intends to situate the enactment of the method of participant observation. The intent here is to find ways to mitigate the risks of being enveloped by normalcy by not only troubling normalcy through questioning and critique but, also by engaging in the telling of other stories with disabled children and their teachers amidst disability. It is important to keep in mind that this move is not intended to replace the centrality of the ‘normal’ subject with the centrality of the ‘disabled’ subject. De-centering the self for the purposes of this project is considered integral to de-centering the import of Western onto-epistemologies and the hegemony of binary thinking that normalcy depends on. Rather, as mentioned earlier, the intention here in evoking reading and being read in disabling ways as an important methodological move, is to reconfigure the method of participant observation by amplifying the way it is situated both socially and in relation amidst other humans in both its active and passive manifestations. For example, Wynter’s consideration of how racism is embedded in the imposition of colonial western epistemologies, allows for both a critique of the current representations of human subjectivity as well as a call to reimagine the human with one another. Wynter (2003, 2015) contends that a necessary component in the reimagining of the human, entails a reconsideration of our relations with one another through an acknowledgement of the simultaneous impressions of both active and passive forces upon our mutually constituted subjectivities. In rejecting the notion that the humans are “individual biological subjects,” Wynter (2015, p. 35) contends that “we are both
initiated and reborn as fictively instituted, inter-altruistic, kin-recognizing members of each symbolically re-encoded genre-specific referent-we”. Elsewhere, and routed through a distinctly different set of onto-epistemologies, Butler (2015) also contemplates the active and passive forces within which we are situated. “The task is to think of being acted on and acting as simultaneous, and not only as a sequence” (Butler, 2015, p. 6). If as Wynter (2015) and Butler (2015) posit that the distinction between activity and passivity that tends to valorize the active in much of Western philosophy, is actually more of an enmeshment whereby reading and being read occurs in tandem with one another, then participant observation can come to be situated, reconfigured and inhabited with a distinctly different purpose and intent.

A methodology of reading and being read in disabling ways helps us to reconsider how the method of participant observation might yet find ways to situate itself while foregrounding the import of honouring research relationships. First and foremost, reading and being read in disabling ways inhabits a mode of confronting and questioning unidirectional impositions of power that have and continue to extract, collect, and take from research participants in a manner that objectifies and disregards the multiple and variant subjectivities within a research context. Second, integral to respecting the research relationship, reading and being read in disabling ways intends to honour varying subjectivities while simultaneously refusing the subjective self its own spotlight. Third, if reading, as Titchkosky (2007) suggests, always involves the risk of capture, reading and being read in disabling ways acknowledges the appearance of capture while contending that becoming human amidst other humans evokes a semi-permeability and elusiveness of capture through the simultaneous impress of active and passive forces. In other words, 'the way things are' amidst our disabling relations with one another, can change. The possibilities for change remain in the spaces between us and in the making of new moments/
stories amidst disability. Thus, reading and being read in disabling ways is committed to staying
with the trouble and remaining troubled by the current configuration of the way things are, as we
all work to reconfigure our relations with one another.

Before concluding the chapter and moving to the description of my methods and
reflexive tools applied in this study, this chapter will outline one more integral component
included in the methodology. The final component of this methodology will consider how my
inhabiting of participant observation as a method situates itself in the midst of an affective
assemblage. The need to consider the import of the work from post-structural researchers in
education who use affective assemblages are significant to this study for two reasons. A focus
on affect and assemblage acknowledges the work of numerous scholars who are using post-
structuralism to critique and reconfigure our conception of education as well as to how this work
has impacted my own research. Also, in acknowledging this work, it is important to attend to the
numerous contributions of affective assemblages to the work in de-centering the subject through
research methods that emphasize the dynamic encounters amidst teachers and students in the
classroom. This is particularly important within the context of engaging in research with disabled
children and their teachers in a segregated setting. The work by post-structural educational
researchers outlined below, considers the enmeshment of voices with silences and sensations in a
manner that is intended to both decentre the gaze of the observer as well as refuse the hegemony
of either 'voice' or silence in the making of the stories that will be recounted in this study.

**Affective Assemblage Amidst Voices, Silences and Sensations: De-Centering the Self
Through an Entangled Mode of Participant Observation**

In an effort to attend to and honour my teaching/learning/research relationships, the
methodology I am in the process of enacting here of reading and being read in disabling ways,
purposely foregrounds its limitations, partialities and vulnerabilities. I am not only dependent on the numerous scholars and theorists who have shaped this study, I am also dependent on the encounters with disabled students and their teachers and the ways our encounters with one another both shaped and refused to shape the stories we made. The significance of the term encounter continues to foreground a consideration of how we shape and refuse to shape the stories we tell both together and apart. "Encounters that shake up and mess with both a teacher’s and a student's sense of identity and position are crucial events of political 'intervention'" (Mulcahy, p. 22, 2012). In her definition of the import of encounters between teachers, students and researcher, Mulcahy’s (2012) insight conveys how our relations with and through one another, offer continued opportunities to refuse complacency. For Titchkosky (2007), this is both a refusal of being captured and an orientation to understanding how our readings have already captured us. Wynter (1987) refers to this process as a commitment to the disenchantment from Western colonial logics. When read in tandem with one another, the insights from these scholars serve as a reminder to me, that enacting the methodology I am proposing here of reading and being read in disabling ways, must apply numerous tools to foreground the significance of the encounters with disability and the import of these interventions in our becoming human with one another. Therefore, in order to contribute to the questioning of the subjective self and the onto-epistemologies the self is situated within, I outline below the complementary tools of affect and assemblage

The small moments that comprise the encounters felt by both teachers and students in segregated special needs classrooms, comprise a tangle of associations and relations to normalcy in ways that are evident in the foreground of a classroom as well as ways that remain taken for granted as ‘the way things are’. For me this represents a commitment to attending to the tangles
in between the ‘what’ (knowledges both vocal and silent), ‘who’ (subjectivities) and ‘where’ (complex implications of place and space). Though I have not yet come across any qualitative studies that apply the theoretical framework I am in the process of outlining here within the context of the segregated special needs classroom, there are numerous examples of the uses of assemblage and affect both together and a part in post-qualitative education research (Davies, 2014; Mazzei and Jackson, 2016; Mulcahy, 2012; Swirski, 2013; Sellers, 2010; Skattebol and Hayes, 2016). Contending that “teaching and learning [are] constituted in assemblages of the social,” Mulcahy (2012, p. 21) defines affect in tandem with assemblage. According to Mulcahy, (2012, p. 21) “affect is not a personal property of the teacher. It is assembled—a complex and uncertain gathering of energies, words, gestures, commitments, affections, artefacts, bodily feelings, routines and habits.” Elsewhere, Mazzei and Jackson state: “assemblage isn’t a thing—it is the process of making and unmaking the thing” (2012, p. 747). The thing that is (un)made here is the human web of connection not only to other humans but to the world around us. Affect and assemblage are methodological tools that can work in tandem to foreground how embodied experiences are troubled, troubling and trouble the networks through which they are enmeshed and embedded (Davies, 2014; Mazzei and Jackson, 2016; Mulcahy, 2012; Swirski, 2013; Sellers, 2010; Skattebol and Hayes, 2016). Within the context of disability studies and within my particular research context of inhabiting a research relationship with disabled children and their teachers, affect and assemblage substantiate the necessity of foregrounding our relationships with one another amidst a social context where education curriculum policies and procedures adhere to the hegemony of normalcy. This means exploring the ways both normalcy, resistances to normalcy as well as the makings of living otherwise, circulate within the space while attending to
the ever-present ethical conundrums embedded in the power imbalances between teachers and students as well as researchers and participants.

Therefore, in so far as, these projects emphasize the import of the teaching, learning, researching relationship that simultaneously refuses to centre the self, several applications of methodologies of affective assemblages, appear allegiant with my methodology of reading and being read in disabling ways. Of particular significance for my purposes, are the uses of affective assemblages that enact a diffusing of the import of the eyes in research processes while considering the significance of other senses. For example, MacLure states: "We may feel the wonder of data in the gut, or the quickening heartbeat, as well as the cerebral disappointment of failing to find the right code or category" (2013, p.229). Elsewhere Swirski (2013, p. 349) says: "Our senses do not run parallel to what we create or our subsequent well being—they involve a bodily- material choreography, or meshwork." What is articulated here in the work of MacLure (2013) and Swirski (2013), as representative examples, is a mode of observing/noticing that contrapuntally engages the senses in ways where our embodied senses of knowing are foregrounded as actively informing how it is that we come to wonder about our relationships with ourselves, others and the world around us. One such example can be found in the work of Mazzei and Jackson (2012, 2016) where they describe a situation of hearing a door open and footsteps that were approaching during an interview with a research participant that caused a shift in the tone, intent and content of their participant’s contribution. In this context, foregrounding what might typically stay in the background alters the meaning of the words spoken and offers with them, a moment of wonder of how the sound of an opening door and approaching footsteps could affect the trajectory of what was both said and remained unspoken (Mazzei and Jackson, 2012, 2016). This one representative example resonates with me as
significant because it connotes the import of inhabiting participant observation in a manner that conveys how inhabiting space with varying disabled embodiments engages the senses of touch and hearing in ways that insist on the diffusion/decentering of sight. This example is also relevant for how it demonstrates the import of decentering sight and any of its unequivocal knowledge claims.

Considering the role of silences and the ways humans convey meanings in between words and wordlessness, places ethnographers who adhere to a post-structural/post-qualitative approaches to research in conversation with disability studies, postcolonial studies and decolonial studies in ways that help us to consider how children labeled as non-verbal or with limited ‘traditional’ communication skills might contribute toward foregrounding “a non-coercive and non-dominating knowledge” (Chowdhry, 2007, p. 105). Silences along with voices convey meanings that both sustain and disrupt what should or might happen under 'normal' circumstances within a classroom setting and/or a differing context/circumstance (Mazzei, 2003, 2007; Mazzei and Jackson 2012; MacLure et al, 2010, Spyrou, 2015). The work of MacLure et al (2010) offer an example of the ways silences are read with voices that simultaneously privilege neither and evoke a sense of the relational conundrums that are experienced in both resisting and sustaining the normalizing narrative of schooling. They write about a child's silence amidst their research as a "breach of etiquette... [a] hole in the ceremonial order of the classroom... a hole in the fabric of the daily routine- a mere four words." (Mac Lure et al, 2010, p.492-493). Silence here is not treated as the absence of voice and thus absence of meaning, rather for MacLure et al (2010, p. 493), "silence both blocks and produces analysis." Here voices and silences haunt each other thus producing a nebulous space of questioning both the demand for voice and the demand for silence amidst our encounters as students/teachers
within the classroom. The foregrounding of silence within the work of post-structural/ post-qualitative ethnography is applied as a tool to question a dominating voice while also refusing silence its own dominion. “These silences confound interpretation and manifest intolerably, the illusory status of speech as full ‘presence,’ as living voice. They betray the impossibility of saying, once and for all and in so many words, who one is, or what something means” (MacLure et al, 2010, p.495). Their work serves as a reminder that analyzing both voices and silences do not lead toward a solution or a neat prescription of strategies rather, analyses remain incomplete, uncertain, unsure and partial (MacLure et al, 2010). Elsewhere, Mazzei suggests “a problematic of silence also encourages me to investigate the perpetuation of sameness, hegemony of privilege through an unarticulated ‘interior monologue’” (2007, p.636). What Mazzei (2007), Spyrou (2015) and MacLure et al (2010) point to here, is that neither silence nor voice can claim truth and or innocence. Both silences and voices are implicated in power that both implicitly and explicitly influence what comes to matter in our teaching/learning/researching relationships. These insights contribute to my methodology of reading and being read in disabling ways in that a consideration of the import of both voices and silences in affective assemblage adhere to the concerns of continuing to question the hegemony of normalcy while engaging disability in the telling of other stories.

Concluding Thoughts

My goals in this chapter have been to orient the reader to my relational commitments both theoretically and practically as I persist in this dissertation in exploring the following question: how do encounters between teachers, students and the researcher within a segregated special needs classroom both perpetuate and resist the normalizing narrative of schooling. I have focused on making explicit my trepidations both as a teacher and novice researcher, in the
knowledge making and dispersing processes of Western-centric discourses, policies and practices. I admittedly remain implicated in these practices even while I engage in the process of critiquing, questioning and hopefully insisting upon other ways of knowing, being and becoming amidst disability with one another. In staying with the trouble, I hope I have made clear the ways that I continue to be in trouble, am troubled and will engage in the troubling of current hegemonic conceptions of the self in current Western onto-epistemological theories that inhabit our daily social practices in teaching, learning and researching. The theoretical framework I am situating this study within, as well as my proposed methodology of reading and being read in disabling ways, are intended to confront the normalizing discourses inhabited by teachers, students and researchers within public education, in ways that insist on the import of the making of new stories for reading and being read in dialogue with varying embodiments. In returning to Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2013, p. 2), who provocatively ask about “readings of intimate accounts of bodies of disabled children,” I hope that, by focusing on the everyday seemingly mundane moments between disabled children and their teachers, this study contributes to a reimagining of our enactments of reading with one another in ways that reconfigures our relationships amidst disability. The next chapter will work toward this aim by outlining the methods of my version of participant observation that foregrounds my commitment to the teaching/learning/researching relationships that are the focus of this study.
Chapter 2: Methods and Reflexive Conceptual Tools

By focusing on the question, how do encounters between teachers, students and the researcher within a segregated special needs classroom both perpetuate and resist the normalizing narrative of schooling, this dissertation engages in an analysis of the narrative entanglements that come to be foregrounded in the application of the method of participant observation. The stories represented here are based on my experiences being part of two segregated special needs classrooms once a week beginning on September 13, 2017 and ending on December 20, 2017. Within this time frame, I inhabited the class labelled Primary Learning Disabilities (LD) for fifteen afternoons. Similarly, I inhabited the class labeled as Primary Mild Intellectual Disability (MID) for fourteen afternoons. I maintained field notes and audio recordings for twelve of the visits with the Primary LD class and eleven of the visits with Primary MID class. The first three visits to each of the classes were intended to familiarize both the teachers and students who participated in the study of both my responsibilities in my role as a researcher as well as, their rights as participants to consent, refuse consent or withdraw consent. Therefore, no notes or audio recordings about participants were taken during the first three visits of the study in each of the classes. The stories recounted in this dissertation include only those whom consented to participate. In all, twelve students between the ages of seven and nine (six students from each class) participated in the study and seven adults (both classroom teachers, three Special Needs Assistants (SNA’s), one occasional teacher, one long-term occasional teacher) consented to participate in the study that is represented here. While I inhabited both of these classrooms once a week for fifteen weeks, only small fragments of those times are recounted here. Indeed, this study intentionally confined itself to taking audio recordings and
field notes for about 20-30 minutes each afternoon when students, teachers and the researcher were engaged in small group instruction in reading and being read.

This chapter is composed of two parts with several subsections with the intention of explicitly outlining the methods as well as reflexive tools used in this research project and their adherence to the theoretical and methodological commitments outlined in chapter 1. Section I is entitled: Methods: A Matter of Consent and a Matter of Sitting on the Carpet Amidst Disability and Normalcy. This section of chapter 2 will focus on outlining the methods used in this study as they particularly concern my relationships with the disabled children and their teachers in these two segregated special needs classrooms. Within this methods section, I will describe both my previous and ongoing relationships with the disabled children and teachers in this classroom and how this relational commitment impacted, constrained and limited the stories found within this study. I will also describe the formal and informal processes of consent with research participants. This section of chapter 2 will also describe the process of inhabiting the carpet amidst disability and normalcy and how this relationally embodied mode of participant observation impacted my use of field notes and audio recordings. Section II of this chapter will consider the import of a reflexive mode of stopping and wondering as integral to enacting a methodology of reading and being read in disabling ways. This section will explore how this study is working towards telling a different series of stories through a mode of reflexive stopping and wondering that is contrapuntally engaged (Chowdhry, 2007), narratively entangled (Burke, 2014) as well as criptistemologically/glocally embodied (Mitchell et al, 2014, Mitchell and Snyder, 2015). Ultimately, I hope this chapter achieves the goal of demonstrating how the method of participant observation can be deployed as a mode of amplifying the trouble with the Western-centric subject and its adherence to the hegemony of normalcy.
Methods: A Matter of Consent and a Matter of Sitting on the Carpet Amidst Disability and Normalcy

My Relationship to the Context and Research Participants

“Up North Public School” the place where the two segregated classes I inhabited for this research project are located, is a small neighbourhood school in a predominately white upper middle-class neighbourhood (approximately 230 students). In the school year 2017-2018, this school was home to five segregated special needs classrooms. Approximately 50 students arrive to “Up North Public School” by bus due to being placed through the TDSB’s special education process known as Identification, Placement Review Committee (IPRC). The boundaries of the geographic area of this predominately white upper middle-class neighbourhood are surrounded both on its east and southern borders with schools found on TDSB’s Learning Opportunities Index (LOI) which are classified as such due to factors such as lower socio-economic class which continue to disproportionately impact both immigrant and Black communities (Brown and Parekh, 2013). In their report which examines the relationships between special education identifications and placements, Brown and Parekh (2013) also note the intersection between low-income status, race (disproportionately Black) and gender (disproportionately boys). This broader description of where the Primary LD and Primary MID classes are situated is relevant for the purposes of considering how the research participants in this study inhabit not only the local context of the school and segregated classrooms they have been placed in, but also, the persistent and undeniable role of the hegemony of normalcy in enacting practices of social marginalization. The hegemony of normalcy continues to impact the daily encounters of disabled
children and their teachers in ways that keep in the foreground the ongoing impacts of social marginalization.

My own entangled commitments as a researcher/teacher/learner, shape my ongoing engagement with the method described here as way to stay amidst the difficult ethical conundrums that are part of the work of sustaining relationships with, through and in the lives of disabled peoples as they continue to experience social marginalization. I describe my relational commitments as entangled because as mentioned earlier in chapter 1, I have been an employee of the TDSB as an elementary school teacher since 2002 and more specifically I taught the Primary MID class, which is one of the classrooms in this study, from 2012-2014. When I walk into this classroom, I still recognize pieces of myself (organizational charts, activities and routines that shaped my relationships with my students and colleagues) that I both left behind and carry with me. Both of the SNA’s that I worked with in that time period continue to work in this classroom. I have kept in touch with both of them as well as the current teacher of this class. Similarly, after my departure from “Up North Public School” to a public school that was closer to OISE, I have continued to stay in touch with the students too. I have returned both as a visitor and an occasional teacher throughout the pursuit of my PhD studies in both the Primary MID and Primary LD class and thus, I have maintained relationships with the disabled children and their teachers in both of these classrooms. In fact, after the completion of the fourteen and fifteen visits for the purposes of audio recording and taking field notes in small group instruction in reading, I continued my visits to both of the classrooms for a half day once a week.

I believe it is important to mention my entangled commitments to the disabled children and their teachers because of how my embeddedness in these relationships implicate the enactment of participant observation in, at least, three significant ways. First, it is important to
emphasize that over the years and in the course of developing relationships with the disabled children and their teachers in these two settings, both the students and the teachers have disclosed personal information to me prior to, in the middle of and after the closure of this research project. Out of respect for my participants and our relationships, I consider these conversations to be outside of the parameters and commitments of this study. Second, inhabiting this segregated classroom space with participants entails confronting the power imbalances embedded in this context through both the notion of teacher authority as well as the lived consequences of social marginalization. This particular point is addressed in the upcoming section of participant consent. Third, in telling stories about a specific small fragment of my time sitting with participants as we engaged in reading and being read in disabling ways, wondering about how we come to be in relationship with one another remains the primary focus of questioning, analyzing and living both within and against normalcy. Acknowledging the tangled web of stories, we are enmeshed in, in the midst of the classroom, represents a commitment to foreground the ethical dilemmas of the researching process while remaining humbled by the inexorable limits of my endeavours to know and represent the lives of disabled children within the segregated classroom setting. This is particularly important when considering the practical constraints of collecting data via audio recordings and field notes of a small fraction of the interactions while being a participant of whole group instructions in reading (20 – 30 minutes per half day visit). This project is in many ways concerned with the representation of fragments within fragments. It is a study mired in the ethical conundrums of what comes to be represented as mattering and whose stories come to be simultaneously marginalized and foregrounded in the telling of other people’s stories.
Formal and Informal Process of Consent and the Foregrounding of Research Relationships

One of the many ethical conundrums that I face as a teacher/learner/researcher, relates to honouring and respecting the teachers and children I will be working with while continuously stopping and wondering about ‘how things are the way they are.’ This is not a conundrum I expect to escape or avoid or resolve rather, it serves as a reminder of my own entanglements in the process of becoming human with other humans. In preparing to engage in the research process with participants, I visit both classes during the month of September 2017. The purpose of these unrecorded visits is to familiarize both the disabled children and their teachers of their rights as participants as well as my responsibilities as a researcher. Here I follow the work of Snelgrove (2005) who seems to represent one of the few examples of educational research with young disabled children that engages in research amidst disability rather than about solving the ‘problem’ of disability. For example, in implementing her method of inquiry in a segregated class with students labeled with intellectual disabilities, Snelgrove (2005, p.314) considers the importance of finding ways to “challenge accepted truths and engage with children ‘with-out’ trying to assimilate or acculturate the other.” Snelgrove (2005) states rather unequivocally that: “In order to, include those that are most marginalized as effective participants in research we have to be prepared to be innovative in our methods” (Snelgrove, 2005 p. 319). Ultimately, she opted to adapt her method to a group format that foregrounded issues of consent, to allow for both group interaction and conversation (Snelgrove, 2005). Snelgrove’s work (2005) to adapt her method to ensure the engagement of the intellectually disabled children she was working with mirror attempts by both indigenous scholars (Skattebol and Hayes, 2016; Wright et al, 2012) and post-qualitative ethnographers (Johansson, 2016), to consider how the conversations that occur amidst our daily encounters offer new trajectories and dilemmas in developing research methods.
They also mirror my intentions to find ways to engage in conversation with disabled children beyond merely privileging voices but also considering the meanings in their silences and in other modes of wordless communication that give space to varying ways of conveying meanings.

In addition to the formal letters of consent that are signed by the adults (Appendix A, B, C, D) including the parents and caregivers of student participants, I follow Snelgrove (2005) in taking my time to speak with students about what research is, what I will be doing as a researcher on my weekly half day visits as well as their right to say no to research and the researcher at any time. I especially want students to understand that they can say ‘no’ and they should say ‘no’ if at any point they are feeling any sense of discomfort during the research process. I explore these research issues with the permission of both classroom teachers, once a week, over a period of three weeks, where they give me time to teach students about the matters of research and consent. We read stories together like: *Silent Music* (Rumford, 2008), *Wings* (Myers, 2000) and *No, David!* (Shannon, 1998). We sort ideas into t-charts and Venn diagrams both in a small group and individually with adult help, in order to identify key ideas especially around their rights as participants and my responsibilities as a researcher (Appendix E, F, G). We post these ideas on large paper in the classroom and the students get their own individual copies of the same information. Each student also gets a copy of visual prompts for saying ‘yes’ (green sheet) or saying ‘no’ (red sheet) to consent (Appendix H1, H2). All of this happens before I send letters home to parents to formally request consent to have their children participate in the research (Appendix D). For me, the most significant aspect of this process is explicitly assuring participants with whom I have pre-existing relationships that I honour and respect who they are and what we are to each other outside of the research relationship. These are all moves intended
to diminish the power imbalances both perceived and real between us. These moves are also intended to assure participants of my commitment to respect their own refusals.

In addition to establishing these formal processes of consent with participants, there are informal processes of consent that also occur during my visits. For instance, there were occasions when one of the student participants was angry, upset or crying. In such circumstances it seemed rather inappropriate to ask for a participant to confirm their consent. If I could not confirm participant consent on any given day, I assumed that no consent had been given even in situations where parents had signed consent. During the course of the study, visual reminders related to research and consent given to students, may have gotten lost, buried under other papers and/or damaged. Therefore, every time, I visited I was clear with participants that I was audio recording one small group lesson for 20-30 minutes per visit. I check-in with the students during every visit by reminding them why I am there and prominently holding out my audio recorder during the small fragment of time when we are sitting together in a small group learning. Our daily encounters as researcher and participants are embedded in a foregrounding of the import of consensual relationships. In addition to stipulating the right for participants to refuse consent for a day or series of days during the study (Appendix G), I also establish a formal process to withdraw after the study is formally completed (Appendix I, J, K). Since, the letters reminding parents/caregivers go home near the holidays, I include a three-week window to reflect upon and consider any concerns they may have so that they can withdraw if they choose to do so (Appendix K).

Despite all of the formal and informal steps taken within this study to demonstrate my sincere commitment to inhabit space with participants that have historically been socially marginalized, in a manner that refuses to either objectify or perpetuate marginalizing practices, I
remain in a perpetual mode of questioning myself, my intentions as well as my own associations and affiliations with power in this space. For example, it is November 20 and my colleague/friend/participant needs to slip out of the classroom to organize some materials for scones and butter we are about to make as a group. She asks me to take her chair and without hesitating, I sit in the teacher’s spot. ‘Steven’ immediately calls out: “Hey, you said you are not the teacher, you are not supposed to be there. We don’t have to listen to you! Just joking!” (Audio Transcript, November 20, 2017). The rest of the students/participants are silent. In this moment, I am first relieved and then concerned. I am relieved because Steven remembers the red and green sheets we reviewed together before the research project officially started (Appendix E, F, G, H1, H2). He remembers that he and his classmates can say ‘no’ to participating in the research at any point during the study. I am concerned too because before this research project started several students in this class knew me as a teacher who would come in when ‘Mrs. Robinson’ was away. Six of the seven students in this Primary LD class have letters of permission signed by their parents and I wonder about the fuzzy line I just crossed between teacher and researcher. If I encounter this line as fuzzy, how could I expect the students not to also recognize its fuzziness? Power is present here in ways that muddy the matter of consent. In another instance very early on in the research study Mrs. Robinson says: “I know Ms. Karmiris is recording me. I told her it is okay. I trust her” (Audio Transcript, October 13, 2017). I greet this moment once again with both relief and concern. I feel both a sense of relief in the trust that has been imparted to me and also, a sense of responsibility to refuse the temptations to treat the stories we are making together as products/objects/data to be consumed by others. Thus, I remain in a perpetual mode of questioning of whether I have done or could ever do enough to inhabit my relationships amidst
disability with honour and respect. This is how I enact staying with the trouble that leaves me both troubled and perpetually troubling my relationships amidst disability.

Participant Observation as Sitting on the Carpet Amidst Disability and Normalcy: Audio Recording and Field Notes

While the word data and data collection has slipped through on a few occasions in my introductory orientations to this study, I remain troubled by both terms and I am reluctant to use them to describe my processes of relational engagement with my participants. As mentioned earlier in both this chapter and chapter 1, one of my concerns in this study is finding ways to both confront and refuse discourses and practices that objectify humans and, in particular, marginalized groups such as disabled peoples that have encountered research as harming and harmful. I prefer to use the word stories to describe what is represented here for a variety of reasons. Stories inhabit a place of non-innocence, partiality and intentionally foreground the responsibilities and perspectives of the storyteller. The most powerful story, in our current socio-cultural moment, the story or normalcy, can only be confronted, questioned resisted and hopefully supplanted one day, through the collective and diverse force of human imaginaries and the subsequent stories we make together. The representations of stories within this study seek to contribute to a reimagining of how we might become human with each other amidst disability as integral to what happens after the time of “Man, and its over representation” reaches its end (Wynter, 2003, p.268). The theoretical framework, methodology and method enacted here foregrounds how reading and being read in disabling ways implicitly and explicitly conveys the import of re-reading taken for granted stories differently while also making new stories with one another. It is important to remember that telling stories while inhabiting a mode of participant observation is intended to amplify rather than diminish my sense of responsibility as I inhabit disabling relationships.
In terms of the enactment of my methods during this study, my commitment to inhabiting my relationships in a mode telling stories through the methodology of reading and being read in disabling ways, entailed being fully present in the moment I was sharing with participants. In practical terms, this mostly meant sitting on the carpet with disabled children oriented toward the guidance and instruction of the teacher as framed through the lens of normalcy. I try on the very first day to take field notes while sitting with the children and I fail miserably. For me sitting on the carpet or sometimes at a table, represents an opportunity to engage in the small moment-making processes as we read and are being read by one another. While the teacher, is following the script of normalcy, my hands are often interlaced with the hands of students on either side of me. Sitting in this way, on the ground, literally in the middle of disability, in part evokes provocations from Ahmed (2006), to engage in different storytelling practices through both a re-orientation as well as inhabiting an embodied proximity with participants. Similarly, sitting on the carpet or at the table with participants also foregrounds the everyday mundane moments (Walcott 1994, 2016; Halberstam, 2011) and how this project might engage in the questioning of the expected routines of sitting on the carpet and/or at the table as a taken for granted integral component of teaching and learning. I write/sketch my field notes as soon as I get home. Inspired by the work of Sellers (2010), I sketch out the encounters in our small group moments by focusing on the multi-directional flows that occur even in this short span of time where normalcy almost consistently insists on being the only story worth telling. I also write about the small moments that seemed both too comfortable and discomforting. I listen to audio recordings and type out my transcripts. While, I appreciate that there are apparently numerous software programs intended to make the process of transcription more efficient, when I listen, I am reminded of all of the moments, audio recordings cannot capture, and it
contextualizes the voices amidst the seeming silences in ways that I suspect software programs find elusive. The method of making and telling stories that I am describing here, I believe is consistent with both the theoretical framework and methodology I have outlined.

**Analytical and Reflexive Conceptual Tools: Telling Stories in a Perpetual Mode of Stopping and Wondering**

Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s work (2012) serves as a reminder that an important consideration in the research relationship is remaining committed to reflexive practices throughout the research process. My research story will be applying three conceptual tools in tandem with one another in a perpetual mode of stopping and wondering. The three conceptual tools outlined below include, contrapuntal engagement, narrative entanglement as well as cri
distemological/ glocal embodiments. The goal of these tools is to sustain this project’s commitment to reading and being read in disabling ways while also insisting on the import of my own partiality as one component part of the unfolding relationships in these classrooms. To stop and wonder at how we trouble, are troubled by and engage in the troubling of how teaching and learning happens in relationship with, through and in disability is to inhabit both the "politics of wonder" (Titchkosky, 2011, p. 129) as well as Mac Lure's (2013) provocation to notice the data that is collected and represented in research through a mode of wonderment.

Wonder is relational. It is not clear where it originates and to whom it belongs. It seems to be 'out there' emanating from a particular object, image, or fragment of text; but it is also 'in' the person that is affected. A passion: the capacity to affect and to be affected. When I feel wonder, I have chosen something that has chosen me, and it is that mutual 'affection' that constitutes 'us' as respectively, data and researcher...We, and the data, do not pre-exist one another (Mac Lure, 2013, p.228).

While engaging in my role as a researcher within the two segregated special needs classrooms, it seems that there were several times when the ‘data’ chose me, both literally (e.g. children that would not let go of my hand) and figuratively (e.g. words and phrases that would repeat like and
echo in my mind) as Mac Lure suggests. I also encountered multiple moments where it was necessary to stop and wonder when I noticed both a taken for granted sense of comfort as well as when I noticed moments of discomfort arising within the teaching/learning/researching relationships in the classroom. The small moments that comprised the encounters felt by both teachers and students throughout this research study, comprise a tangle of associations and relations to categories of race, gender, class, disability and heteronormativity in ways that incite the import of stopping and wondering. For me this represents a commitment to attending to the tangles in between the ‘what’ (knowledges both vocal and silent), ‘who’ (subjectivities) and ‘where’ (complex implications of place, space and embodiment).

**Contrapuntal Engagement**

In an effort to continue in the troubling of normalcy I turn to the concept of contrapuntal engagement as integral to stopping and wondering through the method of participant observation and the stories represented in this study. Here I follow the work of Geeta Chowdhry (2007) who makes a case for the import of contrapuntal reading as way to resist the hegemony of Eurocentric epistemologies. Her application of contrapuntal reading draws heavily upon postcolonial scholars like Said and was intended to contribute to broadening the field of International Relations. Yet, her insights can also be seen as applicable to the field of disability studies and social justice education more broadly. Contrapuntal reading can be seen as, a way to temper inclinations to “privilege any particular narrative but reveal… intermeshed, overlapping and mutually embedded histories… A contrapuntal reading is like a fugue which can contain two, three, four, five voices; they are all part of the same composition, but they are each distinct” (Chowdhry, 2007, p. 105). Paradoxically it seems through binding ourselves to other voices and disciplinary fields, we simultaneously unbind ourselves to the tendency towards a dominating
voice and agenda that seems so ‘commonsensical’ in our contemporary world that continues to maintain and sustain colonial socio-cultural norms. The concept of contrapuntal reading/engagement thus becomes conceptually significant to my research project for the ways it complicates our understanding of what voice(s) might be within our teaching/learning/researching contexts and how these voice(s) push and pull upon us to (un)make the self in complex ways.

Part of my commitment to the concept of contrapuntal engagement entails a questioning of the voice(s), including my very own voice, as a way to attempt to catch the slips into a monologue of Western Eurocentric hegemony that continues to permeate our relationships with each other in undeniable ways. Chowdhry notes: “Said’s plea for a contrapuntal reading… is a plea for ‘worlding’ the texts, institutions and practices, for historicizing them, for interrogating their sociality and materiality, for paying attention to the hierarchies and the power-knowledge nexus embedded in them and for recuperating ‘a non-coercive and non-dominating knowledge’” (2007, p.105). Applying contrapuntal reading within disabilities studies allows us to engage with Michalko’s (2002, p.90) thought provoking question: “what if blind people actually believed what they saw? What if we thought we were actually seeing the true thing?” If we imagine the world inhabited by multiple true things, multiple ways of being and becoming within and through a legacy of coloniality, then perhaps, we might also begin to imagine how disability becomes an integral way of knowing/being and becoming human with other humans in the world. In seeking to re-imagine what might be possible in our world, disabilities studies scholars have a significant contribution that could work in tandem with postcolonial scholars, decolonial scholars as well as post-structural feminist scholars. Neither postcolonial scholars, decolonial scholars nor post-structural feminist ethnographers seem to have considered the strengths of such
an entangled relationship. Yet through their own interdisciplinary engagements, several
disabilities studies scholars have demonstrated the ways in which modernity’s ‘monologue’ with
itself has negatively impacted the lives of countless of disabled persons in ways that overlap and
intersect with categories of race, gender and class (Baker, 2002, 2015; Erevelles, 2000, 2005,
2011a, 2013; Connor, 2009; Michalko, 2002). Therefore, contrapuntal engagement for me
represents my own commitment to remain reflexive about and hopefully contribute to the
making of stories while focusing on an onto-epistemological turn toward “a non-coercive and
non-dominating knowledge” through which diverse ways of living and being in the world would
and could survive and thrive (Chowdhry, 2007, p. 105).

Narrative Entanglements

In tandem with the tool of contrapuntal engagement, this dissertation applies the concept
of narrative entanglement as another tactic in persisting in remaining reflexive about ways to de-
centre the self and along with it, the western epistemologies that sustain normalcy. The concept
of narrative entanglement is in part rooted and routed through the work of Wynter (1984, 2003,
2015). Through Wynter's work, the precarity of Western science to be the only voice that claims
to represent 'true' knowledge becomes increasingly evident. Wynter (1984, 2003, 2015) contends
that there is an urgent need to rewrite the onto-epistemological grounds of science to include a
study of how our systems and structures are implicated in the tales we tell ourselves and each
other. She states: “The Studia must be reinvented as a higher order of human knowledge…
which takes the human rather than any one of variations as Subject; must be reformulated as a
science of human systems which makes use of multiple frames of reference” (1984, p.56).
Elsewhere in her work she argues: “Once you redefine being human in hybrid mythoi and bios
terms, and therefore in terms that draw attention to the relativity and original multiplicity of our
genres of being human, all of a sudden what you begin to recognize is the central role of our discursive formations… in the performative enactment of all such genres of being hybridly human” (Wynter, 2015, p.31). There are two significant points that I consider from Wynter’s insightful provocations, for the purposes of my own research project. The first, is though her work is distinct from how post-structural feminist scholars, like Butler, route/root their work, Wynter’s decolonial frame also foregrounds the import of considering the ‘self’ not as an independent entity but as interdependent, on other humans and our relations to local/ global systems. Butler (2015, p. 16) for instance states: “Where the ethical does enter, it seems is precisely in that encounter that confronts me with a world I never chose, occasioning that affirmation of involuntary exposure to otherness as the condition of relationality, human and non-human.” The ‘self’ it seems is irrevocably bound not only to other human selves but to the material context and circumstances “in that encounter that confronts me with a world I never chose” (Butler, 2015, p.16). Both within Wynter’s work and Butler’s work the much-revered ability of the ‘Subject’ as conceived within the term of Western science and philosophy, to choose is reconsidered through how the ‘self’ is implicated in a system of other humans and nonhumans. These insights from both Wynter and Butler leads me to foreground a second important point for the purposes of my own research project. If as Wynter encourages, there must be a rewriting of what we have come to know as science to include “genres of the human”, then what also must become integral to this rewriting is disabled bodies/ disabled humans and how disability can contribute to blurring the lines of ‘self’, of ‘other’ and of our relations with each other.

Through a focus on Wynter’s work what I hope I have made clear is the need to reconsider how our systems and structures are implicated in the narrative (re)formations of the
Similarly, I hope I have demonstrated how the stories we tell are integral in enmeshing each ‘self’ in the lives of other selves and our material realities. One example of such a possibility can be read, when the work of Butler (2005, 2015) and Burke (2014) are considered alongside one another. In their respective fields of study both Butler (2005, 2015) and Burke (2014) continue to contribute to the further erosion of the myth of the ‘Enlightenment Man’ through the concept of intersubjectivity. As Butler (2015, p. 16) states: “Acted on, I act still, but it is hardly this ‘I’ that acts alone, and even though, or precisely because, it never quite gets done with being undone”. Here Butler describes the tangle of ‘I’. A tangle of relations that shape and reshape what is referred to as the subjective self. Here we get a sense that perhaps the notion of the subject is more nebulous and less the sturdy edifice than classic Enlightenment thinkers led us to believe (Butler, 2015). This is exemplified in the disability studies scholarship of Burke (2014, p. 36) who suggests in her interrogation of Alzheimer’s narratives, that the “concept of narrative identity…. erodes the distinction between inner and outer selves, pointing to a far leakier and permeable relationship between the two.” Burke (2014) suggests that Alzheimer’s is a disability that impacts not only the individual who has been diagnosed but, their entire network of family and friends who experience a troubling of their own subjective ‘knowing’ alongside the loved one who has been diagnosed. Burke (2014) foregrounds the ethical dilemmas that are evoked in attempting to ‘capture’ the stories of loved ones with Alzheimer’s, whose method of communication might be experienced as fragmented, disrupted, and more reliant upon reading body language than verbal expressions. She states: “intersubjectivity as the concept that potentially salvages and preserves the identity of the person with dementia is also that which stands in its way” (Burke, 2014, p. 38). In other words, the risk of telling our own or each other’s stories does not dissipate in the moment of our recognition of semi-permeability. If anything,
intersubjectivity as a hopeful possibility, amplifies the dilemma of story, self and representation. For the purposes of my own project, acknowledging the tangled web of stories we are enmeshed in, while in the classroom, represents a commitment to foreground the ethical dilemmas of the researching process through an enactment of a methodology of reading and being read in disabling ways.

**Glocal/ Cripistemological Embodiments**

The final concept to be outlined in this introduction, is the concept of glocal/ cripistemological embodiments. This concept follows the work of both disability studies scholars as well as decolonial scholars in order to foreground the import of place, both as embodied and materially situated, as well as integral in the work of disrupting the hegemonic story of normalcy. The intention here is to consider how the interaction of varying embodiments offers opportunities to engage in reading and being read through difference in a perpetually reflexive mode of stopping and wondering. Within the context of exploring different possibilities within public education Mitchell et al (2014) have applied the work of Halberstam (2011) in inciting both failure and low theory, as well as the work of McRuer (2006) with crip theory, to provoke schools to reconsider both spatial and social belonging through disability. They join several other disability studies scholars in critiquing inclusionary practices of school as methods of normalization (Mitchell et al, 2014). As a refusal of "the grim scenarios of success that depend upon 'trying and trying again' " (Halberstam, 2011, p. 3), Mitchell et al (2014, p. 295) pursue the possibilities within what they term "curricular cripistemologies". One of the key purposes that they foreground in their account, of how curricular cripistemologies suggest hopeful possibilities, can be seen in their consideration of the ethical demands of a pedagogical approach that makes "crip/queer subjects not just integrated but integral to the contemporary curricular
knowledge base” (Mitchell et al, 2014, p. 302). The hopeful possibility that is proposed here, acknowledges being situated "with[in] the often discomforting content of living interdependently with others" (Mitchell et al, 2014, p. 298). Significant here, in the contribution of Mitchell et al (2014) is the reminder that our inescapable obligation to each other, is riddled not only with possibilities but also with the incredible risks entailed with the admission of our vulnerabilities as we make and break connections to and with each other. For the purposes of my own research aims, Mitchell, Snyder and Ware’s application of Halberstam’s notion of low theory is particularly pertinent for the way it incites a focus on the contextual circumstances of space and how the bodies who inhabit and interact with each other and their environment come to (un)learn together. “I believe in low theory in popular places, in the small, the inconsequential, the anti-monumental, the micro, the irrelevant… I believe in making a difference by thinking little thoughts… I am chasing small projects, micropolitics, hunches, whims, fantasticals” (Halberstam, 2011, p. 21). I take Halberstam’s provocation to explore the small moments as another opening of possibilities to attend to the interactions between our entangled selves and the role of our spatial material contexts in the stories we tell ourselves and each other.

Focusing on the small moments between teachers and students where teaching and learning occurs in encounters that both adhere to and unravel our social scripts of normalcy, is the ultimate aim of this research project. Yet, as I hope has become evident at this point, it is my contention that the small moments that occur amidst and between teacher and student encounters are reverberations of Western onto-epistemological discourses as well as the shifts to other onto-epistemologies such as those rooted/routed in engaged, entangled and embodied ways of knowing, being and becoming. Though distinct from the work of Mitchell et al (2014), McRuer (2006) and Halberstam (2011), Mignolo’s rather succinct phrase “I am where I do and think”
can be seen as allegiant with the intent of the post-structural and disabilities studies scholars mentioned here, to the degree that the intent is to link the ‘I’ inextricably to relationships within the surrounding context of its becoming. Therefore, when Mignolo’s statement “I am where I do and think” (2011a, p. xvi), is read in tandem with Butler’s contention that ‘I’ is “occasioned by what is outside of me” (2015, p. 54), and the cripistemological import of “the often discomforting content of living interdependently with others” (Mitchell et al, 2014, p.298), leaves each of us in the midst of a ‘where’ comprised of glocal embodiments. The concept of glocal embodiments thus comes to play a significant role in the way it both materially grounds this study within a segregated space for disabled children while, simultaneously engaging in the questioning of those very grounds through the presence of embodied relations through which global currents of cultural dispersal come to reverberate both because and perhaps in spite of being in a segregated space.

**Concluding Thoughts for Part I and Overview of Study**

The overall goal of the first two chapters in Part I of this study was to outline the purpose, goals and intentions of the theoretical and methodological framework as well as the methods that guide my research practice in this study. The intent here is to explore inhabiting our relationships with each other differently amidst disability. Troubling participant observation through a reflexive mode of storytelling through stopping and wondering with contrapuntal engagement, narrative entanglement and glocally/ cripistemologically oriented embodiments are intended to continue to guide this study through the interpretation of encounters between teachers, students and the researcher during small group instruction in reading. Thus, in addition to Part I, there remains three more parts as well as a conclusion. Part II addresses the ‘who’ (subjectivities), Part
III addresses the what’ (knowledges both vocal and silent), and Part IV addresses the ‘where’ (complex implications of place, space and embodiment).

Part II of this study is entitled: The Trouble with Naming and being Named as an Ethical Dilemma of Subjectivity through Disability Studies. This part of the study will consider ways of troubling the subjective self through disability studies that will utilize all three of the conceptual tools outlined in this introduction. Chapter 3 will address the dilemmas embedded in naming and being named that impact what happens in the small everyday moments of learning both practically and theoretically. Chapter 4 will address the pernicious matter of reading identity through both literal and figurative voices and silences that both haunt and limit participant observation within the context it was utilized. Part III of this study is entitled: Disabling Encounters with the Curriculum. This portion of the study is composed of two chapters that confront how the script of normalcy remains deeply embedded in the everyday demands of working for rewards and what kind of thinking counts as thinking. The two chapters in Part III will largely focus on troubling the claims of normalcy while also foregrounding the import of disability studies in de-centering the claims of the normative subject. Chapter 5 will address readings of products, producers and production through encounters with disabled children and their teachers in both the Primary MID and Primary LD classrooms. Chapter 6 will address readings of what counts as thinking by stopping and wondering about ‘new’ ways to teach thinking through both computer coding as well as familiar examples such as playing games like Candyland. Part IV of this study is entitled: The Troublesome Matter of Touching and Being Touched: How Disability Continues to Leave its Imprint. This part of the dissertation will also include two chapters. These two chapters will largely focus on how the small moments of touch through disability convey that not only a disruption of the script of normalcy but also
possibilities for reimagining and enacting what it means to be human with one another differently. Chapter 7 will focus on troubling taken for granted orientations toward both disabled and normative embodiments. Chapter 8 will consider both the power and risk of touching and being touched. The risks of touch considered here include unbalanced relations of power and how disability is unsettled and remains unsettling in encounters between teachers and students. The final portion of this dissertation will include a conclusion that will focus on an overview of the significance of my study and outline some areas that might benefit from further focus and attention. Overall, my aim in this study is to inhabit the method of participant observation as a troubling and troublesome mode of storytelling. Through a methodology of reading and being read in disabling ways, the intention here is to question, resist and refuse the hegemony of normalcy while also endeavouring to contribute to a reimagining of becoming human amidst disability.
Part II– The Trouble with Naming and being Named and the Ethical Dilemmas of Subjectivity through Disability Studies

**Lance:** The kids are making fun of her and she is saying: Chrysanthemum, Chrysanthemum, Chrysanthemum.

**Kirby:** I am fish.

**Nadar:** [nods head] What’s your name?
**Me:** What’s my name? You know my name?
**Nadar:** Are you a hippopotamus? [laughing]
**Me:** I don’t think I am a hippopotamus.
**Nadar:** [laughing] How about a snail?
**Me:** No, I don’t think so.
**Nadar:** [laughing] How about a fish?
**Me:** No, I am not a fish either. Are you playing a trick on me because I always joke with you and pretend I don’t know your name?
**Nadar:** [nods while laughing]

**Bruno:** Which one is Jamal?

**Mesan:** What’s that word? [points to the name of his friend]
**Me:** That’s your friends name.

**Mrs. Robinson:** Josephine is a human being just like you but, she is unique just like you. What makes you different from everyone else?

Introduction

The research fragments included above are intended to offer a small glimpse into how practices of naming and being named remain a pressing concern in classroom spaces and specifically in the segregated Primary MID and Primary LD class where this study took place. Each of these small everyday moments, represented in the semi-permeable clouds above, evoke for me the troubling of the western normative subject and its knowledge claims by prompting me to think about several key questions. These questions are routed/ rooted through how naming practices occur daily and repeatedly in ways that are often taken for granted. For example, it seems rather unremarkable when during the reading of *Chrysanthemum* (Henkes, 1991), Lance states: “The kids are making fun of her” (Audio Transcript, September 27, 2017). That people can and do get teased for their names is something that even the disabled children between the ages of seven and nine years old have come to know about being in the world. This appears both distinct yet linked to another rather expected statement about selfhood from Mrs. Robinson who states: “Josephine is a human being just like you but, she is unique just like you” (Audio Transcript, Oct 13, 2017). I wonder here about what it means to celebrate unique human differences even as practices of naming, labeling and identifying, leave humans variably exposed and vulnerable to ridicule as well as numerous dehumanizing practices. I wonder too about how naming practices evoke a need for fixities and certainties even as practices of naming and being named evade, refuse, conceal and reveal a great deal about how the self is inextricably linked to the social. This is also evident in the examples above where both the students and myself play with and wonder about naming practices with each other. When Kirby says: “I am fish”, or when Mesan wonders how the combination of sticks and curves, we call letters, happen to make his
friends name, they provoke me to wonder about how our practices of naming and being named come to matter through acts of redrawing the lines that make naming possible. What do we both conceal and reveal about each other through practices of naming and being named that simultaneously sustain and resist the normalizing narrative of schooling?

Invariably practices of naming and being named leave this project enmeshed in the who (subjectivities), what (knowledges), ‘where’ (complex implications of place, space and embodiment). Invariably in confronting the tangle of associations amidst encounters between this researcher, disabled students and their teachers in this study, the how of reading and being read in disabling ways is also implicated. In Part II, I explore how subjectivities and onto-epistemologies are implicated in practices of naming and being named by focusing on two distinct yet linked intentions. In chapter 3 What’s Your Name Again, the intention is to foreground the ongoing ethical dilemmas that accompany my commitments to honour and sustain my relationships with my research participants. Butler’s work serves as a reminder that an ethical commitment amidst our relations is both an acknowledgement and affirmation that “no ‘I’ belongs to itself” (2005, p. 132). In chapter 3, I wonder about how playing with names simultaneously foregrounds the ways power is implicated in naming practices as they both slip and fix themselves amidst subjectivities. I wonder about how my own power as the researcher is implicated in the naming practices that I accept and refuse and how I both fail and get in the way of my participants with the naming practices I have committed to using in this project. I also wonder here about how to trouble my comfort, while being in familiar classroom spaces, with seven and nine-year-old disabled students and their teachers by considering how both the use of particular pseudonyms as well as other labelling practices of disability, gender and race are being used in this study. Also, a significant part of this chapter, will explore the limits of the method of
participant observation used in this study by considering the import of research relationships in the practices of ethical storytelling.

Chapter 4 Troubling and Troublesome Identity Amidst Disability, contributes to a sincere questioning of the relationship between identity claims, selfhood and power by considering how they are enmeshed with one another in ways that both adhere to and reject Western colonial impositions of power-knowledge. Also, this chapter will concern itself with exploring the ways disability and in particular, the contributions of disabled children in this study, might help us to re-orient our conversations to the conception of identity differently. In exploring the practices of naming and being named, this chapter will rely on Kevin Henkes (1991) well-known (at least in elementary school) work Chrysanthemum. It will also rely on readings of this work from participants. Similarly, their contributions will be evident in how they read or rather refuse to read Jamal in the story entitled: My Friend Jamal (McQuinn, & Frey, 2008). Also, a reconsideration of identity will be evident in the retelling of other small moment stories that occurred in between the gaps and spaces normalcy can never quite close or keep closed. This chapter will be supported through its reliance on the work of disability studies scholars such as Michalko (2002), McRuer (2006), postcolonial/ decolonial studies scholars Walcott (2016), and Wynter (1994) as well as post-structural feminist scholars Athanasiou and Butler (2013). Through foregrounding the reflexive/ conceptual tools of contrapuntal engagement, narrative entanglement and cripistemological/glocal embodiments, I hope to show how reading and being read in disabling ways simultaneously sustains, resists and engages in the reimagining of what it means to be human amidst disability.
Chapter 3 What’s Your Name Again?

The Troubling Matter of Naming and being Named in the midst of Participant Observation

My aim here is to consider how the concealment of names continues to leave the researcher and research participants in the midst of entanglements with knowledge and power that I continue to inhabit as an ethical conundrum of research practice. I choose the pseudonyms for all but two of my research participants and in so doing find myself mired in relations of power. For the purposes of this study, the names of the disabled children in the Primary LD class are: Bella, Lance, Scott, Bruno, Steven and Haron. The names of the children in the Primary MID class are: Mesan, Nadar, William, Kirby, Rick and Salam. The adult participants include: Ms. Yosam (Teacher, Primary MID), Ms. Postich (Long Term Occasional Teacher, Primary MID), Ms. Sapper (SNA, Primary MID), Ms. Noya (SNA, Primary MID), Ms. Sharek (Occasional Teacher, both classes), Mrs. Robinson (Teacher, Primary LD) and Ms. Voyant (SNA, Primary LD). How could the nineteen names, listed in these three sentences, be the source of such trouble to this project? Perhaps it is because of insightful questions asked by Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2012) who consider in their work multiple readings of disabled children. Within attempting to make a critical intervention through disability studies Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2012, p. 53) provocatively ask: “Are we in danger of empowering dangerous readings that create pathological versions of childhood?” This question seems particularly relevant to think with in my study as I wonder about how the naming practices, I adhere to risk exposing the disabled children between the ages of seven and nine years old to the risks of having their subjectivities exploited through research. What Goodley and Runswick-Cole are attending to here, and what I hope to explore in more detail, are how naming and labelling practices are implicated in the slippages and returns of the hegemony of normalcy even as the
Western-centric self and its knowledge/identity claims are foregrounded in both our critique and our questions. In an effort to engage in ethical research and storytelling practices as the work of Smith (2012), Lather (2007), Spelman (1997), Ahmed (2004a) and Titchkosky (2011), convey is necessary, the question above asked by Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2012), provokes me to consider the research practice of using pseudonyms as a mode of concealment while also considering how other ‘markers’ of identity are also used in research as a mode of revealing/representing subjects.

To find some way through to addressing the ethical conundrum of power embedded in the naming practices of this research study, I think it is important to consider the failings of my own method in adequately engaging participants in choosing their own names. That is to say, I was so deeply troubled by the idea of engaging in the process of naming and being named, that my first inclination was not to confront the trouble but, to avoid it. I regret not asking for time with participants to explicitly explain what pseudonyms are, and have each participant pick their own. Instead after the first three orientation lessons to the process of research and consent, I often inhabit both classrooms as a guest. Even though I stated the use of pseudonyms both in the letters of consent as well as orally to both classes, I failed to adequately engage my participants in the act of naming themselves. I mention it in informal conversations with both disabled children and their teachers (Field Notes, September 27 – October 7, 2017). Several of the teachers and students brush it off, either by shrugging their shoulders or, indicating that they trust me to make the name choices. Some of the kids think I am joking and begin to declare that they would like to be referred to as Batman or Iron Man or Spider Man as they laugh with one another and with me. Only two of the participants, both adults, take me up on my offer and self-select their own pseudonyms. One of the participants was listening to a song on the radio and texted me
with a smiley face emoticon indicating that her pseudonym would be Mrs. Robinson. The other participant introduces herself by her pseudonym when I arrive to class as Claire Voyant. I laugh, and at the same time wonder, how the voices and silences depicted in these rather banal moments both are being shaped by and are refusing to be shaped by the hegemonic power of normalcy?

What am I supposed to make of shoulder shrugs, laughter, names of superheroes and names suggested with tongue-in-cheek? Silences and voices of participants as well as my own intermingle here, in a manner that foregrounds contrapuntal engagement. Part of my commitment to the concept of contrapuntal engagement as outlined by Chowdhry (2007) and Said (1994, 2003) entails a questioning of the voice(s), including my very own voice, as a way to attempt to catch the slips into a monologue of Western Eurocentric hegemony that continues to permeate our relationships with each other in undeniable ways. In tandem with the questioning of voices, I am also guided here by the work of post-structural feminist ethnographers who consider how silences refuse voices the hegemony they typically occupy in emancipatory oriented research projects (Alcoff, 2009; Lather, 2007; Mac Lure, 2009; Mac Lure et al, 2010; Mazzei, 2003, 2007; Mazzei and Jackson 2012, 2016). In reading the voices and silences of research participants along with my own, it is important to consider these small fragments within the context of relationships I have been in the middle of for several years. We are so comfortable with one another, that power circulates between us in both hegemonic and non-hegemonic ways that its presence fades into the background of how things are. For example, in one of the fragments above, I relay how three of the boys in the Primary LD class want to be called superheroes while I laugh along with them. I leave unspoken in this moment the ongoing trouble of valorizing able-bodied white masculinity. In this moment, my laugh sustains the rather ordinary association with boys and the valorization of white male power. I do not question their
fascination or provoke them to consider how the hegemony of white able-bodied maleness depends on the diminishment of other varying embodiments such as their own. I do not make a move toward the school library or the class laptop to provoke these boys into thinking differently about the seemingly easy association between superpowers, whiteness, masculinity and ableism. In this moment, I laugh and leave unspoken, the ways that the persistence of stories of superhuman male heroes contributes to the ongoing diminishment of becoming human with one another differently.

Through reading and being read in disabling ways by contrapuntally engaging both the voices and the silences, participant observation in this instance allows for a consideration of the ways disabled children and in this case me as the researcher, sustain the story of normalcy amidst laughter. Somehow, the comfort I felt in the moment while laughing along has dissipated. Somehow, laughing with them, exposes both me and my participants as being complicit with the hegemony of normalcy as we enact a getting along with another that keeps us in comfort. The movement of following my own laughter, as it conveys both the trouble with being too comfortable with participants and the troubling recognition of how the power through which normalcy is sustained through a laugh is a demonstration of the limits and failure of the mode of participant observation I have inhabited in this project. As I have engaged in this project with the goal of not only untethering perspective readers of my work to the western-centric self and its embeddedness in the colonial logics of western epistemologies, I am also doing the work of untethering myself to those very same adherences. Therefore, in this moment of considering what I left unspoken while laughing along with participants and their evocation of superheroes, I confront “the difficulty of escaping customary habits of seeing and thinking” (Jones et al, 2010, p. 479). Simultaneously however, in refusing to leave my laugh alone, what I hope to show in
this one of many examples of my failures and the limits of this project, is the subsequent import of reading and being read in disabling ways, in such a way, that I trouble my own comforts and their ableist tendencies. Following the work of Mazzei and Jackson (2012, p. 745), reading voices and silences in tandem offers even flawed and novice researchers like me, opportunities “to challenge hegemonic discourses and (over) simplified knowledge claims.”

Thinking voices and silences together, while refusing hegemony to either, also allows for a consideration of how the power of normalcy is both questioned and sustained through both. In returning to another fragment I mentioned earlier, I also want to explore here, how the shoulders shrugs from a few of the students in the Primary MID class along with the verbal calls from the staff to choose the names myself, intermingle in ways that trouble the enactment of naming and being named in productive ways. As the work of Mazzei indicates:

…the absence of speech does not imply the absence of communication, and very frequently the interpretation of speech itself relies very heavily on the nonverbal component of communication. In other words, speaking without speaking is understood as a view of silence that places it not in opposition to speech, but that positions silence on a continuum with voiced speech. (Mazzei, 2007, p. 633)

Mazzei’s insight in relation to the import of nonverbal communication, I believe has particularly fruitful possibilities when applied with disabled children in the midst of critical disability studies theory. I find it particularly fruitful in foregrounding the contribution of some of the disabled children in this study such as the ones shrugging their shoulders, whom prefer nonverbal means of communicating. The shoulder shrugs occur within the context, of overhearing their teachers tell me that they trust me to choose the names on my own. So, I stop and wonder about the ambivalence conveyed in shoulder shrugs. Indicating the “construction of in-betweeness” (Johansson, 2016, p. 453), the shoulder shrugs convey a simultaneous acceptance and refusal of both what I have asked and what their teachers have agreed to for themselves. In other words, the presence of shoulder shrugs foregrounds an uncertainty about my own power to name as well as
the insistence of their teachers that not questioning the researcher’s power in this instance to name others, is okay. The power embedded in the shoulder shrugs provokes a troubling of the subjective force of both teachers and researchers while also acknowledging the presence of those subjective forces. This moment of shoulder shrugs also generates an ambivalence about their own subjective forces and the questioning of power circulating in between us in this moment. Silent shoulder shrugs here, both accept and refuse their power to wonder about the processes of naming and being named.

Both the presence of power and attempts at its erosion trouble all the subjective selves implicated in this moment in ways the evoke Burke’s work (2008, 2014) with intersubjectivity amidst disability. Burke (2008, 2014) insightfully considers how living amidst disability erodes the notion of the existence of the autonomous self through her contention that we all live narratively entangled lives amidst disability’s ongoing presence. When Burke’s narratively entangled intersubjectivity is considered alongside Mazzei’s (2003, 2007) simultaneous engagement with voices and silences which subsequently evokes Chowdhry’s (2007, p. 105) call for a contrapuntal engagement as a “worlding of the world”, shoulders shrugs from disabled children are proven to be vital in reimagining the world differently with another. Within their ambivalence about engaging in naming and being named, I cannot help but be haunted by the names they and their classmates have already been called by others. The names called by others, evokes for me Lance’s very ordinary reading that getting teased for your name is part of how things are (Audio Transcript, September 27, 2017, Field Notes, September 27, 2017). The names called by others also evoke how the names of diagnoses from the fields of psychology, medicine and education, are intent upon affixing and pathologizing disabled peoples in a manner that questions their inclusion in the category of human (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2012; Kudlick
2003, Slee, 2011; Baker, 2002; Erevelles, 2013). As troubling a practice as these processes of naming are, neither the disabled children nor their teachers explicitly mention them with any regularity. However, these naming practices as well as cultural naming practices of families remain ever-present forces shaping the ethical conundrum of representation in this study. For example, in addition to the pseudonyms given all the participants in this study, several of the disabled children and adults have a name that they use at home with families and a different name they are known by at school by teachers and classmates. In this sense the small moments of, superhero names, tongue-and-cheek names, shoulder shrugs, participants already known by more than one name and participants deferring pseudonym choices to the researcher, convey how the practice of using pseudonyms as a mode of concealment, reveal the non-innocence of naming and being named. Thus, a contrapuntally engaged and narratively entangled commitment to reading and being read in disabling ways exposes the circulation of power in these small moments of participant observation in a manner that persists in amplifying the trouble of representation in research. The naming practices used in this study are mired in the confrontation between intersubjectivity in research relationships and the subsequent conundrums of endeavouring to engage in ethical storytelling practices.

In encouraging researchers to confront the matter of power so inextricably linked with representation in research, Alcoff’s (2009) work can be read alongside Burke (2008, 2014) in troubling the notion of an independent self while also insisting upon embedding research in the midst of its relationally entangled responsibilities. “We are collectively caught in an intricate, delicate web in which each action I take discursive or otherwise, pulls on breaks off, or maintains the tension in many strands of the web in which others find themselves moving also” (Alcoff, 2009, p126-127). The insight by Alcoff (2009) stated here, helps me to keep in the foreground
my relationships with participants in ways that evoke continued trouble with the naming practices I am enacting in this study. As a reminder, the disabled children in this study are between seven and nine years of age and in addition to how the names here, connote distinctions of gender (11 boys and 1 girl in terms of the disabled students as well as an all-female staff), the names and labels used here should provoke questions about how some names are perceived as being from far away. The names chosen here intentionally carry with them the impacts of displacement wrought through Western colonialism. I have repeatedly used such terms as Western colonialism, Western-centric knowledge claims, Western hegemonic power, Western-centric self to insists upon the import of this socially unjust structure within everyday small taken for granted moments. This is evident here even in the pseudonyms selected for this study which try to honour the naming practices of participants, while still concealing their names. For example, some of the pseudonyms used in this study could easily pass as standard Western names: William, Kirby, Rick, Mrs. Robinson, Scott, Steven. While other pseudonyms chosen for this study convey a sense of distance rather than proximity to the West: Haron, Ms. Voyant, Ms. Noya, Ms. Sharek, Ms. Postich, Ms. Yosam, Salam, Nadar, Mesan. How is it that some names like Rick, Scott and Steven are associated with a sense of belonging in this place we call Toronto, while other names like Mesan, Haron and Salam, are associated with the sense of belonging someplace else? These questions are intended to provoke a consideration of the implications of how centuries of displacing people through the mechanisms and structures of Western colonialism continues to reverberate in both of these classrooms through the names represented here. In staying in tension with how power circulates (Trinh, 1989; Alcoff, 2009, Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2012) amidst our naming practices, the pseudonyms here enact a simultaneous concealing and revealing of adherence and resistance to Western colonial logics.
Concealing and revealing names amidst the voices and silences inhabited in this study, perpetually keep me in tension with the power imbalances I remain mired in as I endeavour to question and resist normalcy while, trying to find ways to tell stories differently. In contemplating the power of current western-centric knowledge systems in the ongoing circulation of “white-male-is-norm ideology,” Trinh (1989, p. 6) foregrounds the multiple meanings embedded in our words through which this hegemonic power both slips in and evades its own erasure. In addition to considering the use of pseudonyms in our research practices and how they are implicated in naming and being named, it seems rather necessary not only to confront the hegemony of normalcy, but to also insist that opportunities exist between us and amidst disability to reimagine these practices. Therefore, I want to take a moment to consider one of Haraway’s (2016) most recent works and how a concept she calls String Figures (SF) might offer a fruitful possibility to both disability studies and post-colonial/decolonial studies, as well as to my small project and its current exploration of the practices of naming and being named.

Playing games of string figures is about giving and receiving patterns, dropping threads and failing but sometimes finding something that works something consequential and maybe even beautiful, that wasn’t there before or relaying connection that matter, of telling stories in hand upon hand, digit upon digit, attachment site upon attachment site, to craft conditions for finite flourishing on terra, on earth. String figures require holding still in order to receive and pass on. String figures can be played by many on all sorts of limbs, as long as the rhythm of accepting and giving is sustained. (Haraway, 2016, p. 10)

Here, Haraway (2016) evokes the intermingling of varying embodiments and the necessary enmeshment of passive and active forces while, oriented towards one another and the making of stories that create the conditions for the thriving and honouring of human and non-human life in all its variabilities. Haraway’s contribution is also relevant here in the consideration of how story telling can be enacted simultaneously as a repetition, disruption and reimagining of our relations with each other. Thus far in this chapter, naming practices amidst the voices and silences I
inhabited as a researcher have considered the troubling association of names with adhering and questioning normalcy. Haraway’s concept of string figures evokes these tensions, while also provoking the possibility of reimagining the stories we tell and pass on amidst varying embodiments.

An example of string figures that I experienced with participants long before they or I knew we would be participants and researcher, involves a name game we have been playing for several years and are also depicted in the introduction to Part II. The games we play with names also echoes the concerns with power imbalances in naming practices that have remained in the foreground of my concerns throughout this chapter. In the example below, Nadar starts the game while we are waiting for the Ms. Yosam to sort out some technical difficulties with her Interactive White Board (IWB) lesson (Audio Transcript, October 5, 2017).

Nadar: [nods head] What’s your name?
Me: What’s my name? You know my name?
Nadar: Are you a hippopotamus? [laughing]
Me: I don’t think I am a hippopotamus.
Nadar: [laughing] How about a snail?
Me: No, I don’t think so.
Nadar: [laughing] How about a fish?
Me: No, I am not a fish either. Are you playing a trick on me because I always joke with you and pretend, I don’t know your name?
Nadar: [nods while laughing]

This little moment of playing with naming and being named, I would contend, is a version of enacting Haraway’s (2016) string figures, in ways that are allegiant with the methodology of reading and being read in disabling ways. There are I think a few significant points to be made here. This silly little game intentionally enacts a form of forgetting that allows the play to continue for as long as both or sometimes multiple players are experiencing the fun of imagining what other names might be possible. Sometimes one or more participants in the name game temporarily adopt a different name. Here the slippages and intentional acts of forgetting avail us
of small moments to imagine differently with one another by enacting “a non-coercive and non-dominating knowledge” (Chowdhry, 2007, p. 105). In the small moment depicted above, the game exchanges in a passing back and forth of the power to name and be named that refuses the certainty of anyone to name another as embedded in the continuation of the relational exchange.

I would also like to contend that this silly game assists in cultivating the structures for the thriving of varying embodiments. In the example above between myself and Nadar, he begins with wondering about my name. As part of how he embodies difference, sometimes, Nadar needs time and help to remember names. This game gives him a chance to intentionally remember with some help from his teachers and classmates, while laughing along the way. Indeed, because I inhabit the world amidst a crowd of names of countless students I have taught, sometimes I am the one who needs the help of this naming game. This name game gives me a chance to remember when I have unintentionally forgotten the name of the person speaking. Third, string figures as Haraway (2016) has conceptualized it, offers another mode of what I have described here as reading and being read in disabling ways as the contrapuntally engaged, narratively entangled, cripistemologically/ gloally embodied enactment of unbinding the self from Western colonial logics while seeking new bindings to be tethered to amidst and with disability. The hopeful possibility offered here amidst relaying some silliness between participant and researcher, intends to also foreground that perhaps because of all the trouble and failings of my mode of participant observation, there is perhaps the not so silly production of stories amidst disability that question normalcy while also suggesting other disabled stories have yet to be told.

Within this context, I am irrevocably tethered to superhero names, laughing along, shoulder shrugs and hippos and snails. I am tethered too, to the choices of representation I am
making within these pages and the ongoing ethical dilemmas that haunt me in the use of pseudonyms as simultaneously concealing and revealing the power between us as Trinh (1989, p. 53) astutely notes “never dies out.” I feel this power in researching, teaching and learning as a troubling weight especially when enacting processes of naming and being named because of the long legacy of harm embedded in the growth and sustenance of Western colonial logics in the name of research (Smith, 2012; Acker-Verney, 2016; Mitchell and Snyder, 2003). Even as I choose pseudonyms to conceal participant names, I continue to hold in tension both a respect for their own naming practices as well as a wondering of how names can be read as proximal/distant to Western practices of naming. In the use of Haraway’s concept (2016) of string figures, the slippages in naming and being named evoke the simultaneous trouble with intentional and unintentional forgetting. This is also evident in Burke’s work (2008, 2014), where she considers intersubjectivity as a matter of troubling the narrative self already troubled in our endeavours to preserve memories in our storytelling practices.

Perhaps it is because of the slipperiness of power evident in naming and being named through processes of concealing and revealing, voicing and silencing as well as intentional and unintentional forgetting, that there is a simultaneous need for fixity no matter how temporal, that names, labels and categories provide? In the next part of this chapter, my intention is to explore and confront my relationship with the expectation in research practice of revealing the identity of participants through associating participants within categories of identity. I remain concerned here with how the representation of subjectivities in this study might inadvertently slip into “pathological” tendencies noted by Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2012), who consider the way disability continues to be read as a problem in need of solutions or at the very least management. When western-centric knowledge systems continue to sustain the circulation of “white-male-is-
norm ideology,” Trinh (1989, p. 6), I intend to focus on continuing to stop and wonder about how the naming practices I am engaged in this project simultaneously risk sustaining and resisting the normalizing narrative of schooling.

**Naming and Being Named: An Enactment of Untethering the Self from Western Colonialism**

The desire for fixities in naming practices impacts this study in productive and non-productive ways as indicators of both adherence and resistance to the normative subject. In part, this section of the chapter, will consider the interplay between voices and silences in relation to practices of intentional and unintentional forgetting of the subjective self. In a comparable but distinct fashion to Trinh’s (1989) conception of western hegemonic power’s evasive and impactful movements of self-preservation, Said’s (2003) insights in relation to western power-knowledge, guide my wonderings in relation to the practice of enacting ethical storytelling. According to Said (2003, p. xviii): “History cannot be swept clean like a blackboard…[it] is made by men and women just as it can also be unmade and rewritten, always with various silences and elisions, always with shapes imposed and disfigurements tolerated.” Here, Said’s words serve as a reminder of two key considerations. First, my study inhabits a swirl of labels that the disabled students and teachers themselves rarely uttered out loud yet, are inhabited by all of us and indeed have brought us together in these two classrooms in ways that cannot be denied, ignored or erased. For example, in addition to the labels of LD and MID, the fields of medicine, psychology and education have labeled participants in these two segregated classrooms with diagnoses that include but are not limited to: Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Anxiety, Scoliosis and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). How can this study represent the import of diagnoses that are never explicitly spoken yet, are already shaping the trajectory of the disabled children in this classroom? Second, how can this study represent the varied cultural
affiliations of participants, in circumstances where some participants are unsure of the ‘where’ of their belonging? Third, what are the risks posed to my relationships with participants in my engagement with naming, labelling and classification practices that implicate this study in both intentional and unintentional practices of both remembering and forgetting to repeat, disrupt and reimagine our story making with one another? Needless to say, my choices are embedded in the ethical conundrums of research representation posed here and I am troubled by how power-knowledge are both shaping and refusing to shape the subjectivities in this study.

I return to the provocative question asked by Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2012) to consider how the need to place participants in relation to categories of race, gender, class, disability risks sustaining rather than delinking from normalcy. Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2012, p. 53) provocatively ask: “Are we in danger of empowering dangerous readings that create pathological versions of childhood?” I stop and wonder here about how naming practices are deployed in ways that allow normalcy to play all the strings through the management of differences as a repetition of the hegemony of the Western self. Therefore, “delinking” from what Mignolo terms “the colonial matrix of power” (2011a, p. 9) must involve a consideration of how to inhabit and represent embodied differences while refusing the pathologizing and subsequent management regimes of normalcy (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2012; Titchkosky, 2001; Baker, 2015). For this reason, I turn to Mignolo’s (2011a) tactic of delinking as a mode of questioning and resisting normalcy while inhabiting disability, while also following Said (2003) in refusing to sweep away the tainted histories of pathologizing, labeling and naming practices. It is important to emphasize here, that delinking is not evoked as a mode of escape from the present troubles, we inhabit due to the adherences and repetitions of western-centric colonial logics. Rather, delinking is a strategy of challenging the reading of disability through a commitment to
questioning the hegemony of normalcy while also reading normalcy differently through disability.

For me an integral part of this delinking involves three decisions in relation to the representation of disabled peoples in this study. First, as mentioned in Chapter 1 and outlined here in more detail, it involves refraining from the use of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) language so common in government policy documents as well as in elementary education policy and practices. As Titchkosky (2001, p. 128) notes in her critique of PWD language “all speech gives rise to and reflects a particular re-presentation of the meaning of people.” Titchkosky (2001) offers the insight that person-first language, emphasizes disability as a problem of the individual to be accounted for, measured and managed. PWDs evoke a reading of disability as an “individual trouble” rather considering how “everyone is touched by disability” (Titchkosky, 2001, p. 135-136). In other words, PWD’s perpetuate that the notion of the self, as conceived by Western epistemologies, as separate from disability, when disability is conceptualized as a lack or limitation in need of management (Titchkosky, 2001). Thus, PWD language can be understood as the circulation of hegemonic Western power, with the intent of sustaining normalcy. Therefore, in following the work of both Mignolo (2012, 2011a) and Titchkosky (2001), I use the terms disabled students, disabled children, disabled children and their teachers as a practice of delinking from the Western self and Western-centric epistemologies that continue to reject disability as embedded in our human embodiments and encounters with one another. I want to explicitly mention that I use the term disabled children and their teachers not as an identity claim but rather, as a way to insist, that in our efforts to delink from coloniality as Mignolo (2012, 2011a) provokes, disability is integral to the work of tethering each of us to one another in distinctly different ways amidst our differences.
In being trained as an elementary school teacher, to use PWD language, delinking from this practice is a true moment of stopping and wondering about the import of habituated practices of representation. Similarly, another decision in relation to the representation of disabled peoples in this study follows the work of both Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2012) and Titchkosky (2001) in refusing to explicitly use the pathologizing language of medical diagnoses that the subjectivities in this room inhabit without speaking their names. It is important to point out that the refusal to use the names of specific diagnoses is not intended to be a denial or a silencing of the import of these practices in shaping the lives of disabled peoples. Great work has been done and is continually pursued by numerous scholars within the field of disability studies that is attending to how medical and psychological diagnoses such as ASD and LD are being deployed against disabled peoples as a method of managing ‘problems’ (McGuire, 2016, 2017; Annamma et al, 2013; Connor, 2008; Connor et al, 2011). Yet, as I mentioned earlier, the names of specific diagnoses are not explicitly mentioned during the confined time this research project was focused on studying. I have made a commitment to my participants to constrain this study to exploring a 20-30-minute portion of each half day we spend together in my consideration of the question: How do encounters between teachers, students and the researcher within a segregated special needs classroom both perpetuate and resist the normalizing narrative of schooling? As mentioned earlier in both chapter 1 and chapter 2, while I had informal conversations outside of the research relationship where both adults and students shared their relationships amidst disability, I do not disclose those conversations within this study. These very obvious silences in relation to the specific impacts of diagnostic labelling practices, are not intended to indicate that the ways disabled children are labelled is not significant. Indeed, these silences speak volumes in ways that I hope to remain committed to addressing in the upcoming chapters and in ways I hope
contribute to the larger conversation about the uses of power-knowledge by the fields of psychology, medicine and education.

The two decisions already mentioned in relation to the naming practices I endeavour to adhere to are intended to keep me and this project mired in the ethical conundrums of naming and being named as I continue to acknowledge the trouble my own decision-making leaves me situated in. The third decision that I am foregrounding here, relates to the pronounced failure of this research project to pin down identity. In part, this failure is due to the taken for granted knowledge about one another that remains unspoken between myself and my participants. For example, over the years I have come to know that my participants have relationships to other parts of the globe. As far as I know through my relationships with the participants of this study, none of us have indigenous roots in this place now called Toronto, Canada. We are all settlers here and represent through the varying generational routes through which we settled, nearly every continent of this Earth. These places include but are not limited to: Argentina, Taiwan, Greece, Poland, Korea, China, India, Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad, Iraq, Egypt, Russia and Iran. As will be evident in the upcoming chapter, there are moments when the disabled children and their teachers disclose parts of themselves in relation to their embodied sense of differences.

Sometimes these moments of revealing their relationship to categories of identity will include vocal declarations. Yet, there are other moments with participants, of verbal and non-verbal ambivalence as well as moments of intentional and unintentional non-disclosure. For example, during a family album making activity, Nadar could share that his parents were from another place but, when asked where that place was, he replied: “I don’t know. It’s back home” (Field Notes, Dec 11, 2017, Audio Transcript, Dec 11, 2017). This here, is not an intentional refusal to disclose. Rather, it is indicative of the challenges of remembering things, that are a part
of the embodied differences that shape how Nadar and some of his fellow classmates encounter one another and their teachers. Intellectual disability, which impacts the participants here in distinctly different ways tends, in part, to be embodied and encountered as trouble with memory. For Nadar, names of places and people are fuzzy while, stating that Eid is his favourite holiday and that his mom wears a hijab are not (Field Notes, Nov 3, Dec 11, Audio Transcripts Nov 3, Dec 11). Within the context of this study, identity failed to get fixed in large part due to the perpetual sense of “erosion…of narrative identity” (Burke, 2014, p. 37). “The erosion…of narrative identity” (Burke, 2014, p. 37) that invariably needs to be contended with in this study is deeply embedded in many of the ethical conundrums that haunt this project in its confronting the power of naming and being named as well as reading and being read in disabling ways.

Concluding Thoughts

Throughout this chapter I have focused on the ethical dilemma of naming and being named by enacting a methodology of reading and being read and disabling ways. In employing the tools of contrapuntal engagement and narrative entanglement to refuse either voices or silences hegemony, one of the intentions was to demonstrate how inhabiting disability troubles the processes of naming and being named. In reading voices and silences in tandem through the work of Mazzei (2003, 2007) and Mazzei and Jackson (2012, 2016), I tried to explore how power circulates in both coercive and non-coercive ways to sustain and question normalcy. I hope this was evident in troubling my laughter with participants and talk of superhero names as well as in the ambivalence of shoulder shrugs from disabled students. Similarly, the small string figure (Haraway, 2016) story told in this chapter, intended to foreground how processes of naming and being named as a pattern given, received and refused in its repetitions, inhabits past and present troubles as well as evoking the possibilities of different futures. In the process of
thinking voices and silences both together and apart, I hope I demonstrated the import of inhabiting disability amidst us, as impacting and impressing on our relations with one another. I hope this was particularly evident in part two of this chapter as well, in its continued exploration of the failure of this project to refuse to fix identity in the midst of myriad of both the intentional and unintentional troubling of identity. In exploring the ethical dilemma of naming and being named, it was not my intention to resolve the questions which I posed at the beginning of this chapter. Indeed, it is my contention that if we are to not only decentre normalcy but contribute to the reimagining of a world amidst disability, we must remain attentive to how power circulates and continues to sustain the story of Western colonialism. Thus, in reading and being read in disabling ways, this project proceeds in the midst of unresolvable ethical conundrums, in order to engage in the work of inhabiting the world differently amidst disability.
Chapter 4—Troubling and Troublesome Identity Amidst Disability

Haron: “She’s got the bananas”
Mrs. Robinson: “Pardon?”

Mrs. Robinson: [The kids] were jealous. They wanted a flower name too! Right? Mrs. Twinkle said the she might name her baby after a flower. Does that make Chrysanthemum happy or sad?
Bruno: Happy

Bruno: Which one is Jamal?
Lance: The Brown guy.
Mrs. Robinson: This is Joseph [points to the boy with white skin]. This is Jamal [points to the boy with black skin]

Mrs. Robinson: Tell me something good friends do?
Steven: Play
Mrs. Robinson: Yes, friends play but what else?
Steven: Clean the table.

Mrs. Robinson: How is Josephine a living thing?
The images of the three book-covers, the dialogue fragments placed in semi-permeable boxes connected by two-way arrows, are intended to generate both pause and wonderment at the ways the ‘self’ is reading and being read in disabling ways within the context of the segregated special needs classrooms in this study. The two-way, curvy and ultimately interconnected arrows are intended to depict a foregrounding of how, as Titchkosky (2008, 2007) notes, reading and being read are social acts. In reading, reading in this way, we come to foreground how our relations with one another both sustain and disrupt the normal able-bodied ‘Self’ of western epistemologies. The images of the book-covers and the accompanying dialogue boxes are also inspired by the work of Halberstam (2011) and Sellers (2010) who foreground the small moments between us, in a way that has been integral in guiding my own understanding of how the story of normalcy continues to circulate. Invariably, the storybook characters, Chrysanthemum, Joseph, Jamal and Josephine are in the middle of how reading and being read as different, unique, and alive, both shapes and refuses to shape the stories we tell ourselves and one another about what it might mean to become human with one another amidst disability. Invariably, because we are reading Chrysanthemum, Joseph, Jamal and Josephine with one another, the semi-permeable lines, connote how these stories of the ‘self’ are sustained and dispersed through routes that depend upon the power of retelling the story of a Western-centric self.

How might the readings and sometimes, the refused readings of the able-bodied subjects depicted in these books, contribute to a re-imagining of the self and its claims to identity? How might attending to both the voices and silences that trouble the self in rather ordinary and banal ways, contribute to re-orienting (Ahmed, 2006) our relationships with one another by insisting on the import of disability’s presence, especially as normalcy insists on its absence? Amidst
teaching and learning to become differently human with one another, even as the Western-centric subject of normalcy persistently resists its displacement, how might we find alternate routes of relating with each other, other than the ones that lead us back into western-centric claims of selfhood and identity? The questions posed here outline a particular set of concerns within the exploration of the broader question of how do encounters between teachers, students and the researcher within a segregated special needs classroom both perpetuate and resist the normalizing narrative of schooling. Chapter 4 of this dissertation will continue to focus on notions of the self, the dilemmas with naming and being named as well as the pernicious dilemmas of identity claims. It is important to keep in mind that the method of participant observation that was applied within these two classrooms where I gathered, collected and I am now in the process of retelling stories, remains perpetually tainted, limited, constrained and mired in the necessary ethical conundrums of representation. In many ways what I hope to demonstrate in this part of the study, is how this tainted method substantively failed to ‘pin down’ identity and in particular failed to ‘pin down’ a disabled identity. Yet despite the slipperiness of identity, even in the midst of disabled children labelled and identified through mechanisms of medicine, psychology and education, the pervasive force of the normal self could neither be evaded or ignored. Able-bodied Chrysanthemum, Joseph, Jamal and Josephine remain central to the ways disabled children are oriented to knowing the ‘self’. A self that remains tethered to notions of identity routed through the colonial impositions of Western-centric epistemologies in ways that are adhered to, refused and generate possibilities for distinctly different relations between subjectivities.

This chapter follows the concerns of chapter three and the broader concerns of this study by exploring two interrelated questions of the self, the western-centric epistemologies enacted in
classrooms and practices of naming and labeling who counts as human. First, how do disabled children encounter readings of who counts as human within a segregated special education class? In part, I continue to stop and wonder here about how contrapuntally engaged voices and silences help in questioning a reading of the normal self through disability. In part, I also stop and wonder here about how the rhetoric of the unique self, so often deployed in children’s storybooks, conceals both a call to sameness and a call to manage differences. Second, to paraphrase Michalko (2002), how is disability already contributing to a reimagining of the human, in a manner that desires difference as difference and not sameness? In addition to using the conceptual tools of narrative entanglement and contrapuntal engagement, I intend to explore here how cripistemological/ glocal embodiments can contribute to the possibility of the impressions disabled students and their teachers, along with this researcher, leave upon one another. I wonder here about how the readings of Chrysanthemum (Henkes, 1991), I am Josephine (Thornhill & Lee, 2016) and My friend Jamal (McQuinn, & Frey, 2008) simultaneously adhere to and resist these normalizing narratives while also generating the conditions for humans becoming human with each other differently. In many respects, it is both the readings and refused readings of disabled students that provoke the moments of stopping and wondering about normalcy and its presence in this classroom. In the midst of this wondering of the trouble, troubled and troubling self, some of the works which guide my own include: Wynter (1994, 1987), Michalko, (2002), McRuer (2006), Ahmed (2012) and Walcott (1994, 2016). Throughout this chapter, it is my intention to continue to point to the (un)productive failures of the method of participant observation I inhabited in this study by foregrounding the impossibility of fixing identity within this study.

“What Makes You Different from Everyone Else?”
Unlike chapter 3, which considers naming practices through the small moments of my encounters with disabled students in both the Primary MID and Primary LD class, the readings of *Chrysanthemum* (Henkes, 1991), *I am Josephine* (Thornhill & Lee, 2016) and *My friend Jamal* (McQuinn, & Frey, 2008) occur entirely in the Primary LD class, within the first month of the research project. In engaging in the readings of these stories of self, difference and proclamations of identity, I am sitting on the carpet literally in between disabled children between the ages of seven and nine years old. While we are supposed to be oriented toward the teacher Mrs. Robinson and the stories of selfhood she is sharing, I realize that from the vantage point of the carpet, that the disabled children in this study are oriented as much toward each other in their varying embodiments as they are to the stories Mrs. Robinson is reading aloud. Part IV of this study will more directly consider these embodied orientations on the carpet amidst each other in more detail. I only mention it here in order to emphasize how the stories of selfhood depicted in these stories inhabits trouble from the moment we sit with each other and engage in attempting to know the self through our collective efforts of reading and being read. I also mention it here in order to keep in the foreground the ways in which learning to know the self within this LD classroom, happens amidst embodied ways of knowing that remain tangibly experienced that both shape and refuse to shape the stories of Chrysanthemum, Josephine, Joseph and Jamal.

During the reading of the story *I am Josephine* (Thornhill & Lee, 2016), the disabled children and myself are oriented towards considering a reading of the human in both its centrality as the point of comparison, as well as its unique form of aliveness that distinguishes being human and alive from other ways of being alive. This is a remarkably ordinary reading, that is emphasized in teaching and learning about the classification of living things in science for
students in grade two and grade three, in both segregated special needs classrooms and regular classrooms. As we sit on the carpet together and Mrs. Robinson continues to sit in her rocking chair, we are learning how to draw lines between different degrees of being alive. Mrs. Robinson asks repeatedly as she reads this story, “How is Josephine a living thing?” We learn that plants, insects, birds and mammals are all living things. We also learn that the human is a mammal but, it is special and unique in its form of being alive. At one point, it takes some convincing to draw the line between chickens and other mammals as well as cold-blooded reptiles and other mammals (Field Notes, Oct 13, 2017). The story *I am Josephine* (Thornhill & Lee, 2016), endeavours to convey the message that being human is a unique kind of alive for its limbs, its senses and for its language, that are all emphasized in the story and on the front cover, where Josephine is depicted on the book cover as in the middle of a cartwheel, one hand down and her legs up ready to complete the wheel. When we arrive at the end of this process of comparing different types of being alive, Mrs. Robinson asks: “Josephine is a human being just like you but, she is unique just like you. What makes you different from everyone else?” (Audio Transcript, Oct 13, 2017). There is what seems like a long silence before, Mrs. Robinson offers her own example, “Maybe… I don’t know… you like to eat something weird… Like I used to eat cereal with chocolate pudding.” Mrs. Robinson begins to laugh as the students register their disgust through both their body language and noise making. Mrs. Robinson has declared herself a unique human through her habits of consumption and she encourages the students to write and draw pictures about their own unique consumption habits.

This depiction, of a small fragment of time where I sat on the carpet with participants oriented toward the reading of, *I am Josephine*, has something to teach us about becoming human amidst disability. In being guided by the provocations of disabled students as well as the
work of critical theorists, there are I believe at least three key points to consider here. First, as a participant observer who has been deeply embedded in classrooms as well as my own pre-existing and ongoing relationships with participants outside of this study, I am comfortable sitting on this carpet engaging in the familiar exercise of drawing lines of comparison between different gradations of what counts as alive and who counts as human. Being here, with my hands holding the hands of two students on either side of me as we read stories together, is an act so familiar as to be untroubled and untroubling. Yet, I am reminded of Titchkosky’s insight mentioned earlier in the introduction: “If every act of reading risks capture, then attending to the act of reading maybe a way to resist such capture” (2007, p. 103). Part of the ethical dilemma that lingers and haunts the representations of experiences throughout this study is confronting my own comfort as well as the comfort of my participants in the story of normalcy. Post-structural ethnographer Lather refers to this unacknowledged and taken for granted comfort in research as “the water in which the fish swim” (2007, p. 66). In following the work of Foucault, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) contends that the entire structure that informs all of our decision making from the mundane (e.g. sitting on the carpet) to the significant (e.g. drawing lines between gradations of aliveness) is tainted and mired in the confines of oppressive hierarchies. “Foucault also suggests that the archive reveals ‘rules of practice’ which the West itself cannot necessarily describe because it operates within the rules and they are taken for granted” (Smith, 2012, p. 44). How am I supposed to notice the trouble I am in, when as Smith (2012) notes, much of the trouble is embedded in the rules of teaching and learning that are taken for granted habits? When read alongside one another, Titchkosky (2007), Lather (2007) and Smith (2012) evoke the genuine trouble I am in as a researcher just sitting on the carpet in the middle of reading normalcy. It seems that I am always at risk of remaining captured and failing to resist capture of
the very familiar practice of drawing lines between what counts as alive and who counts as human.

In continuing to underscore the limits, constraints and risks in the midst of the ethical conundrums of being committed to my relationships with participants while also trying to trouble comfort that comes with the habit of sitting on the carpet, the second point here, relates to enacting the habit of drawing lines between you and I and us. How did the practice of teaching, learning and representing of the lines drawn between what counts as alive and who counts as human become such a seemingly ordinary occurrence? What is the purpose and preoccupation with identifying differences in being alive and being human? How are being the same and being different inextricably linked in who counts as human? Michalko (2002, p.101) states: “The line that separates disability from non-disability is understood as a given, drawn once and traced over and over again with the indelible pencil of nature.” It appears, that not only are we as humans both preoccupied and compelled to draw lines “over and over again”, but who is drawing the lines and where the lines are drawn continues to reveal a great deal about what our differences in embodying life mean. For instance, each participant in this study at “Up North Public School” is amidst embodied disabled differences, cultural differences, language differences, racial differences, gendered differences, class and demographic differences. Yet, when Mrs. Robinson poses the question “What makes you different from everyone else?”, we are collectively silent. What do the silences amidst differences mean in this moment when we as a collective have been oriented toward reading Josephine as different from other living things? How is it that the ensuing silences, that follow Mrs. Robinson’s inquiry about differences, is broken by a call to our sameness in declaring herself a quirky prior consumer of eating chocolate pudding and cereal together? What do the silent refusals to declare our individual differences reveal about the taken
for granted lines already in between us that chocolate pudding and cereal together seek to conceal?

After Mrs. Robinson breaks the silence with her story of combining chocolate pudding and cereal, the students are instructed to write and draw a picture about something quirky they eat that evokes both their difference and sameness with their classmates and teachers. It seems that to be unique and different like Josephine or Mrs. Robinson becomes a call that evokes sameness. This call to sameness, by evoking difference, in a way that “does not make a difference” (Michalko, 2002, p. 94), exposes how this segregated special education classroom is troubled by differences. In the following quotation, Michalko (2002), insightfully suggests that the principles responsible for segregation in education are intended to foreground as normative a version of the human (able, white, male, middle class, heterosexual), that marginalizes difference(s).

Segregated schools or special education classes are not essentially different; they may not have been the 'mainstream', but they are certainly tributaries that flow from (and into) it. 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 the can get in preparation for 'fitting in' (Michalko, 2002, p.62)

Michalko (2002), here insightfully points to the coordinated intent of special education and regular school to adhere to the sustenance of normalcy in ways that dismiss disability and disabled peoples and how their varying embodiments contribute to a different understanding of the world or as Chowdhry states “a worlding of the world” (2007, p. 105). It seems that in this sense, Mrs. Robinson’s question about difference and how she subsequently orients students to respond to the question, seeks to manage difference (Walcott, 2016, Titchkosky, 2001, Ahmed, 2012), rather than contrapuntally engage with differences by considering the possibility of their being more than “one and only one true thing” (Michalko, 2002, p.90, Chowdhry, 2007; Said,
1994, 2003). Somehow the call to declare our individual differences keeps us mired in the sameness of normalcy. In this sense too, what becomes evident is the persistent power of normative self and its desire for sameness to consume, capture and continue to be the water in which we swim (Smith, 2012; Titchkosky, 2007; Lather, 2007). Thus, drawing lines that distinguish between human differences appears a simultaneously necessary tactic to refuse the hegemony of normalcy, while also being embedded in the risks of contributing to the hegemonic status of normalcy and western colonial logics through already established practices of managing differences.

Therefore, it seems a rather troubling choice for this project to engage in the wondering about the conception of the self in the midst of segregated classrooms whose intent purpose is to attempt to manage disabled differences, amongst other differences. Yet, in enacting a methodology of reading and being read in disabling ways within this context, I hope that the multiple sets of lines that I seem tangled in, persist in contributing to a different understanding of the self, amidst disability. The lines that keep us both together and apart, seem to be a great source of trouble for contributing to the collective project of reimagining becoming human with one another differently amidst disability. There are the set of lines I mentioned between myself and participants that constrain this study in hopefully productive ways, in a foregrounding of the import of the research relationships. This set of lines is mired in the ethical conundrums of endeavouring to sustain connections and commitments with participants while also, troubling those very same connections and commitments, especially when they run through and into the demands of the normative self. This was evident in the example of the ensuing silences when reading Josephine and the call for difference amidst cereal and chocolate pudding which “does not make a difference” (Michalko, 2002, p. 94). In this sense, our collective silence can be read
as a missed opportunity to trouble and disrupt the valorization of able-bodied Josephine. I too think about the contribution of my own silence as I wonder about my own role in sustaining the normalizing narrative of schooling.

This ethical conundrum is further complicated by another set of lines mentioned in this chapter. This set of lines are the implicitly and explicitly stated differences that persist in valorizing “Man, and its over representation” (Wynter, 2003, p. 268), while diminishing other varying human embodiments. The classroom I inhabit with disabled children and their teachers as we orient ourselves to stories of normalcy like, *I am Josephine* (Thornhill & Lee, 2016), is both rooted and routed in the Western colonial logics that sustain “Man, and its over representation” (Wynter, 2003, p. 268) through managing difference. This is evident in how this story orients its readers to the abled-bodied human as the point of comparison of other living things. The demands of normalcy are evident in the collective silence that follows Mrs. Robinson’s declaration that eating cereal and chocolate pudding makes her a unique human being. The silence conceals the myriad of disabled, racial, cultural and class differences that are neither foregrounded nor addressed in this moment of reading about Josephine and being uniquely human. In attending to this silence in this instance, both my own as well as the silences of the students I am sitting with, my intention here is to point toward the ways normative demands continue to silence a much-needed critical engagement with differences while in the very same breath declaring the value of being uniquely human. So, I wonder what can giving voice to differences do when the category of who counts as human is overdetermined by the normative body. In this sense our collective moment of silence when faced with Mrs. Robinson’s question: “What makes you different from everyone else?”, can also be read as the way in which disability continues to haunt the normative demands to voice unique differences.
While my own silence and the silence of my participants in that moment can be read as a missed opportunity to disrupt able-bodied Josephine in mid-cartwheel, the failure to do so also offers a fruitful opportunity to explore the ways silence as a form of refusal troubles the notion that voicing differences can, in and of itself, make enough of a difference to transform normative demands on disabled bodies. In other words, I wonder about the limits of voicing differences as a strategy that might transform the category of the human when the act of giving voice to differences reinforces rather than troubles the normalizing narrative of schooling. How might disabled students and their teachers refuse the capture of normative demands while also remaining mired in them? In the next part of this chapter, I evoke a paraphrasing of Michalko (2002) once again in asking, how is disability already contributing to a reimagining of the human, in a manner that desires difference as difference and not sameness? Thus, in continuing to examine Mrs. Robinson’s question: “What makes you different from everyone else?”, I want to explore how western hegemonic practices of managing difference are both troubled and evaded by inhabiting differences differently. The next subsection of this chapter will be guided by the provocations of disabled students as well as scholars such as Walcott (2016), Ahmed (2006), McRuer (2006) and Michalko (2002) and Athanasiou and Butler (2013).

“The kids are teasing her” and “Which one is Jamal?”

If we are always named by others, then the name signifies a certain dispossession from the start. If we seek to name ourselves, it is still within a language that we never made. And if we are to be called by another name, we are in some ways dependent on those we petition to agree with our demand. There seems to be an overdetermination of the social at the site of the name, so however particularistic we want the name to be, it exceeds us and confounds us.” (Athanasiou & Butler, 2013, p. 138)

Athanasiou and Butler’s insights into naming and being named, serves as a reminder of how the (non)declaration of both sameness and differences in naming practices are dependent
upon our connections with one another. Invariably in naming and being named in our differences, we expose ourselves amidst one another too. In returning to Mrs. Robinson’s question and the subsequent collective silence, when she asked: “What makes you different from everyone else?”, the silence can also be read as a refusal to expose each other to the risks of exclusion. As (Trinh, 1989, p. 36) insightfully states: “Who can endure constant open endedness? Who can keep living completely exposed?” The silence in that moment, preserved our comfort with one another in a way that exposes the fragility of being amidst each other. The disabled students, their teachers and this researcher, have our own troubling stories of our exposures to being called derogatory names because of our differences, so much so, that it is taken for granted as the way things are. Thus, when Mrs. Robinson reads *Chrysanthemum* (Henkes, 1991) to the class, no one is surprised that the main character is being mocked and bullied because her name is different when compared to the names of her classmates. *Chrysanthemum* is a well-known story in elementary schools. Perhaps, I do not notice a sense of surprise among students listening to Mrs. Robinson read the story because I have read this story so frequently over the years that I almost have it memorized. *Chrysanthemum is a commonly used story at the beginning of the year in both regular and special education classes as it immediately brings in the foreground the necessity of reminding each other about the importance of respecting each other’s names.

As Butler and Athanasiou (2013) contend, names evoke particular identity claims while also exposing the self to the uncertainty that comes with depending on others to recognize such claims. In the case of the character Chrysanthemum, depending on others to appreciate her name, rather than tease her, leaves her encountering several negative experiences with her peers at school. Bruno, referenced at the beginning of this chapter with saying, “The kids are teasing
her,” is one of numerous students who make similar comments (Audio Transcription, Sept. 27, 2017; Field Notes, Sept. 27, 2017). Within this context, we can reread the question “What makes you different from everyone else?” as a request to expose the self as apart from normalcy. In the moment and time of my recording no one (not even the adults) seemed to want to engage in that form of explicit and declarative self-exposure. The silence along with the chocolate pudding and cereal indicate their own line-making of cautiousness as well as avoidance of revealing too much of ourselves, and in turn, troubling the tenuous comfort of the moment. If as Athanasiou and Butler (2013) suggest, that each of us is already dispossessed in the process of naming and being named, it seems that you, and I and us inhabit a fragility in our relations with one another that implicates the repeated drawing of lines between difference and sameness in both our accepted and refused dependencies. Reading stories like *Chrysanthemum* and subsequent responses like Bruno’s are ordinary and rather banal moments that are indicative of the ongoing dilemma with naming and being named that are a component part of attending school.

Thus, in reading “the kids are teasing her” as a common everyday refrain in the readings of disabled children between the ages of seven and nine years old, I stop and wonder in this study to foreground other refrains in small moments between us. In this case I turn to the work of Ahmed (2004a, 2006, 2012), and Wynter (1994), among others, to help guide me through my analysis of these rather common refrains that comprise the readings of able-bodied characters like Josephine, Chrysanthemum, Jamal and Joseph. Ahmed (2006, p. 3) suggests that in trying to connect with one another amidst our differences differently we “might start by redirecting our attention toward different objects, those that are ‘less proximate’ or even those that deviate or are deviant.” I read Ahmed’s (2006) provocation here as a call to desire to be impressed upon and transformed by difference that echoes the work scholars such as Halberstam (2011), McRuer
(2006) and Walcott (2016) whom also convey in their work, both a desire and dependency on human variability as necessarily productive. Similarly, the work of these scholars seems to distinctly and collectively respond to Michalko’s (2002, p. 94) earlier observation and stated concern about his disabled difference of blindness “not making a difference.” These scholars seem to be indicating, that despite the perils of drawing lines between differences, which include the perils of differences managed through established tactics of neoliberal, western colonial states, that inhabiting differences differently is already happening and will continue to transform how we become human amidst one another (Ahmed, 2004, 2006, 2012; Halberstam, 2011; McRuer, 2006; Walcott, 2016). In this sense, perhaps we can imagine along with Wynter (1994, p.42) that we can and are in the process of untethering ourselves from the current system of human classification that makes “the acronym N.H.I” (No Humans Involved), unthinkable, as a result of becoming oriented (Ahmed, 2006) and thus tethered to one another differently. Perhaps too, one day, the common refrain from disabled children immediately recognizing in their reading of Chrysanthemum that “the kids are teasing her” because of her difference, will cease to be remarkable for being so ordinary.

In the meantime, I want to contribute a couple of examples from my own study as a way of further exploring the possibility of another set of lines I am in the middle of exploring here in this chapter. I am in the process of stopping and wondering here about how western hegemonic practices of managing difference are both troubled and evaded by inhabiting differences differently. I return to a reading of another story in the Primary LD class and to the introduction of another question to orient the students to the reading of My Friend Jamal (McQuinn, & Frey, 2008). This time, Mrs. Robinson asks: “What do good friends do?” (Audio Transcript, Oct 20, 2017). Unlike the question, “What makes you different from everyone else?”, the question “What
do good friends do?”, elicits multiple verbal responses. In one set of responses noted in the dialogue boxes that introduced this chapter, Steven appears to be differently oriented to two intended audiences when he responds “Play” in one instance and “Clean the table” in another. Giving voice to the actions or doings of “good friends” invariably evokes concerns about human interdependencies in distinct yet linked ways to the silence that followed Mrs. Robinson’s previous question: “What makes you different from everyone else?” While the collective silence that followed this question can be read as remaining complicit with the normative demands of school, the very same silence can also be read as refusing the demands of voice for particular actions that orient disabled subjects in particular ways. In each instance of describing a good friend, each participant describes an action that becomes a component part of how this Primary LD class comes to categorize good friends.

For example, Bruno repeats on more than one occasion that good friends help pick-up a friend when they fall down (Field Notes, Oct 20, 2017). For Bruno, this quality in friendship matters in a very tangible way because Bruno wears a brace around his torso and has been wearing a brace daily for the three years that I have known him. When Bruno falls, he needs help to get up. He is always glad for helping hands when they are there. He is also disappointed and frustrated when other children intentionally push him down and do not help him up (Field Notes, Oct 20, 2017). The replies here by both Steven and Bruno to the question “What do good friends do?”, foregrounds in distinctly different ways, their interdependency upon others. Steven needs and wants friends to play with and he also needs and wants his teacher to be happy so, his contributions of “Play” and “Clean the table” can be read as oriented to both audiences. Bruno’s disabled difference leaves him literally and tangibly in between the hands of others. To borrow a turn of phrase from Athanasiou and Butler (2013, p. 138), Bruno is “dependent on those [h]e
petition[s] to agree with [his] demand.” While Bruno never names the physical disability that leaves him tangibly dependent on “good friends” he conveys his need for helping hands with a tinge of sadness in his voice that cannot be conveyed in written words. In giving voice to the dependency of his body, voice both troubles and reinforces orientations towards normalcy. In one sense the sadness in Bruno’s voice conveys the precarious situations he finds himself in when his dependency on helping hands is intentionally ignored. His relations towards others foregrounds his embodied difference in ways that cannot be overcome within a school paradigm that insists on progress towards normalcy. Bruno embodies the world in ways that trouble taken for granted assumptions of the unique abilities of the able-bodied self that are repeatedly reinforced in school. Bruno’s voice in inextricably linked to his embodied difference in ways that provoke me to ask distinctly different questions about teaching and learning in interdependent ways.

One such question is, how might you, and I, and us, continue to draw lines between differences differently amidst disabled children like Bruno, who demand a reconsideration of how we tether ourselves to each other? In many ways the asking of the question of how, might you and I and us continue to draw lines between differences differently, intends to explore and wonder about both the practical and theoretical implications of transforming our social relations amidst disability. Ongoing practices of conditional inclusion and discounting of varying disabled, racialized, gendered embodiments continue to shape the lives of disabled children like Bruno. Bruno who takes it for granted that “The kids are teasing her” and also recognizes that when he falls, he is not assured that anyone will help him. On a daily basis, Bruno and his classmates encounter the hegemony of normalcy through stories like: I am Josephine (2016), My Friend Jamal (McQuinn, & Frey, 2008) and Chrysanthemum (Henkes, 1991). All three of these
stories feature able-bodied characters. All three of these stories end with happy declarations of uniqueness and self-identity. In *I am Josephine* (Thornhill & Lee, 2016), Josephine is quite happy to have classified herself as human whilst placing other living things in ‘less’ significant categories. While Chrysanthemum is teased for her name, by the end, she is valued and recognized for her uniqueness. *My Friend Jamal* (McQuinn, & Frey, 2008), is told by Joseph while, describing the ways he is the same and different from his Muslim friend from Somalia. How Bruno and his classmates engage in reading these stories with one another, exposes the hegemony of normalcy while also suggesting that disabled students inhabit differences in ways that suggest both the necessities and possibilities of orienting ourselves to one another differently. In part, this is evident through the evocation of human dependencies in the work of Athanasiou and Butler (2013). Foregrounding the self as dependent, allows for a focus on the import of our social relations in generating the conditions for varying embodiments to thrive. However, in foregrounding the dependency of the self, what happens to the possibility of the difference individual differences can enact to impress upon and transform those whom they are tethered too? If the self is embedded amidst social relations, in a manner that “signifies a certain dispossession from the start” (Athanasiou and Butler, 2013, p. 138), what does that mean for the possible difference Bruno’s disabled difference can make (Michalko, 2002)?

In considering how to draw lines between differences differently, it seems important to think about how difference, and, in this case, disabled difference must be making a difference through its presence (Michalko, 2002). How might we accomplish the task of drawing lines between each other in ways that reconfigure the self, amidst its social relations without appealing to the Western-centric self and its identity claims? How can the self, situate itself as de-centred and yet continue to impress and transform the social relations within which it is embedded?

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Before returning to another example from Bruno and his classmates, I turn here to the work of Walcott (2016) and McRuer (2006) for some guidance about how to reimagine the self, amidst disability. Through crip theory, McRuer (2006), engages in embedding his work precariously between embracing the need for differences embodied in identity while also substantially critiquing any version of a disabled identity that would become static, fixed or hegemonic. McRuer’s (2006) contention of the simultaneous necessity of both moves, is rooted/routed through his intention to honour decades of work in collective movements in disability, LGBTQ, gender and race to redefine the terms of naming. McRuer’s (2006) move in situating the self as a force that is both impacting and being impacted by the social, explicitly conveys a refusal-to-forget the ugliness of colonial western logics in their continued attempts to name and manage different human embodiments. In a distinct yet linked manner, Walcott (2016) also situates the self in the social while infusing his conception of the self with the possibility to leave its own impact. An important consideration for Walcott (2016) is the continued impacts of colonial and postcolonial histories that continue to shape the human self in ways that require acknowledgement and confrontation. When read in tandem with one another, McRuer’s (2006) and Walcott’s (2016) conception of the self allows for the enactment and thriving of individual and collective differences in a manner that moves to and from the self and the social.

Both McRuer’s (2006) and Walcott’s (2016) conception of the self in their work, foregrounds working both within and against the hegemony of the normative western self in a manner that honours and troubles the self in the midst of reimagining the self, outside of normalcy. In this way, inhabiting the disabled self is a difference that is making a difference by confronting and questioning the normative self while simultaneously reimagining the self. Thus, when the stories: *I am Josephine* (2016), *My Friend Jamal* (McQuinn, & Frey, 2008) and
Chrysanthemum (Henkes, 1991) are being read amidst disability, the disabled students inhabit the process of reading as a necessary troubling of who they are in relation to the normative selves represented in these stories. Another example of one of these troubling moments, returns us to Bruno and a question he asks during the reading of My Friend Jamal (McQuinn, & Frey, 2008). Bruno wonders: “Which one is Jamal?” (Audio Transcript, Oct 20, 2017). Both his teachers and his classmates help Bruno review the story and notice the explicit clues that indicate Jamal’s family are immigrants from Somalia which prompts Bruno to share: “My dad is Jewish, and my mom is from Korea. My sister was born in Toronto. I was born in Toronto. I am from Toronto” (Audio Transcript, Oct 20, 2017, Field Notes, Oct 20, 2017). Bruno repeats the sentence, “I am from Toronto,” at least three times which prompts Scott to talk about his mom visiting their home in Jamaica but that he too was born in Toronto (Audio Transcript, Oct 20, 2017, Field Notes, Oct 20, 2017). Within the context of understanding the self as embedded in the social in a manner where the individual and the social impress their differences upon one another, what is to be made of the confusion evident in the question: “Which one is Jamal?” Similarly, what about the confusion with Jamal, prompted Bruno and Scott to share their connection to this place we call Toronto?

Within the readings of My Friend Jamal (McQuinn, & Frey, 2008,) articulated here in the responses from both Bruno and Scott, there is a voicing of both confusion and clarity as it relates to practices of identifying the self. For example, Bruno tells a story about the time he was on the bus with his mom and being asked by a stranger where they were from (Field Notes, Oct 20, 2017). Bruno identifies as a boy with a physical disability, a learning disability, who is also Jewish and Korean, and he repeats three times “I am from Toronto.” The distinct yet linked threads that comprise his narratively entangled relations with himself and the world around him
situate him in this place we call Toronto. It seems in reading Jamal as belonging to many different categories, Bruno has an opportunity to read himself and his classmates differently too. Bruno is the embodiment of their being more than “one and only one true thing” (Michalko, 2002, p. 90). Bruno’s self is contrapuntally engaged, narratively entangled and cripistemologically/ gloally embodied and he subsequently inhabits a classroom imbued with a myriad of complexly interconnected differences. According to Walcott (2016, p.48): “the everyday and banal multiculturalism that we live in intimate urban spaces functions as the backdrop for a move toward a more creole experience.” Walcott (2016, p. 39) talks about the concept of “creole-ness” within the context of pointing toward inhabiting multiculturalism not as state-sponsored management tactic but, as part of the daily happenings where legacies of colonialism are confronted through multiple routes/roots of everyday story-making. Thus, in inhabiting multiple categories simultaneously, Bruno not only embodies many true things, he is also tethered to his classmates who themselves are embodiments of many true things. They make stories together every day in ways that enact the drawing of lines differently between each other even as the script of normalcy in stories like the ones discussed in this chapter remain pervasive in the classroom. Both possessed and dispossessed by the demands of normalcy, the disabled students in this Primary LD classroom are simultaneously adhering to, questioning and reimagining their own humanness between one another.

**Concluding Thoughts**

This chapter offered an opportunity to stop and wonder about the category of the human as well as what it means to identify, label, classify and name the self. This wondering in relation to the categories of the self, involved both questioning the demands of voice to make declarative statements about being uniquely human as well as paradoxically depending on voice to trouble
the conception of the self as being “one and only one true thing” (Michalko, 2002, p. 90). In some ways, through repeatedly orienting ourselves to able-bodied characters like Josephine, Chrysanthemum, Jamal and Joseph, my own silences as well as the silences of participants in refusing to make declarative statements about identity work to sustain the normalizing narrative of schooling. However, in other ways, these very same silences trouble normalcy by questioning the demands to declare differences and the subsequent inclination in educational structures to manage differences. This chapter confronted the ongoing perils of attempts to manage difference through these mechanisms of identification in ways that continued to be encountered as harmful and unjust on a daily basis. In some sense the mechanisms of identification so commonly practiced in schools were troubled both in the silences and subsequent voicing of identities. While in some instances, participants do not explicitly self-identify in any particular way, in other instances, some participants self-identify in ways that convey the multiple entanglements of their diverse identities. Thus, through reading and being read in disabling ways within the context of this Primary LD classroom, the self can be read as simultaneously inhabiting many categories in ways that embodied many true things in a manner that trouble orientations towards normalcy. Already finding ways to draw lines of difference differently between one another, the readings of these disabled students continue to question normalcy while simultaneously engaging in the reimagining of the human in a manner that evades its grasp. Contrapuntally engaged, narratively entangled and cripistemologically/ glocally embodied, the small moments that represent the self, have admittedly failed to fix the self. Rather, they point toward how both the self and the social are already being reimagined amidst disability.
Part III—Disabling Encounters with the Curriculum

The two chapters that follow in Part III of this study, explore disabling encounters with the curriculum. When I refer to the term disabling encounters with the curriculum, I intend to pursue a form of reading about reading that is focussed on three distinct yet linked moves. The first, is to consider how the curriculum remains integral to sustaining the normalizing narrative of schooling in a manner that continues to diminish and marginalize disabled children and their teachers. This is part of the ongoing commitment of my study to foreground the import of ethical storytelling practices by confronting some of the banal seemingly taken for granted moments where calls for ‘progress’ paradoxically sustain mechanisms of conditional inclusion for disabled peoples (Erevelles, 2000, 2005, 2011a, 2013; Baker 1999a, 1999b; Graham & Slee 2008a, 2008b; Snyder & Mitchell 2010; Casey, Lozenski & McManimon, 2013). Second, in addition to confronting the ongoing presence of these socially unjust practices, I continue to rely on the work of scholars in disabilities studies, postcolonial studies, decolonial studies and post-structural feminisms, to question how these curricular practices continue to be sustained whilst they are simultaneously resisted. Here the stories of everyday encounters of disabled children and their teachers with the curriculum, foreground how current practices “mark a progress going nowhere” (McRuer, 2006, p. 182). In part the ethical move here, in troubling encounters with the curriculum also evokes the provocation from Tuck and Yang (2014b, p. 817) “to turn the gaze back upon power, specifically the colonial modalities of knowing persons as bodies to be differentially counted, violated, saved and put to work.” Thus, in disabling encounters with the curriculum, my intentions here are to confront, question and lastly consider the implications and contributions of the stories told in the spaces and gaps that the curricular calls to normalcy
cannot seem to contain. The third move here is to consider how disability continues to trouble normalcy not only through confrontation and questions but through contributing to a reimagining of what it means to become human amidst disability differently.

One component part of exploring disabling encounters with the curriculum entails addressing the numerous and often conflicting definitions of what it means to learn and what forms of knowledge acquisition, count as learning curriculum. For the purposes of the two chapters that follow, I take-up some of the tensions raised in Baker’s work (2010) between both the universal (i.e. the hegemony of the western onto-epistemological model) and efforts of provincializing curriculum (i.e. the import of local places and spaces as simultaneously sustaining and resisting western knowledge claims). Baker (2010) borrows from the work of Chakrabarty (2008) to consider the import of colonialism as integral to the hegemony of Western epistemologies that are self-named as universal and thus are routed/rooted through local school curricula. Baker (2010, p. 222) asks if there is “ever really [an] outside, ever in excess of such a normative frame of reference and its onto-theological baggage?” If as Baker (2010) suggests that colonialism runs through the modern project of schooling, what implications are there for how disabled students and their teachers come to encounter the curriculum? Baker’s work serves as a reminder of one of the meanings of curriculum. According to Baker (2010, p. 226) “curriculum derives from the Latin currere, meaning a racecourse or track. Significantly, we are to understand this track not as linear but as circular, where the ending meets back up with the beginning, the emphasis on the journey.” Baker’s insight is particularly relevant here when read alongside both McRuer (2006) and Tuck and Yang (2014b) because it connotes the paradoxical relationship between progress and stasis. Progress in learning the curriculum, involves staying on track, which subsequently sustains the lines of colonial Western onto-epistemologies. I wonder in the
following chapters, what it means to be read as off the track in ways that sustain and resist the normalizing narrative of schooling while also inviting the possibility of new disabled readings of curricular encounters.

Thus, within both the Primary LD and Primary MID classrooms at “Up North Public School” disabling encounters with the curriculum implicates a simultaneous confronting and resisting of the colonial Western logics embedded in the curriculum of modern schooling practices. Chapter 5 considers how disabled students and their teachers learn about the “productive capacity of future workers” (Erevelles, 2000, p. 42). This chapter explores reading and writing practices in a small group setting and their linkages to management practices and curriculum goals as they specifically relate to how disabled students and teachers come to read human and non-human life as products and producers in the cycle of production. Chapter 5 includes small moment stories from both the Primary MID and Primary LD classes. Chapter 6 focuses on small moment stories only from the Primary MID class. While considering both the new focus on teaching computer coding to elementary students as well as the old focus on following the rules in games like Candyland, in chapter 6, I wonder about thinking about thinking differently. In other words, what happens when thinking goes off the track of the normalizing narrative of schooling and its subsequent adherence to the hegemony of colonial western logics? Chapter 6 includes a troubling of the notion that learning can be measured as low or high as I wonder how else we might engage in teaching and learning about what it means to think with each other. Ultimately, I hope that both of these chapters achieve the goal of foregrounding disability in troubling the curriculum and how it sustains the normalizing narrative of schooling.
Chapter 5—Producing, Products and Production- How does the value of products and producing determine who counts as human?

Mrs. Robinson: Can you focus?

Mrs. Robinson: Eyes up here.

Mrs. Robinson: You are on the right track.

Mrs. Robinson: Listening. Are you guys listening?

Mrs. Yosam: Salam forgot a word. Go fix it please and when you fix it, you will get a sticker. Who’s next?

Mrs. Yosam: When you’re finished your book, you are going to have a book all about the life cycle of a pumpkin.

Mrs. Yosam: I am going to go and get the sheets because you have a lot of work to do.
I sense the words and ideas conveyed in the voice fragments depicted in the semi-permeable lines above as ordinary, commonplace and familiar. In part I have this sense because I was there sitting on the carpet with students when these words were spoken by Mrs. Robinson and Mrs. Yosam respectively. Sitting on the carpet or at a small table with disabled students and their teachers also means inhabiting a complex entanglement of stories. How the voices and silences of these teachers are embedded as part of the assemblage that comprises reading and being read in disabling ways in these two classrooms, remains a fundamental concern for this project. Part of this concern returns me to my ongoing preoccupation with how to engage in the practice of ethical storytelling when I consider the ways I too am implicated in the words spoken by Mrs. Robinson and Mrs. Yosam. In many ways, their voices stand in for my own. I could not even begin to count or account for the numerous occasions in my own daily teaching practice when I have spoken a variation, and/or the exact words depicted in the semi-permeable circular voice fragments above. Indeed, I could have listed several pages of examples from the short three-month period of this participant observation study where words such as “finish”, “complete”, “focus”, “listen”, “look” and being “on the right track” are used in varying combinations to generate commonly used refrains readily associated with the teacher’s voice.

The purpose of this chapter is to stop and wonder about the common and ordinary refrains of the teacher’s voice within the two segregated special education classrooms I inhabited during this study. I seek to trouble the ordinary by focusing on the readings of the small moments between us and how these moments sustain, resist and also contribute to a reimagining of our relationships amidst disability.

Therefore, in stopping and wondering about the role of the teacher’s voice in the affective assemblage that comprises these two classrooms, the intention is to trouble voice by refusing any
one voice a privileged or hegemonic role in the storytelling practices of this project (Chowdhry, 2007; MacLure 2009, Alcoff 2009, Mazzei & Jackson, 2012, 2016). In part troubling the teacher’s voice will be accomplished by finding ways to, as Tuck and Yang (2014b, p. 817) state: “turn the gaze back upon power, specifically the colonial modalities of knowing persons as bodies to be differentially counted, violated, saved and put to work.” A component part of disabling encounters with the curriculum, entails troubling the teacher’s voice and its complicit involvement in sustaining the normalizing narrative of schooling. I ask here, what is always and already happening that prompts Mrs. Robinson and Mrs. Yosam to repeatedly orient students toward finishing, focusing, completing, looking and listening? How is it that despite or perhaps because of repeated calls to finish, focus, complete, look and listen, these acts are perpetually inhabited as disrupted and interrupted? This rather narrow conception of the normative human and its relationship to the seemingly never-ending cycle of production will be troubled by engaging in the work of scholars in disability studies such as Erevelles (2000, 2013), scholars in decolonial studies such as Wynter (1987) as well as scholars in post-structural feminisms such as Haraway (2016). Thus, this chapter is composed of two parts. The first part, of this chapter will focus on troubling the taken for granted relationship between individual work completion and rewards. The second part of this chapter will subsequently explore how learning to read the lifecycle of a pumpkin serves to reinforce the gradient of evaluations of human and nonhuman life. I wonder how Western colonial logics remain embedded in modern schooling practices and how disabled readings might produce new possibilities in our teaching and learning encounters. Throughout this chapter I wonder about how the story of normalcy can never quite accomplish the task of fully enchanting (Wynter, 1987) or capturing (Titchkosky, 2007) participants amidst disability.
A Call to Normalcy: Producers, Producing and Products

It is Thursday October 26, 2017 and I am sitting on the carpet in the Primary MID class. Just like in the Primary LD class I have been visiting, the disabled students and their teachers are in the middle of learning about the lifecycle of plants. There are key words on the wall like seed, seedling, sprout as well as the familiar circular diagram of arrows pointing in a clockwise direction to indicate the direction of movement that produces, in this case, a pumpkin. Before Mrs. Yosam starts the lesson on the lifecycle of a pumpkin, some of the students are sharing their journal writing from earlier in the morning. Within this classroom journal writing involves drawing a picture with a caption that is co-constructed with the support of Mrs. Yosam, Mrs. Sapper and Ms. Noya. Today Salam, William, Kirby and Rick are sharing their journal writing before the lesson starts. In a sense the students experience the production of writing as its own cycle. First, they share their ideas in their notebooks with a combination of pictures and words and support from their teachers and then they share their writing with their peers and teachers in a small group setting. If their work is counted as complete, they get to choose a sticker for their notebooks. Through this small moment of coming to know themselves as producers and potential receivers of rewards, the disabled children and their teachers come to inhabit relationships with each other and the world around them through the story of production and its value. For instance, Mrs. Yosam tells Salam and the rest of the class: “Salam forgot a word. Go fix it please and when you fix it, you will get a sticker. Who’s next?” Salam does not get to choose a sticker. Instead, Salam returns to his desk where Ms. Noya helps him “fix it.” While, Rick takes his turn to share the writing he has produced, Ms. Yosam will determine whether the work produced by Rick is sticker worthy.
This occurs within three or so minutes of my participant observation of small group instruction in reading. Learning to read the lifecycle of a pumpkin is the main purpose of today’s lesson yet, it seems that the participants are already in the middle of reading the cycles of production through their readings of each other. I wonder here how both curriculum and management techniques enmesh with each other to sustain the normalizing narrative of schooling in ways that simultaneously limit and ultimately foreground the varying disabled embodiments and complexly entangled subjectivities that comprise this classroom. In reading the process of producing, producers and products as integral to sustaining the normalizing narrative of schooling, it is important to confront its hegemony through how teachers and students come to inhabit this story. For instance, part of the story of normalcy that is played out in this small moment is the idea that individuals receive rewards for work that is completed and well-done. Salam’s work does not yet count as sticker worthy. Salam will receive his sticker as soon as he fixes his mistake. In this small moment, where Salam is sent back to his desk to “fix it”, while the small group carries on with the reading of their journal entries, the teacher calls upon another student when she says: “Who’s next?” Everyone will have a turn to share their writing and potentially choose a sticker which is supposed to serve as a reward for what they have produced. Who is next, to be evaluated as producing a product worthy of a sticker? It seems that in sharing their writing and reading with each other, the giving and receiving of stickers, serves the purpose of foregrounding reading and writing as a production of individual (in)capacities and (in)abilities in a manner where the measure of who counts as human perpetually dangles the (im)possibility of inclusion.

Several scholars in disability studies and other fields have expressed their concerns for the ways in which the valorization of the individual as producer and product of the production
cycle acts to constrain our understanding of what it means to be human in a manner that continues to perpetuate cycles of marginalization and exclusion (Erevelles, 2000, 2005, 2011b, 2013; Baker 1999a, 1999b; Graham & Slee 2008a, 2008b; Snyder & Mitchell 2010; Casey, Lozenski & McManimon, 2013). Perhaps Erevelles (2000, p. 42) summarizes the intent in these small moments, of giving out stickers only for work that is sticker worthy, best when she states: “the everyday functioning of public schooling is predicated on the institutionalization of a complex array of evaluation strategies used to predict the productive capacity of future workers.” What does it mean for our teaching and learning relationships as we become human with one another, to be captured in the story of normalcy and its taken for granted belief that the degree to which you count as human is tethered to your productive capacity? According to Snyder and Mitchell (2010, p. 124): “In traditional formulas of Marxism and liberal discourses of political economy, disability represents the existence of non-productive bodies that cannot be successfully adapted to market expectations of competitive labor.” The insight offered here by Snyder and Mitchell conveys the concerns of several disability studies scholars, and in particular the contributions of Nirmala Erevelles (2000, 2005, 2011b, 2013), in challenging the ongoing material impacts in the lives of disabled peoples when the normalizing narrative of schooling remains enmeshed in producing producers and products. Being ensnared in this story implicates subjectivities, knowledge and power in a manner that sustains rather than questions how we might become human. Baker’s work (1999a, p. 806) in tracing the history of current curriculum policy and evaluation practices serves as a reminder of the power imbalance embedded in this narrative when she outlined how the “teacher as scientist and as judge…became the key educational identity”. This component part of the teacher’s voice that is present in the classroom assemblage,
is evident in the direct use of her power to give or withhold the sticker as an act evaluating students as producers.

In this sense getting in the way of the teacher’s voice in my study is integral to as Tuck and Yang (2014b, p. 817) state: “turn the gaze back upon power, specifically the colonial modalities of knowing persons as bodies to be differentially counted, violated, saved and put to work.” One of my aims here is to both confront and question how the teacher’s voice is acting as a conduit for the normalizing narrative of schooling in ways that sustain the marginalized status of disabled peoples when their “productive capacity” (Erevelles, 2000, p.42) is used as the measure of the degree of their humanity. The power imbalance is evident in the moment when Mrs. Yosam withholds the sticker from Salam until he goes back to “fix it.” She judges the value of his product as lacking and Salam returns to sit with Ms. Noya to try again. Casey et al (2013), insightfully suggest that as educational policies and management practices have come to route/root themselves through neoliberalism that the needs of corporations as future employers are foregrounded in ways that implicate education in the managing of troublesome students. This includes the valorization of the individual and their work products as “commodified through the mechanisms of schooling” (Casey et al, 2013, p. 47). Subsequently, Casey et al (2013, p. 50) also contend that: “Pedagogically, management is an attempt to separate curriculum from human interaction.” In addition to substantiating the work of Erevelles (2000, 2005, 2011b, 2013) and other disability studies scholars, the insights from Casey et al (2013), are significant here in the ways they emphasize the effects of engaging in the readings of disabled children as producers of products perpetually under the scrutiny of assessment, evaluation and management practices. Similarly, in moving to “turn the gaze back upon power”, the insight from Casey et al (2013) reveals how the narrative of individual producers and products, is an attempt to deny how
teaching and learning/ reading and writing are social acts that we inhabit with each other (Titchkosky 2007, 2008).

Through my critical interpretive analysis of the small moment that occurs with Salam, one of my aims is to disrupt and question the ways in which the teacher’s voice remains oriented towards evaluating producers and products in a manner that is both taken for granted and dependent on sustaining the normalizing narrative of schooling. While returning to his desk to work with Ms. Noya, Salam is smiling as he continues to repeat the same series of words he was attempting to convey in writing: “It’s Ms. Noya’s birthday today. We’re going to have a party!” (Audio Transcript, October 26, 2017, Field Notes, October 26, 2017). The giving and receiving of stickers as representative of individual products well produced, is a powerful story that contributes to the sustaining of the normalizing narrative of schooling. However, it is not the only story the disabled children and their teachers inhabit as they become human amidst one another. Rather than attempting to engage in a management strategy to minimize Salam’s disruption of Rick’s turn, Mrs. Yosam remains silent as Salam repeats the words, he is so excited about. Her silence amplifies Salam’s words as the participants and I, turn toward Salam as he walks toward Ms. Noya to sit with her and “fix it.” As Mazzei (2007, p. 633) contends, the silences from the teachers, the students and I are “meaningful and purposeful.” The silences allow me to stop and wonder for a moment about what “it” is that actually needs fixing? Salam’s smile inhabits the silence in a manner that prompts me to wonder about what else is being produced in this moment other than a reading of Salam as failing to produce a sticker worthy product. According to Snyder and Mitchell (2010, p. 124): “When we approach disability with respect to a concept of alternative valuation rather than merely as a symptom of exclusion within Capitalism, opportunities erupt for realizing “other worlds” of possibilities.” Snyder and
Mitchell’s (2010) insight along with Mazzei’s provocation to attend to the silences, foregrounds the ways that as powerful as the story of normalcy and its productive capacities portend to be, its impacts can be contained, minimized and even refused through a strategy of engaging in the making of other stories with each other.

Salam’s rather vocal departure alongside Mrs. Yosam’s silence, allows for the consideration of how we are always and already in a tangle of stories that not only question and challenge the normalizing narrative of schooling but also contain its import through the human connection that occurs when varying embodiments inhabit the same space. His failure to produce a sticker worthy product, offers distinctly different readings of what it means to produce, to fail, as well as to engage in disabling encounters with the curriculum. In failing to adhere to the normalizing narrative of schooling, Salam not only resists being captured and/or enchanted for himself as an individual, his failure creates a collective moment of stopping and wondering (Wynter, 1987; Titchkosky 2007, 2011; Halberstam, 2011). He is genuinely excited and happy that Mrs. Noya, someone he has known for several years, is celebrating her birthday. His excitement disrupts the ritual of giving and receiving stickers for work well-done. The value of the stickers in that moment, is diminished if not refused entirely, not only by Salam’s expression of joy but also, by how his joy captures and enchants the attention of the entire group as we absorb his joy through our silent acknowledgement of his departure from the group. The promise of a sticker and the subsequent verbal praise from the teacher, fails to completely capture Salam. His failure to be captured in this moment produces something new (Halberstam, 2011, Mitchell et al, 2014). It produces the possibility of becoming human with each other outside the demands of the neoliberal subject of production, consumption and commodification (Casey et al, 2013; Snyder and Mitchell, 2010). It serves as a reminder that the reading and writing of disability are
social acts (Titchkosky, 2007, 2008, 2011) that, invariably foreground how Salam’s reading and writing is connected with his relationship to Ms. Noya as well as the relationship of the rest of the participants to both Salam and Ms. Noya. Disabling encounters with the curriculum, generate something other than sustaining process of marginalization and social injustices. Departing from the world of sticker worthy producers and products, offers opportunities to generate narratives that just might contribute to the reimagining of the human amidst varying disabled embodiments.

Thus, reading and being read in disabling ways can work to question the story of normalcy while also suggesting that inhabiting stories is an enactment of becoming human with each other both within and against the construct of “Man” by philosophers of the European Enlightenment. Wynter’s work (1984, 1987, 1994, 2003, 2015), in tracing the pervasiveness of “the figure of Man” in European thought and the subsequent devastating impacts wrought through colonialism, demonstrates the ongoing pervasiveness of western logics in shaping the onto-epistemologies, subjectivities and power imbalances in our social relations.

“I quote Wynter (1987, p. 207) at length here to emphasize the necessity, the difficulty as well as the possibilities evoked in what she terms “disenchanting discourse.” As I have tried to demonstrate thus far, one integral aspect to the story of normalcy and its relationship to Western colonial logics, is the valorization of the productive capacity of individuals. Invariably, this valorization of the neoliberal subject is implicated in sustaining the process of reproducing the conditions of marginalization and conditional inclusion for disabled peoples (Erevelles 2000, 2013; Graham & Slee 2008a, 2008b; Baker 1999a, 1999b). Thus, “disenchanting discourse”
(Wynter, 1987, p. 207), becomes a necessary component of generating the possibilities for confronting, questioning and reconfiguring our disabling encounters with the curriculum.

Similarly, the necessity of “disenchanting discourse” (Wynter, 1987, p. 207) is evident in the daily immersion of teachers and students in the normalizing narrative of schooling. Salam’s momentary departure from the demands of producing sticker worthy work are both significant and fleeting. Salam’s expression of continued joy despite being directed to “fix it,” is representative of numerous other instances of disenchantment of both his peers and teachers. These moments of possibilities between us are often fleeting yet, their collective frequency, when considered in tandem with each other, represents a persistent troubling of normalcy and its myriad of enchantments. As indicated at the very beginning of this chapter, some of these troubles are evident in the seemingly ceaseless requests from the teacher to “look,” “listen,” “finish,” “complete,” and “pay attention.” The story of normalcy both implicitly and explicitly demands a great deal of attention. According to Wynter (1987, p. 242) the current hegemonic narrative of normalcy “functions to encode the dynamics of desire at the deep structural level of the order’s symbolic template.” What Wynter points toward here, and quoted earlier in more detail, is the way enchantment embeds itself among us in the narratives we tell ourselves and each other about what it means to be human. Thus, while it is necessary to engage in the work of “disenchanting discourse” (Wynter, 1987, p. 207), the enchantment of normalcy remains difficult to undo. In the end, Salam does comply with the request to “fix it” and he goes back to Mrs. Yosam for his sticker. Disabled students and their teachers inhabit the normalizing narrative of schooling to varying degrees and intensities while they also resist and at times engage in making stories with each other that demonstrate possibilities for inhabiting and storying our lives with each other differently.
Thus far, this chapter has focused on how the teacher’s voice is implicated as a conduit for management practices in the valorization of the normalizing narrative of schooling. The pervasiveness of the impacts of the production cycle and how it is embedded in the learning process through offering rewards based on the normative demands and evaluations of individuals as producers, was demonstrated through the example of Mrs. Yosam’s potential withholding of stickers. Mrs. Yosam withholding the sticker from Salam demonstrated how daily and pervasive practices of evaluating reading and writing continue to sustain the cycle of conditional inclusion for disabled peoples. So far, this chapter has also attempted to foreground the possibilities in resisting, containing and refusing the demands of normalcy. One of the strategies deployed for this purpose was to “turn the gaze back upon power” (Tuck and Yang, 2014b, p. 817) by getting in the way of the teacher’s voice through a consideration of the role of other voices and silences within the affective assemblage that comprise this classroom (Chowdhry, 2007; MacLure 2009, Alcoff, 2009; Mazzei & Jackson, 2012, 2016). Salam’s departure from normal exemplified the possibilities, however fleeting, of refusing the readings of individual failure (Halberstam 2011, Mitchell et al, 2014, Snyder and Mitchell 2010), whilst engaging in reading and writing as social acts we inhabit with each other (Titchkosky, 2007, 2008, 2011). Pointing toward the limits of the teacher’s voice and subsequently the limits of the normalizing narrative of schooling, represents a commitment to reading and being read in disabling ways that enacts a form of contrapuntal engagement which refuses the hegemony of any one voice or story as a movement towards “a non-coercive and non-dominating knowledge” (Chowdhry, 2007, p. 105).

This also represents a commitment to “disenchanting discourse” (Wynter, 1987, p. 207) or as Titchkosky refers to it, via the work of Dorothy Smith, to engage in the act of reading as the possibility to “resist such capture” (2007, p. 103). The next portion of this chapter will
continue to question the pervasiveness of the story of production and its relationship to normalcy by exploring how the concept of ownership/property are also taken for granted in the daily practices of teaching and learning about the curriculum. I stop and wonder here about how we learn to read and orient ourselves towards non-human life through teaching and learning about the plant lifecycle as an integral part of the science curriculum in both the Primary MID and Primary LD class I visited through this study and how we come to count life as something that can be possessed and commodified. I explore here how the ordinary practice in school of teaching about the plant lifecycle relates to reading and being read in disabling ways by linking this curricular expectation to its representation of the theoretical concepts of “whiteness as property” (Erevelles, 2011b, p. 274, Erevelles, Kanga & Middleton, 2006, p. 93) and “productive capacity” (Erevelles, 2000, p. 42). I also engage in the troubling of curricular knowledge and subjectivities by offering a disenchanted reading of this lifecycle. Similarly, I consider here the relationship between disabling encounters with the curriculum and what Mignolo (2011a, p. 9) terms “the colonial matrix of power.” I am supported in offering this disenchanted reading through the impressions between disabled children and plants as well as the work of scholars in postcolonial studies (Shiva, 1998, 2000, 2014) as well as post-structural feminisms (Haraway, 2016). I wonder here how the normalizing narrative of schooling is simultaneously sustained and resisted through our relationships to non-human life as differentially possessed and valued and how this narrative is embedded in maintaining the conditional inclusion of disabled peoples.

One Seed, One Product, One Producer

The process of “disenchanting discourse” (Wynter, 1987, p. 207) or “delinking” from what Mignolo terms “the colonial matrix of power” (2011a, p. 9), involves a reconsideration of how everyday storytelling practices work to sustain the normalizing narrative of schooling.
Along with the production cycle of writing products that are deemed sticker worthy, the production cycle of a pumpkin can also be read as integral to sustaining the story of the normative subject. It is one of the most ordinary and indeed common teaching moments during the month of October in a great deal of primary grade classes including both the Primary MID class and Primary LD class. Classes visually display a cycle. It starts at the top with a single seed and a single hand that places the seed into the ground. Next, the single hand then waters the seed. It subsequently turns into a sprout, a vine with a flower and a vine with a pumpkin. At each stage it is seemingly due to the efforts of one person that the seed is able to grow into a pumpkin. The pumpkin reaches the end of its cycle when it is ready to be harvested, ready to be used by the hand that produced it (Field Notes, October 13, October 24, October 26, 2017, November 2, 2017). This story is so familiar, and I am so comfortable teaching it, repeating it, noticing it on the walls and in countless storybooks that I almost forget to be troubled by it when it is my turn to sit on the carpet with participants and attend to it for what seems to be the hundredth time. The encounters between the disabled students and their teachers in these classrooms shake me out of my complacency and help me read this story of one seed, one product and one producer as troubled and troubling.

The first perhaps most blatant aspect of the story we teach children about how pumpkins grow, is the apparent relationship between labour and rewards. It is the farmer’s hand who assures the growth of the pumpkin and the continuation of the plant lifecycle. Students in both the Primary MID and Primary LD class are told that the cycle of production is endless as long as the farmer’s hand continues to plant the seed, water it and harvest it (Field Notes, October 13, October 24, October 26, 2017, November 2, 2017). This is not dissimilar to the lesson about finishing work in the classroom. Stickers, verbal praise and/or a free choice of activities are
readily offered as rewards for work well-done. While the story we repeat about the lifecycle of a pumpkin is ostensibly intended to teach the science curriculum and the earlier example of withholding stickers from Salam is ostensibly about the evaluation and management of writing skills, both come to be linked. Salam’s written product and the farmer’s pumpkin come to be linked in so far as, both are examples of how the story of individual efforts and their apparent relationships to individual rewards is reinforced in the curriculum. I am troubled here not only by how the story of individual labour and individual rewards is reinforced through everyday encounters with curriculum in the classroom, I am also troubled here by what it means for our relationships among human and non-human forms of life. I return to Wynter (2003, p. 268) for a reminder as to the depth of trouble we are in, as we continue to inhabit the story where the “over representation of Man as human” continues to shape our relations with one another in ways that sustain current unjust social structures. If the story that is perpetually reinforced in school is that the degree to which you count as human is tethered to the degree to which your labour counts as valuable labour, how does this narrow conception of what it means to be human constrain human imaginaries and the possibilities to inhabit disability in these two classrooms differently?

“We presently live in a moment where the human is understood as a purely biological mechanism that is subordinated to a teleological economic script that governs our global well-being/ill-being—a script, therefore, whose macro-origin story calcifies the hero figure of homo oeconomicus who practices, indeed normalizes, accumulation in the name of (economic) freedom. Capital is thus projected as the indispensable empirical and metaphysical source of all human life, thus semantically activating life, thus semantically activating the neurochemistry of our brain’s opiate reward/punishment system to act accordingly.” (Wynter, 2015, p. 23)

Wynter (2015) here, summarizes the fundamental dilemma of inhabiting the normalizing narrative of schooling and the subsequent necessity of disenchantment from this story and the ways it continues to shape both our human relations and the preservation of injustice. The methodology enacted in this study of reading and being read in disabling ways, is inhabited both as a mode of disenchantment and practice of foregrounding the import of generating a
constellation of stories that can work in tandem with each other to insist upon becoming human amidst disability differently. Thus, the story of the pumpkin as a reward for the farmer’s labours must be troubled alongside Salam’s labours for sticker worthy writing. In addition to noticing how reading the production of Salam’s writing and reading the production of the farmer’s pumpkin are distinct yet linked for sustaining what Wynter terms “our brain’s opiate reward/punishment system” (2015, p. 23), it is also important to engage in disenchantment by noticing how individual labour is not as directly linked with rewards as the promise of stickers or the story of harvesting a pumpkin might lead us to believe. For instance, for Salam, the expectation to use spoken language and in particular, the English language, is not only labour intensive for him, but nearly impossible to convey in written form without the help of lots of other hands. Hands that make charts, hands that write out unfamiliar words, hands that point to discrepancies in the usage of uppercase and lowercase letters. Hands and voices that redirect him to try and try again until it is fixed. Despite all of his tedious efforts to bend toward the demands of normalcy, Salam’s labour does not count as being sticker worthy until he yet again makes a return to “fix it.”

Not all labour counts. Not all producers, products and forms of producing count. When Wynter (1987) posits the import of disenchantment from the story of “the hero figure of homo oeconomicus who practices, indeed normalizes, accumulation in the name of (economic) freedom” (Wynter, 2015, p. 23), this also must be taken as an invitation to question and read the processes of schooling where disability might serve as a kind of mirror, inviting us to give a different read, a backward read, on what seems taken-for-granted. Salam’s ‘failure’ thus reveals how the normalizing narrative of schooling has a simultaneously narrow and sprawling conception of who counts as a producer, what counts as a product and how engaging in processes
of producing comes to count as worth counting. This gradient of who counts, what counts and how it comes to count is reinforced repeatedly in these interactional classroom moments such as learning how to read the production of pumpkins. For example, during a lesson on the pumpkin lifecycle in the Primary MID classroom Ms. Noya departs and returns carrying a young pumpkin plant (Field Notes, November 2, 2017). Almost instantly, Mrs. Yosam reminds the students that they can look but they cannot touch the plant. “It’s not ours. It’s from Ms. S’s class. Ms. S planted it” (Audio Transcript, November 2, 2017). Within these three, brief, yet, significant sentences spoken by Mrs. Yosam, labour and possession, in this case the possession of plant life, are linked with the power to touch or in this case, the inability to touch. The children cannot touch or be touched by the plant because the plant does not belong to them. Non-human life can be claimed as being possessed by some humans which gives the humans who claim possession, the right to touch. In this case, Ms. S planted it, so she owns it and can touch it. A few weeks earlier in the Primary LD class, students encounter the idea of labour, possession and touching differently (Field Notes, October 13, 2017). On this occasion, Mrs. Robinson has bought some produce and is passing it around, so the students can feel and smell the different textures of carrots, turnips, beets and onions. As the produce is passed around, Mrs. Robinson introduces each product by describing the ways they are used by people (Field Notes, October 13, 2017). The disabled students in the Primary LD class learn a distinct yet linked lesson to their counterparts in the Primary MID class. Though Mrs. Robinson did not labour to produce the plants, she owns them now, and she can decide who, if anyone, can touch her possessions. Similarly, plants have value, only insofar as they serve human needs. Plants apparently are produced by human labour, possessed and consumed as products that serve human needs.
Therefore, learning to read the lifecycle of a pumpkin, for disabled students and their teachers in these two segregated special needs classrooms, implicates participants in readings of the value of human labour, the value of human possessions and how the accounting of these values shapes our relationships to human and non-human life. Sustaining the normalizing narrative of schooling entails sustaining a gradient of values not only for the “productive capacity” of humans (Erevelles, 2000, p.42), but also of non-human life as possessions. Within everyday schooling practices, Salam’s departure from the carpet for failing to produce sticker worthy work is taken for granted as an expected outcome despite or because of the tedious efforts he has already made to have his work counted as valuable. His labour in this instance does not count. Conversely, Mrs. Robinson and Ms. S can claim possession over plant life that they had no hand in directly producing. The very real power imbalances evident in asking Salam to engage in the act of “‘trying and trying again’” (Halberstam, 2011, p. 3) to attain normative standards is juxtaposed against the taken for granted assumption that some hands, like those of Mrs. Robinson and Ms. S can claim the power of possession, the power to touch and the power to determine what kind of producers count as counting and kind of products have value.

If the sticker can only belong to Salam if he works even harder and tries yet again to “fix it”, if the disabled students are allowed to touch plants in the classroom only based on the claim of possession, then they have already been shaped by a set of stories that remain enchanted by “Man, and its over representation” (Wynter, 2003, p. 268). Learning to read stickers, seeds and plants as products that can be possessed by some humans, whose labour is valued by varying degrees, happens when you are as young seven years old within the common acts of reading your writing or reading the lifecycle of a pumpkin. These everyday acts represent the extent to which preserving the neoliberal subject as well as the neoliberal socio-economic structure are
embedded in teaching, learning and management practices (Casey et al, 2013). In this sense when Salam and his classmates encounter stickers and pumpkins as part of their everyday learning, they simultaneously encounter the ways colonial western logics are embedded in both local and global onto-epistemological structures. The work of confronting and questioning the ways the normalizing narrative of schooling endeavours to enchant disabled students and their teachers can thus be tethered to other examples of how “enchanting discourse” (Wynter, 1987, p. 207) is being pursued as a mode of refusal.

One example of the distinct yet linked circumstances of the segregated special needs classrooms learning about plant lifecycles and global cycles of production is evident in the claims to possess seeds (Shiva, 1998, 2000, 2014). As a scientist, feminist and community activist, Shiva’s (1998, 2000, 2014) concerns with processes of commodification, globalization and subsequent objectification of human and non-human life, offers at least three significant points of convergence with Salam, his disabled classmates and his teachers. First Shiva’s work questions the claims of corporations to patent and own seeds (1998, 2000, 2014), pointing to the ongoing perils posed by “the white possessive” (Moreton-Robinson, 2015) and/or “whiteness as property” (Erevelles and Middleton, 2006; Erevelles, 2011b). According to Shiva (2000, p. 9), “Centuries of collective innovation by farmers and peasants are being highjacked as corporations claim intellectual-property rights on… seeds and plants.” Shiva outlines in detail how the claims to possess non-human life by corporations depends upon rejecting the knowledge, subjectivities as well as the possibility that indigenous peoples have their own distinctive relationships with each other and the earth (Shiva, 1998, 2000, 2014). Second, Shiva shows how the commodification of non-human life subsequently contributes to the dehumanization of disabled, racialized socio-economically disadvantaged peoples. For example, Shiva points out that the
possessive claims on seeds and subsequent implementation of monoculture crops by corporations, has produced both disability and poverty in the Global South through the use of toxic chemicals, and the enforcement of contracts that often leave farmers indebted to corporations who according to Shiva endeavour to commodify human and non-human life for their own profit (Shiva, 1998, 2000, 2014). Third, her work also demonstrates the hubris of colonial western logics as embedded in corporations and their insistence that the only path forward is the one that valorizes the neoliberal subject as embodied in how corporations pursue profit via the commodification/objectification of human and non-human life.

Undoubtedly, Shiva’s interests in drawing attention to global inequalities that are sustained through the corporate desire to possess and commodify seeds (Shiva, 1998, 2000, 2014) are distinctly different from the small moment stories I am in the middle of sharing in this study. However, I believe her work here converges with my own because Shiva’s work, foregrounds for me the import of stopping and wondering as it relates to the following questions: Who has the right to own life? Whose life counts? What types of producing, products and producers count? And, do we know how we have learned to implicitly answer these questions in such a way that counting continues to occur in ways that does not account for the variability of embodied knowledges outside of the domain of the “white possessive” or “whiteness as property” (Moreton-Robinson, 2015, Erevelles and Middleton, 2006, Erevelles, 2011b)? According to Shiva (2014, p. 1): “The dominant model of economic development has in fact become anti-life. When economies are measured only in terms of money flow, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. And the rich might be rich in monetary terms—but they too are poor in the wider context of what being human means.” Along with Erevelles (2011b) and Moreton-Robinson (2015) what Shiva attends to in her work, is troubling the current accounting of life and its value within a
global corporate system of commodification for the purposes of sustaining “the hero figure of homo oeconomicus who practices, indeed normalizes, accumulation in the name of (economic) freedom” (Wynter, 2015, p. 23). Shiva’s work demonstrates that the story of one seed, one product, one producer retold to young children in numerous classrooms, mirrors the story corporations deploy to both claim possession and refuse the accounting of life outside its scale of valuation and commodification.

Thus when Salam and his classmates are repeatedly prompted to finish it, to fix it, to complete it or, when Salam and his classmates are prompted to work for the possibility of having their labour valued as sticker worthy or, when Salam and his classmates read pumpkin seeds and pumpkins as products that are owned, they along with their teachers and this researcher come to inhabit the local manifestations of the western colonial logics that sustain structural inequality on a global scale. The story of one seed, one product and one producer, is one story in a constellation of stories that enables the normalizing narrative of schooling to engage in the teaching and learning about what types of production count and the degree to which human and non-human life counts as counting. To engage in the process of “disenchanting discourse” (Wynter, 1987, p. 207) one tactic I have pursued in this study is to attend to how the small moments that sustain teaching and learning are implicated and complicit in sustaining normalcy in a manner that reflects colonialism in its latest neoliberal iteration. In addition to troubling the grip of neoliberalism both in and out of the classroom, reading and being read in disabling ways is a methodology that is also being deployed in order to convey the import of producing stories differently. In outlining her concept of string figures (SF) discussed in Chapter three, Haraway (2016, p. 35) states: “It matters what thoughts think thoughts. It matters what knowledges know knowledges. It matters what worlds world worlds. It matters what stories tell stories.” I also read
Haraway (2016) and Wynter (2015) alongside Snyder and Mitchell (2010, p. 124) and their contention that disability offers opportunities for “other worlds” of possibilities” to suggest that even as Salam, his classmates and teachers can be read as mired in normalcy, their encounters with each other, can also be read as a distinctly different worlding of worlds. It is at his juncture that I diverge from the work of Shiva (1998, 2000, 2014) and Erevelles (2010) to suggest that while the story of neoliberalism and its accompanying social injustices remains ever-present in its importance, it is possible and necessary to tell other stories both within and against its grasp. While it remains both ethically and analytically significant to question and trouble the story of normalcy as represented in the depiction of the story of one seed, one producer and one product, it remains as significant to this project, to foreground the telling of different stories. In this sense, my intention here is to contribute to string figure making (Haraway, 2016) as a mode of disenchantment, that would add to the production of a distinctly different constellation of stories. The ethical and analytical dilemma here is how do you write stories with the intent of capturing and enchanting your audience when, the import of disabling stories through encounters with disabled peoples by necessity, depend upon both refusing capture and a perpetual mode of disenchantment? The current mechanisms of capture and enchantment through normalcy remain mired in endless cycles of possession, production and consumption. Thus, to engage in distinctly different string figure making seems to require producing stories that must desire failure. For example, what happens when the story you want to tell is both literally and metaphorically inaudible? What happens when in intending to challenge the hegemony of possession and production, the story desires to leave its impression without speaking? How do you write in the sense of touch and smell even as they refuse to be contained by the sticks and curves that mark every page of this study? The small moment story I experienced along with the disabled students
and their teachers that both troubles the story of one seed, one producer, one product and makes something new, is a story that I will fail to tell well because it is a story of inaudible sounds, smells that you cannot smell, and a sequence of touches that you as the reader were not there to touch. In truth even in ‘being there’, I failed to capture the whole story because I too was only one component part of this assemblage. I have included an image below (Fig. 2) in order to foreground this string figure as one that has necessarily failed.

Figure 2—“Pass it Around” (Field Notes October 13, 2017)
This string figure depicted here is inspired by the work of both Haraway (2016) and Sellers (2010). It is my attempt to convey what happened when my colleague began passing around six different plants. While Mrs. Robinson’s voice is clearly describing the human use of each plant, the plants themselves are passed around. The students here are not sitting in a circle so, the plants get passed around in a manner where each begins and ends in a different place. There is a beet, a taro root, a piece of ginger, a turnip and a carrot. Needless to say, that even as Mrs. Robinson is attempting to emphasize the functional use of plants, the students are smelling the distinctive smell of ginger as well as touching the bumps, ripples, indents, tiny hairs and tendrils that jut out of the different plants. The plants leave their own impressions. Some producing faces of surprise, curiosity, familiarity and disgust. In turn, Bruno, Lance, Bella, Haron, Mrs. Voyant and Steven leave impressions on each other as they read each other’s faces while passing around vegetables. For example, Lance is impressed by the ginger in a manner that indicates both familiarity and disgust. "I think I know this one. Ew! It stinks!" When he passes the ginger on to Bruno, he mimics Lance's expression of disgust with his own face, which seems to impress upon Haron, Bella and Steven to respond with a similar level of disgust. In this moment of passing it on, which occurs through the simultaneous impressions between plants and the participants, there is a foregrounding of how our stories occur amidst our relations. In these few fleeting moments of touching and being touched by each other and the plants, we have departed from the story of one seed, one product, one producer. The faces, the inaudible sounds, the passing on of human and non-human impressions both enchants and disenchants. This occurs in a collective swirl of passing it on. The string figure made here troubles the notion that anyone individual human or non-human can produce anything independently. The acts of enchanting and
disenchanted ourselves from the stories we tell ourselves foreground how our relations with each other play an integral role in the kinds of stories that survive and thrive between us.

Thus, I return again to consider the story of Salam's departure from normal and Mrs. Yosam's request to "fix it" for his sticker. How does Salam come to be read as an independent reader and writer that can produce sticker-worthy work? If reading and writing are social acts whereby human and non-human life exist interdependently through modes of simultaneously sustaining and resisting being permanently fixed/enchanted/captured, how does the story of Salam as an independent producer of products work to conceal Salam's interdependent encounters with his peers, teachers and his classroom? Attending to either Mrs. Yosam's or Mrs. Robinson's voices, reveals the concealment that is occurring as the normalizing narrative of schooling is reinforced through the ways the teacher’s voice orients students to notice producers and products for their value. With Mrs. Yosam it is found in the call to "fix it" and in the call not to touch the pumpkin that does not belong to them. With Mrs. Robinson it is found in the conditional touching of the plants that are being passed around alongside her declaration of the purpose and function of each plant. Their voices in these moments conceal how Salam and his peers are reading and being read within a tangle of relations that leave their own impressions. In the case of Salam, his relationship to Ms. Noya impresses a sense of joy on him that leaves him smiling as he departs from normal to "fix it." His failure to produce sticker-worthy work, reveals the import of reading and being read through his social relations. In the case of Lance and the rest of his peers who are reading and being read by each other as they pass on plants that leave their own impressions, the impressions they give and receive from each other through a flurry of facial expressions, also troubles the existence normative subject. These small moments of disenchantment from “Man, and its over representation” (Wynter, 2003, p. 268), contribute to a
conception of semi-permeable subjectivities that fail and indeed disable attempts at capture within normalcy.

**Concluding Thoughts**

Throughout this chapter the intention has been to trouble the normalizing narrative of schooling while stopping and wondering at the implications of the everyday expressions of the teacher’s voice. In an effort to “turn the gaze back upon power” (Tuck and Yang, 2014b, p. 817), this chapter has specifically attended to troubling the production of the story of one. An example of the production of one and its subsequent troubles were evident in this chapter through Salam’s failed attempt at producing a sticker worthy product. It was also evident in the reading of seeds and plants as belongings that can be counted as possessions by some humans whose labour may or may not have been involved in the process of production. Thus, sustaining the story of one can be read as in trouble from the start as the labour of one does not always count as one. There are several thousand different types of plants yet, corporations are only interested in commodifying the value of a handful that are read as worthy human products (Shiva, 2000). In the classroom, the story of planting seeds invariably is tethered to the story of possession. The students in the Primary MID class cannot touch the pumpkin plant because it does not belong to them. The students in the Primary LD class touch the vegetables that belong to Mrs. Robinson because they have her permission to “pass it around.” Inhabiting the normalizing narrative of schooling offers opportunities to attend to how the story of one seed, one product and one producer is sustained through the practice of passing it on while questioning the accounting practices of human and non-human life. Accounting practices that continue to unjustly reproduce the marginalization of peoples who find themselves at the intersections of race, gender, class and disability.
By pointing towards the paradoxical collective effort required to sustain the story which produces a gradient of valuation for both producers and products, the intention here has also been to consider the ways the disabled children and their teachers are simultaneously engaged in the disenchantment from normalcy. Despite the constellation of stories that sustain the normalizing narrative of schooling, they fail to produce complete enchantment. Salam’s failure to produce, in turn produces a collective moment of disenchantment as he walks away from normal and towards Mrs. Noya. As Snyder and Mitchell (2010) and Halberstam (2011) convey, failure and in particular the failure of disability, is an enactment of “disenchanting discourse” (Wynter, 1987, p. 207), that produces new possibilities. Just like the swirl of non-verbal encounters between human and non-human life on the carpet in Mrs. Robinson’s class, we can engage in a different form of “passing it around.” In part this would entail the kind of string figure making (Haraway, 2016), that would show how reading and being read in disabling ways foregrounds our semi-permeability. In part this is also a refusal of the constellation of stories that sustain the “over representation of Man as human” (Wynter, 2003, p. 268). Thus, the failure of one voice/one hegemonic discourse foregrounds our interdependence in contributing to the production of new stories whilst inhabiting varying embodiments.
Chapter 6—Troubling Coding and Higher Order Thinking

As I was nearing the end of my participant observation study at Up North Public School, I came across the following article by Gregory Schmidt (New York Times, Dec 19, 2017): “The Best Toys That Teach Kids How to Code.” According to Schmidt (2017): “Coding is a fundamental skill for children to learn in school, but it is more than just feeding programming into a computer. Learning to code teaches valuable cognitive skills like critical thinking and problem solving.” Schmidt’s contention that learning about coding is not only fundamental but integral to developing critical thinking skills or what elementary school teachers often refer to as higher order thinking skills, reveals an ongoing concern with assuring the progress and achievement of students. Melissa Nakhavoly (CBC, Oct 23, 2017), reports on a research project in Windsor where developing computer coding skills is described as being in a “classroom from the future” and helping students “become proficient in the 21st century competencies.” Similar to the previous chapter, there is a concern here with the kinds of knowledges that will prepare elementary students to be the productive workers of the future. This concern is not only evident in newspaper articles but also in policy documents as well as in everyday teaching practices. According to one of the Ontario Ministry of Education’s most recent policy documents entitled 21st Century Competencies: Foundation Document for Discussion (2016, p. 6) there are “changes in the work force from an industrial model of production to a rapidly transforming, technology-driven, and interconnected globalized knowledge economy.” Teaching, learning and researching within a context where students and teachers are being oriented towards a knowledge economy, I wonder here about three things. How do disabled children and their teachers encounter this new curricular focus on computer coding as a component part of developing thinking skills for the future? How can a disabled reading of coding reveal the ways that it is embedded in sustaining
the normalizing narrative of schooling? What happens when disability disrupts the code of the kinds of knowledges that count as knowledges and the kinds of thinking that count as thinking?

Somehow, learning computer coding, higher order thinking skills and preparing for the future come to be linked together in ways that are shaping what and how elementary age children are learning in school. Specifically, it has an impact on my own research encounters with participants because their curricular encounters are also shaped by the orientation towards higher order thinking and its current iteration computer coding. For the purposes of this chapter, the term higher order thinking follows the work of Sáez-López, Román-González & Vázquez-Cano, (2016). It is useful to follow their definition for two reasons. First, Sáez-López et al (2016) engage in research on the import of teaching about computer coding and computer science. Second, they link their research efforts on the import of computer coding as it relates to higher order thinking skills to Bloom’s taxonomy which remains the taken for granted reference in the elementary curriculum for thinking about how to define thinking. “In order to analyze learning processes, we need categories, instruments, and taxonomies, and the degree of increase in knowledge levels serves as a key indicator for knowledge increase in general” (Sáez-López et al, 2016, p. 131). Thus thinking, even as it encompasses developing computer skills for the future, seeks to sustain a scale whereby some kinds of thinking count as more valuable than others and some kinds of humans and their subsequent “productive capacities” (Erevelles, 2000, p. 42) are also read as more valuable. ‘New’ approaches to teaching thinking through an emphasis on computers and specifically in my case computer coding, seem to sustain a taken for granted belief that thinking involves attaining what is higher and that preparing for the economy of the future subsequently represents being oriented to progress as a perpetual upward motion. I wonder
here how this ‘new’ approach to thinking somehow remains not only untouched by disability but also committed to sustaining hierarchies of exclusion?

The series of small moments as they relate to the teaching of computer coding that I am oriented towards occurred on November 9, 2017 (Field Notes, Audio Transcript). Mrs. Yosam has used masking tape to make a pathway on the carpet. As I walk into the classroom, I immediately notice the taped lines that make a rather short staircase. Before Mrs. Yosam starts her lesson, the students who are present with consent on this day are Nadar, Kirby, Salam, William and Rick play with the taped lines on the carpet. There is a lot of movement now as the students weave in and out of lines as well as zigzag, circle and weave around each other. They start, stop and continue at different points while remarkably managing to avoid any crashes with anyone. This movement in, out and through the taped lines continues for a couple of minutes before Mrs. Yosam asks the students to take their seats. She explains that the goal of today’s lesson is all about coding. On the Interactive White Board (IWB), Mrs. Yosam introduces the students to the symbols most frequently used to introduce children coding (Start, Finish, Left, Right, Up and Down). Now the students, stand-up again. They form a line and begin at the newly labeled ‘Start’ spot. Mrs. Yosam encourages the newly formed line to imagine that they are a train and that the goal is to stay on the tracks. Each student takes a turn being the leader or in this case the conductor. The students hold on to each other’s shoulders as each conductor takes a turn following the tracks. They follow the taped lines five times, repeatedly returning to the start spot and following the lines until the train makes it to a spot labeled with the ‘Finish’ sign. Along the way students are taught to identify the direction of their location on the line with the words up, down, left, or right. Mrs. Yosam reviews the coding sequence on the IWB and the students are asked to copy the sequence in the correct order on a template she distributes to students.
Thus, one of the first aspects of teaching and learning about coding involves staying on track or following lines. I stop and wonder here how disabled students and their teachers simultaneously sustain and disrupt codes they are learning how to follow? I wonder too how the emphasis on learning coding can be read as one story in a constellation of stories that sustains the normalizing narrative of schooling? What role does disability studies play in not only questioning and disrupting the thinking skills that coding reinforces but also in helping to reimagine what becoming human means? In part, this returns this chapter to address the provocations by Baker (2010) whom considers the dilemmas of curriculum within the western onto-epistemological emphasis of staying on the track that seemingly assures progress. I wonder here what progress in fact represents when it is defined as staying on the track whilst oriented towards the kinds of thinking like mastering computer coding that count as higher order thinking? What happens when bodies and minds go off the track? How might we learn from such moments to think differently about what kind of thinking counts as thinking? How might attending to the movement of the bodies of disabled children support in the questioning of the teacher’s voice, especially when the teacher’s voice is embedded in the kinds of curricular goals that perpetuate ableism? These questions are embedded in concerns with subjectivities, onto-epistemologies and power. In the first part of this chapter, I endeavour to address these questions through considering the import of coding public schools across Ontario for which this Primary MID classroom in Up North Public School as a representative example. Ultimately the first portion of this chapter wonders how do readings of coding preserve readings of thinking and knowing that subsequently sustain conditional inclusion for disabled children?
The first move introducing Mrs. Yosam’s disabled students to coding involves both a physical and rhetorical orientation toward moving up. The taped lines on the carpet are intended to mimic in a tangible and embodied way, the computer coding games they will be playing. Most computer coding games for young children involve navigating mazes that increase in complexity and difficulty while learning to input the correct computer code to stay on the right path and complete the maze. The computer coding commands in these introductory activities involve the exact movements students are practicing as they follow the taped lines on the carpet (Start, Stop, Up, Down, Left, Right). Staying on the tracks taped on the carpet, requires moving up, turning to move rightward, turning again to move upward, and turning to move rightward one final time to
reach the spot marked finished. This tangible enactment of coding by the disabled students in Mrs. Yosam’s Primary MID classroom, corresponds with both the scholarly rhetoric of the value in teaching and learning about coding. For example, research promoting the teaching and learning of coding offer readings of coding that foreground the development of thinking skills, and in particular what are known as higher order thinking (HOT) skill development, in students (Sáez-López, Román-González & Vázquez-Cano, 2016; Kalelioğlu, 2015; Chen, Barth-Cohen, Jiang, Huang & Eltoukhy, 2017; Bers, Flannery, Kazakoff. & Sullivan 2014; Israel, Pearson, Tapia, Wherfel & Reese, 2015). According to Sáez-López et al (2016, p. 131): “Since the contribution of Bloom’s taxonomy, it is assumed that learning to higher levels depends on the acquisition of knowledge and skills of certain lower levels. Learning essentially involves different hierarchical levels of knowledge detailing intellectual skills.” I want to stop and wonder about this statement and what it says about the teaching and learning of reading and writing codes. This statement assumes a great deal. In invoking Bloom’s taxonomy there is an assumption not only that thinking skills can be sorted into separate categories but that some kinds of thinking categories are better than others. It also assumes that learning is about moving up to higher levels after mastering lower levels. If coding is about sustaining the categories of low and high thinking skills, staying on track along the taped lines that move upward and rightward on Mrs. Yosam’s carpet, matters. It matters as the embodied manifestation of normalcy as the disabled students in this segregated classroom are tangibly reminded that acts of thinking are inextricably linked to acts of measuring who is high and who is low.

Nadar, Kirby, Salam, William and Rick are oriented to moving upward and rightward along the straight lines that are taped on the carpet. In this instance, moving up along the line towards the higher levels is not only counted as better but, is indeed both literally and tangibly
the only path available. There is only one path taped on the carpet and Mrs. Yosam introduces students to coding by guiding them along the line in an upward and rightward direction. How has staying on the line not only come to be read as thinking but also come to be read as moving up toward higher order thinking? What makes some kinds of thinking count as high and some count as low? The rhetoric around teaching and learning about coding can also be read as a component part of preparing for the jobs of the future that are repeatedly referred to as requiring individuals who can demonstrate the kind of high order thinking skills that are part of reading and writing codes (Sáez-Lópe et al, 2016; Kalelioğlu, 2015; Chen et al, 2017; Bers et al, 2014; Israel et al, 2015). In researching about how to support “all learners,” in developing computer skills like coding, Israel et al (2015, p. 263-265) repeatedly refer to disability and poverty as “risk factors” that are responsible for a “gap” in thinking skills. Perpetually placed in the foreground in research studies that are proponents of teaching and learning about computer programs is the improvement of thinking skills and the overcoming “risk factors” such as disability and poverty (Israel et al, 2015). Thus, Nadar, Kirby, Salam, William and Rick are oriented upward and rightward in learning to read and write codes in a manner that reads disability as a problem that requires overcoming so that higher order thinking can sustain its value.

In addition to sustaining the enchantment that some ways of thinking count as high and some count as low, the story of coding contributes to sustaining the normalizing narrative of schooling by representing itself as new, innovative, engaging and inclusive (Sáez-Lópe et al, 2016; Kalelioğlu, 2015; Chen et al, 2017; Bers et al, 2014; Israel et al, 2015). Even as disability and poverty are repeatedly referred to as risk factors, an emphasis on computer technology is also read as a way to engage students at-risk in the belief that they too can overcome barriers (Israel et al, 2015). Thus, teachers must also learn how to teach coding so that students can stay
engaged at their own varying levels of ability (Bers et al, 2014; Israel et al, 2015). Several studies that advocate for an increased focus on teaching and learning about computer technology like coding, also emphasize the role of training teachers in overcoming their own reluctance or scepticism (Sáez-López et al, 2016; Kalelioğlu, 2015; Chen et al, 2017; Bers et al, 2014; Israel et al, 2015). Bers et al (2014) advocate teaching and learning coding in kindergarten that also entails a commitment to training teachers about how to engage five-year old children in learning how to read and write codes. Israel et al (2015) repeatedly refer to a process of scaffolding to assure that disabled and poor students labeled as at-risk can remain engaged in acquiring higher level thinking skills. Thus, within the context of coding, engagement and inclusion can be read as strategies of enchantment with the goal of orienting teachers and students to stay on the line while orientated upward and rightward.

Moving up higher is repeatedly read as the motion of thinking and doing that counts as being on the right track yet when Nadar, Kirby, Salam, William and Rick initially encounter the taped path on their classroom carpet, the motion of their bodies indicates a different orientation to each other and the taped lines on the carpet. I am reminded here of Ahmed’s (2006, p. 3) contention that “Orientations shape not only how we inhabit, but how we apprehend this world of shared inhabitance as well as “who” or “what” we direct our energy toward.” As described earlier Nadar, Kirby, Salam, William and Rick move in, out and through and around the taped lines intended for coding practice. There is such a swirl of activity of bodies moving in multiple directions that I ultimately fail to capture all of it. Before the lesson on coding begins there is an impossibility to reading the movements of these disabled children as moving high or low, up or down, left or right. It is not even possible to determine if there is a leader to follow as they are asked to do in a few minutes when simulating the train on the tracks. For example, in one
instance it appeared as if Rick was following Kirby in a zigzag motion in and out of the taped pathway, until he suddenly and wordlessly switched directions and began moving around the path rather than zigzagging through it. In another instance William seems interested in staying on the path while trying to count his own steps until he notices the look of joy on Salam’s face as he stops for a moment while Nadar, Kirby and William move around them. There is a great deal of movement here: zigzag motions, stopping, standing still, abruptly changing directions, moving both slowly and quickly. Through the varied movements of their own bodies Nadar, Kirby, Salam, William and Rick, challenge the notion that the only movement that counts as thinking is the kind that moves higher, upward and rightward. Their collective entangled movements represent a moment of disenchantment. The disabled students in this classroom as well as Ahmed’s (2006) contention of how our orientations shape the who and what of our thinking, prompt me to wonder about how to engage in the telling of different stories that might subsequently, question, contain, minimize and refuse the normalizing narrative of schooling even as it finds way to sustain itself through new storylines such as the teaching and learning of computer coding.

Thus, my encounters as a researcher inhabiting these two segregated classrooms for three months, prompts me to veer off the path of moving upward and rightward theoretically, methodologically, practically as well as tangibly. In reading and being read in disabiling ways the intention here is to contribute to both a questioning and reimagining of what it means to become human amidst disability. While chapter 5 focused on questioning how the normalizing narrative of schooling is sustained through teaching and learning about the value of individual labour capacities, this chapter seeks to trouble how we come to readings of what it means to develop thinking skills as represented in the teaching and learning of coding. The brief literature review
of some of the research in coding along with the examples from my experiences as a participant in the Primary MID classroom are not offered here as an expansive overview or analysis of ever-growing field of computer sciences. Rather, my intention here is to focus on a few small examples of how thinking skills in coding read some as high and read others as low in ways that sustain a conception of disability as a risk factor that requires overcoming. Therefore, in questioning the increasing presence of coding in classrooms like Mrs. Yosam’s class at Up North Public School, I want to engage in the troubling of coding by asking what is so new about new, and innovative about an innovation, that remains dependent on sustaining modes of measurement that value some kinds of thinking more than others. How are the kinds of thinking skills that stay on and follow the line of codes from low to high come to count as the only path of thinking? How can the collective entangled movements of the disabled children in Mrs. Yosam’s class be read as another form of thinking that simultaneously disables the normalizing narrative of schooling through a foregrounding of disability as an enactment of a distinctly different imagining of what it means to think and to know?

My first move here is to engage in a form of contrapuntal engagement (Chowdhry, 2007; Said 1994, 2003) through disability studies that seeks to question the reading of teaching and learning coding as something new and innovative. While each of the research articles outlined in this brief literature review of the thinking skills involved in coding are distinctly different in terms of their representations of a variety of elementary school contexts, they are also linked through their preoccupation with finding ways to measure, assess and evaluate the development of thinking skills (Sáez-López et al, 2016; Kalelioğlu, 2015; Chen et al, 2017; Bers et al, 2014; Israel et al, 2015). As described earlier, it appears that being enchanted by the story of the newness and innovative nature of coding also means an adherence to staying on the path of
achieving higher order thinking skills and levels of knowledge. I wonder here along with Baker (1999a, 1999b, 2012) and Slee (2008, 2013) about how much of the old story of the mythic normal human is embedded in the new story of coding? In challenging the ongoing hegemony of western epistemology and in particular the deployment of scientific methods to manage, track, monitor and evaluate children, Baker (1999a, 1999b, 2012) outlines how the rhetoric of skill development in children is tethered to conceptions of progress routed/rooted through colonial legacies of oppression and marginalization. According to Baker (1999a, p. 810): “the child is only possible to conceive of as developing, as increasing its faculties, because of this ‘prehistory’ of human types. Without the evolution out of savages in Rousseau’s forms it was theoretically impossible to think in terms of development and its different ‘stages.’” Baker’s insight (1999a) links ongoing and daily evaluation practices in elementary classrooms to their theoretical and philosophical adherence to the colonialism embedded in western epistemologies. It also implicates the story of coding in sustaining this unjust legacy. Similarly, Baker’s insight helps in troubling conceptions of progress, innovation and newness that are so readily taken for granted as part of the discourses that sustain the belief in human developmentalism that invariably represents disability and disabled people as low, lacking, and in need of overcoming barriers in order to keep moving up.

Perhaps in calling itself new, innovative and indicative of progress, the story of coding reveals itself as embedded in a repetitive pattern that features a constellation of stories that continue to sustain the normalizing narrative of schooling. This is the story that seeks neither to think with nor come to know the possibilities of the collective entangled movements of Nadar, Kirby, Salam, William and Rick when they first encounter, but refuse to follow, the taped path on their classroom carpet. Reading and writing codes requires a perpetual movement upward in a
manner that reads some kinds thinking as high, others as low and still others as not counting at all. For Israel et al (2015), disability and poverty are risk factors that need to be overcome. Their research suggests that one of the most useful strategies in keeping at-risk students on the track of progress is “student-to-student collaboration” (Israel et al, 2015, p. 274). In this sense the intention of cultivating peer relationships remains focused on staying on task and committed to the development of higher order thinking skills (Israel et al, 2015). Slee’s work (2008, 2013) in this instance serves as a reminder that education practices that tout inclusion, such as attempts to make coding accessible to disabled students, preserve the story of normalcy as something that everyone can aspire to attain. The intention in teaching disabled students about coding reveals a commitment to sustain a narrative of growth and progress through which disabled students are counted as at-risk and in need of more intensive monitoring in order to stay on track.

In troubling the narrative of coding through the work of disability studies scholars Baker (1999a, 1999b, 2012) and Slee (2008, 2013) my intention here is both to foreground how coding keeps teachers and students stuck in the story of normal as well as to consider other possibilities for how teachers and students might encounter each other amidst disability in distinctly different ways. Slee (2013, p. 905) asks: “What kind of education facilities are needed for all kids in this century who will build knowledge, skills and disposition to work in and reshape the world of the future?” Here, Slee (2013, p. 905) considers how disabling the story of normalcy through disability studies enacts a provocation to “reshape the world” in a manner that refuses the current practice of conditional inclusion of disabled people. In a distinct yet linked way Baker (2005) too wonders what awaits in a world where Western European thought is no longer the colonizing force that shapes historically unjust social relations. “If writing is not for making lines but for making holes, not for shoring up, but for falling down, not for stagism and linking, but for
untimeliness...then new methods for ‘holing history’ emerge” (Baker, 2005, p. 53). Through
disability studies, post-structuralism and postcolonialism, Baker (2005) suggests that attending to
“holes”, spaces and places of “falling down” offers you and I and us the possibilities of orienting
ourselves differently amidst disability. Taken together the work of Slee (2013) and Baker (2005)
suggest that inhabiting disability offers opportunities for distinctly different readings and
imaginings of what counts as thinking and whose thinking counts in the stories that are stitched
together in everyday classroom moments. When I attend to how differently Nadar, Kirby, Salam,
William and Rick move in, out, through and around the taped lines as they also move around,
beside, behind, in front of each other, I wonder how becoming human amidst disability
differently might also reshape our conception of what counts as thinking skills. I wonder how to
remain engaged in processes of disenchantment while also contributing to the telling of different
stories; disabling stories that refuse the hegemony of normalcy and contribute to a reimagining of
our teaching and learning encounters.

Thus far, in this chapter I have focused on a couple of specific examples of how Nadar,
Kirby, Salam, William and Rick encounter coding from the Primary MID class I inhabited once
a week for three months. These small moments are representative of the troublesome ways in
which the normalizing narrative of schooling is both sustained and resisted. Daily encounters
with curriculum such as learning about how to read and write codes persist in orienting students
to following a single path upward and rightward. Coding, even or perhaps especially because it
represents itself as new and innovative, ultimately sustains practices of assessment and
evaluation of thinking skills that sustains the measure of low and high while reinforcing the goals
of staying on the path of striving for higher order thinking skills. Through the work of disability
study scholars Baker (1999a, 1999b, 2005, 2012) and Slee (2008, 2013), I have contrapuntally
engaged the normalizing narrative of schooling in order to question, trouble and disable its enchantments. The intent has been to trouble the hegemony of normalcy’s presents in everyday curricular classroom moments. The next part of this chapter will draw upon a few more examples of my encounters with disabled students in the Primary MID classroom. The intention of further exploring what it means to think and how disability has a role to play in reimagining the onto-epistemological practices of how thinking might come to count as thinking outside of measure of high and low. This theoretical and analytical exploration follows the provocation from Baker (2005) in the sense of inhabiting the holes the normalizing narrative of schooling cannot seem to keep closed. It also follows the provocation from Slee (2013) in order to consider the kinds of thinking disabled children are already engaged in that is seeking to reshape how we might become human with each other differently. In reading and being read in disabling ways that is committed to contrapuntal engagement, narrative entanglement and cripistemological/ glocal embodiments, I will also be depending on the work of disability scholars such as Simon (2016) and McRuer (2006), post-structural feminists such as Haraway (2016) and Cixous (1993) as well as postcolonial scholars such as Ahmed (2006).

**Failing at Participation: Learning to Play, Code and Think Differently Amidst Disability**

Computer coding might be the newest codes to become part of the elementary curriculum but, they certainly are not the only kinds of codes teachers and students inhabit in classrooms. When I arrive at the Primary MID class on November 24, 2017, Mrs. Yosam has taken a long-term absence from school and Ms. Postich is there and has agreed to continue with the research project both formally by signing the consent form as well as informally through our conversations before my arrival. During three of the four of my remaining visits before Winter Break (November 24, December 4, December 20, 2017), Ms. Postich asks if I can spend part of
my participant observation visits playing Candyland in small groups with the students. Nadar, Kirby, Salam, William, Rick and Mesan are having a difficult time following the rules of the game and in particular, taking turns. Ms. Postich hopes that I will be able to model how to play the game by following the rules. Much like coding practice with Mrs. Yosam on the carpet, to play Candyland all the players have to begin at the start position at the bottom. The goal of the game is to make it up the slithering path first, to the mountain of candy at the top of the board. During three different visits and multiple restarts of the game with different combinations of players, I fail. Neither singularly nor as a collective are Nadar, Kirby, Salam, William, Rick and Mesan interested in following the path from bottom to top. Laughing along the way as I try and repeatedly fail to model the importance of following the rules of the game, Nadar, Kirby, Salam, William, Rick and Mesan have their own ways of playing and thinking about codes/rules.

Writing is learning to die. It’s learning not to be afraid, in other words to live at the extremity of life, which is what the dead, death, gives us… We need to lose the world, to lose a world and to discover that there is more than one world and that the world isn’t what we think it is. (Cixous, 1993, p. 10)


subjects who cannot speak, who refuse to speak; subjects who unravel, who refuse to cohere, subjects who refuse “being” where being has already been defined in terms of a self-activating, self-knowing liberal subject…Can we find feminist frameworks capable of recognizing the political project articulated in the form of refusal? The politics of refusal emerges in its most potent form from anticolonial and antiracist texts and challenges colonial authority… (Halberstam, 2011, p.126)

I quote Cixous (1993), Haraway (2016) and Halberstam (2011) at length here because when considering my own failure as a teacher and a researcher, I need help to think my way through the possibilities of teaching and learning differently whilst becoming human amidst disability. How can teaching/participating in a game of Candyland become so troubling? How does the refusal to follow the rules mix in with my own laughter as well as the laughter of Nadar, Kirby, Salam, William, Rick and Mesan in our multiple attempts to play the game? I am so
preoccupied with the rules of the game and how to follow them that it does not occur to me until at least the third day of Candyland play, that Nadar, Kirby, Salam, William, Rick and Mesan are interested in thinking with each other differently while reading and writing their own rules as they play. I too have been enchanted by the rules which sustain the path which starts at the bottom and ends at the top. In this case it is the laughter of my fellow players along with the writings of scholars such as Cixous (1993), Haraway (2016) and Halberstam (2011) that provokes me to engage in the necessary work of “disenchanting discourse” (Wynter, 1987, p. 207).

Cixous (1993, p. 10) provocatively states: “We need to lose the world, to lose a world and to discover that there is more than one world and that the world isn’t what we think it is.” I would like to contend that inhabiting a segregated special needs classroom and in particular my time in both the Primary LD and Primary MID class during this research study is perpetually about being on the edge of losing the neoliberal subject and normalizing narratives such as computer coding and Candyland that continue to work their enchantments. Cixous suggests that losing the world and discovering other worlds is a collective act. It is a “we” that loses and discovers other worlds. These acts of “a worlding of the world” differently (Chowdhry, 2007, p. 105) through sustaining, questioning, refusing and reimagining occur in my encounters with disabled students and their teachers. This is evident in my multiple failed attempts to play Candyland while following the rules of the game. No matter how many times I insist, Nadar, Kirby, Salam, William, Rick and Mesan do not want to start in the spot labeled start. Sometimes they go along with me for a brief moment. Nadar laughs and says: “You play funny!” (Audio Transcript, December 20, 2017). More often than not, and irrespective of which combination of boys I am playing with, they pick their own starting spots in random places on the board. Some
on the path and some not. Sometimes they move, and encourage me to join them in moving, in
and out of the path dancing around each other and moving their play figures towards and away
from each other (Field Notes, December 20, 2017). Sometimes, we move as a collective around
the board while one player leads and the rest of us follow (Field Notes, December 20, 2017).
Mesan and Kirby prefer to communicate non-verbally so this style of play which involves both
singular and collective movements, allows them to lead or follow or move in and out of the
entangled movement of the game without being read as unable to play (Field Notes, December 4,
December 20, 2017). In the version of play enacted in these instances, we lose the world of play
where there is only one winner and we discover a world where our plastic play figures encounter
each other in perpetual motion toward and away from each other. This is the world of disabled
Candyland where we read each other and rewrite the rules as we play.

There is a different “worlding of the world” (Chowdhry, 2007, p. 105) here that
individualism in its many flavours in science, politics, and philosophy has finally become
unavailable to think with, truly no longer thinkable, technically or any other way.” While failing
to follow the line that moves from low to high, there is a simultaneous loss of the story so
common place in the current socio-cultural moment of individual winners and losers. In the
moments playing disabled Candyland with varying combinations of Nadar, Kirby, Salam,
William, Rick and Mesan no one wins, and no one loses either, because the game we are playing
is no longer about racing to the top. The thinking we inhabit in these moments of failing to play
the game as neoliberal subjects oriented towards moving on and up falls outside the parameters
of curriculum assessment and evaluation. Despite my many failed attempts to model the ‘right’
way to play the game, such as starting at the beginning and waiting for your turn, disabled
Candyland is a form of play that is in constant motion. We move in many directions both together and apart. Ms. Postich notices that not only are we not following the rules but that I am part of the laughter and disruption of playing the game the ‘right’ way (Field Notes, December 4, December 20, 2017). She comes over to remind us of the purpose and goals of the rules, so we briefly restart again and try to follow the line but, it does not take long before Nadar, Kirby, Salam, William, Rick or Mesan moves off the line and we are back to playing their version of the game (Field Notes, December 4, December 20, 2017). There is a different rhythm to the playing and thinking in the version of disabled Candyland. We play together in a manner that refuses being pinned down as low or high. To paraphrase Haraway (2016), in these moments ‘bounded individualism’ is lost as it fails to completely enchant the disabled students and their teachers in this classroom.

If the kind of thinking we are engaged in both together and apart cannot be ascribed a label such as low or high so typical of assessment and evaluation practices in elementary classrooms, how might we work toward reconfiguring our conception of what it means to think in a manner that embraces disabled differences? In offering a critique of the diagnostic practices that are used with children and youth labeled as part of the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Simon (2016, p. 269) wonders about “how we can relocate ‘mind’ from the cognitive brain to the social opportunistic space created between people.” Simon (2016) offers a critique of experts who assume that their diagnostic knowledge benefits disabled people and their families when imparted in a unidirectional manner. Simon (2016) contends that this unidirectional approach generates a power imbalance whereby the ‘expert’ who knows fails to consider that disabled children and youth diagnosed with ASD as well as their families, may have their own ways of thinking and knowing that could generate different kinds of social/thinking/knowing relations.
Simon’s insights and provocations prove fruitful within my research context and more specifically to questioning the assumption that I as an experienced teacher and resident researcher somehow need to model my expertise with the disabled children while we play Candyland. Following the path upward requires repetition, practice and expert modelling that reinforces the unidirectional flow of knowledge as well as sustaining a measure of thinking that counts some types of thinking as high and some as low. In my role as both teacher and researcher, I fail to inhabit the role of ‘expert’ that is expected in this context. Through my failure as well as the failure of my fellow Candyland players we come to inhabit thinking and playing differently. Slee (2013, p. 905) refers to it as efforts to “reshape the world.” Baker (2005, p. 53) refers to it as “making holes.” Simon (2016, p. 269) refers to it as inhabiting “space created between people.” In this project, I refer to it as reading and being read in disabling ways with the intention of disrupting the storyline of normalcy while reimagining what it means to become human with each other amidst disability.

Thus, the conception of thinking as something that occurs in the mind of the individual that can subsequently be measured as gradients of low and high must be questioned, disrupted and reimagined. As referenced in chapter 5 as well as quoted at length earlier in this chapter, Haraway’s (2016, p. 35) work serves as a reminder that: “It matters what stories tell stories.” Whether it be through lessons in reading computer codes or following the rules of the Candyland game, Nadar, Kirby, Salam, William, Rick and Mesan daily inhabit the normalizing narrative of schooling along with its accompanying demands to aim for higher order thinking. Yet, even as the story of thinking about thinking as something found in the mind that can be scaled from low to high persists, other kinds thinking, are being generated amidst disability. These different ways of thinking, manifest themselves within the failures of the normalizing narrative of schooling. It
seems that the normalizing narrative of schooling has become “no longer thinkable” (Haraway, 2016, p. 5) because of its promises of conditional inclusion as a human require sustaining a form of thinking about thinking that conceives of normal as following the codes of the neoliberal subject. It is important to keep stopping and wondering about who benefits from sustaining the onto-epistemological structures that insist that the only path forward and upward is the path of the neo-liberal subject. It is also important to contemplate as Halberstam (2011) does in his readings of the works of antiracist and anticolonial scholars, about how it has become thinkable to exclude countless humans from being counted as humans because of racist, ableist, patriarchal and colonial logics. Halberstam (2011) wonders how critical feminist theorizing might think with antiracist and anticolonial theorizing to harness the power of refusal in the disruption of neoliberal subject. I join Halberstam in the same mode of wondering and suggest that disabled peoples along with the field of disability studies offer different stories and different conceptions of what it might mean to think with each other.

Therefore, I hope the small stories I am sharing in this project of failing to follow the taped lines on the carpet and refusing to play by the Candyland rules might contribute another string to a different set of “String Figures” (Haraway, 2016, p. 10), that are exploring ways to think of thinking differently amidst the spaces and holes between us. In foregrounding different stories as well as different readings and writings, as an integral part of my conception of reading and being read in disabling ways, one my intentions here, has been to de-centre the normative neoliberal subject that is sustained through daily encounters with the curriculum. One of the strategies I have used here is foreground the import of our interdependence. The stories I am telling have depended on inhabiting the lives of disabled students and their teachers whom are settlers in Canada from virtually every part of the globe. Similarly, the stories told here have
depended on scholars from postcolonial studies, decolonial studies, disability studies and post-structural feminisms that are tethered together through a concern with the social injustices that sustain racism, ableism, classism and sexism as a component part of the western onto-epistemologies. I seem to need and depend on a lot of people to help me to think differently. As Haraway (2016, p. 35), Halberstam (2011) and Ahmed (2006) contend in distinct but linked ways, the knowledges and people we orient ourselves towards matter because they reveal the contingent, situational and relational entanglements of “thoughts think[ing] thoughts” differently. In considering how we might read thinking not as something inside someone that needs to be perpetually monitored, assessed, evaluated, diagnosed and measured, I join disability scholars such as Baker (1999a, 1999b, 2005, 2012), Slee (2008, 2013) and Simon (2016) in wondering what happens when we foreground our social relations along with the possibilities of teaching and learning amidst disability differently in our elementary schools. What stories, readings and writings can we make both together and apart when following the line of normalcy is “no longer thinkable”?

When I think with the help of Nadar, Kirby, Salam, William, Rick and Mesan, I cannot help but notice that disruptions and refusals of the normalizing narrative of schooling can be read as more than just a questioning of the hegemony of normalcy. Nadar, Kirby, Salam, William, Rick and Mesan encounters with each other, this researcher and their teachers shapes our thinking as individuals and as a collective. According to Ahmed’s (2006, p. 9) work on lines, orientations, space and embodiment: “The social also has its skin, as a border that feels and this is shaped by the impressions left by others.” I read Ahmed’s insight alongside McRuer (2006) as well as my own encounters with disabled students and their teachers in this project to help me think about how my thinking has been shaped by our encounters with each other. According to
McRuer (2006, p. 94): “An accessible society is…one in which our ways of relating to, and depending on, each other have been reconfigured.” Thus, in the small moments where disabled students and their teachers inhabit the holes and spaces in between normalcy’s grasp, we choose to orient ourselves towards each other. Refusing and disrupting the normalizing narrative of schooling, generates something new that is distinct from being perpetually oriented upward and rightward in the name of progress and improvement. When we stop and wonder with each other in our encounters, it offers opportunities to read each other differently and make different stories together.

**Concluding Thoughts**

The purpose of this chapter was to consider how codes, old and new, permeate the Primary MID classroom in a manner that sustain the normalizing narrative of schooling. The first part of this chapter analyzed both classroom examples, scholarly literature and the teaching and learning of computer coding as a pathway toward improving thinking skills. In the playing of Candyland, the second part of this chapter considered a different kind of orientation toward following the path of normalcy. Both new and old, the reading of thinking skills as an individual process of moving upwards from low to high has been troubled and questioned through a process of reading and being read in disabling ways. Part of the process of troubling and questioning stories like coding and Candyland that sustain normalcy, has also been to think about thinking differently. I have been trying to stop and wonder in this chapter about what thinking might be in those moments of refusal and failure to adhere to the demands of the neoliberal subject. The disabled students and their teachers as well as disability studies, post-structural feminisms and postcolonial scholars have been integral in thinking about thinking as something that happens between us. In refusing to orient ourselves upward and follow the line that simultaneously
promises higher levels of thinking through more knowledge whilst sustaining an unjust structure of conditional inclusion, we can inhabit the spaces of possibility where different stories emerge. The stories that emerge inhabit disability not as lack or a problem in need of monitoring and scrutiny but rather, they are stories whereby disability is integral to reimagining how we might become human differently outside of the normalizing narrative of schooling.
Part IV—The Troublesome Matter of Touching and Being Touched: How Disability Continues to Leave its Imprint

Part IV of this study places in the foreground the ‘where’ of the disabling relationships through encounters between teachers and students in the elementary segregated special needs classroom. When I refer to the where of place and space, I am specifically evoking discourses of embodiment as integral to how the self comes to both sense and know amidst a web of social relations. Thus, I remain focused on the question: how do encounters between teachers, students and the researcher within segregated special needs classrooms both perpetuate and resist the normalizing narrative of schooling? In both chapter 7 and chapter 8, I continue to depend upon the methodology I refer to in this study of reading and being read in disabling ways as way to trouble, confront, question, resist and reimagine teaching and learning relationships. Chapter 7 Pirates and The Impress of Power in Being (Un)Touched, focuses on troubling taken for granted orientations toward both disabled and normative embodiments. This chapter also relies on the work of disability studies scholars such as Shildrick (2000, 2015), Titchkosky (2012, 2015) and Mitchell et al (2014) to explore how participants in the Primary MID and LD classrooms to foreground how embodied knowledges both shape and refuse to shape our encounters with each other. Chapter 8 Magic Beads and the Power of (Un)Settling Touch, considers both the power and risk of touching and being touched. The risks of touch considered here include unbalanced relations of power and how disability is unsettled and remains unsettling in encounters between teachers and students. This chapter will consider how intersubjectivity remains integral to reorienting ourselves amidst disabled embodiments (Mitchel et al 2014; Burke 2014; Butler, 2015; Ahmed 2004a).
Chapter 7—Pirates and the Impressions of Disability

**Nadar:** We are pirates.

**Rick:** Pirates are bad guys.

**William:** I am a bad pirate.

**Ms. Postich:** Let’s show Ms. Karmiris our attendance reply. Remember from this morning? What does a pirate say?

**Ms. Postich:** [takes attendance with a response of a stereotypical pirate growl from each student]

**Rick:** Pirates do bad things.

**Nadar:** Pirates are like ghosts.

[Audio Transcript Excerpts from Primary MID Classroom, November 24, 2017]

It is November 24th and Ms. Postich has replaced Ms. Yosam who has taken a long-term absence that will last several months. I discover shortly after I arrive that day, that Up North Public School is also having their monthly spirit day that is featuring the theme of Pirates and Princesses. The students are wearing pirate hats they made earlier in the morning and Ms. Postich is about to teach them how to make hook arms and eye patches. The excerpts above are how Nadar, Rick and William describe what they think a pirate is. Kirby and Salam are on the carpet with me and Ms. Postich as well. We are all oriented toward Ms. Postich and her sample hook hand which the students are going to make so they too can be included in the spirit day theme of Pirates and Princesses. The hook arm is made from a Styrofoam cup and a hook made from aluminum foil. When students are shown the hook hand they will be making, Nadar, Rick and William immediately respond with their readings of pirates. Pirates are read as “bad”, “doing bad things” and even as haunting because they “are like ghosts.” Pirates are also read as disabled.
But whether they are bad because they are disabled or disabled because they are bad, is an open question. The disabled students in this classroom are about to make hook arms and eye patches so that they can pretend to be bad pirates who are like ghosts. In addition to being bad guys who are like ghosts, pirates have physical and visual impairments that are going to be mimicked by the disabled children in this class. In focusing on this small moment, it seems that there are numerous troubled and troubling readings of disabled embodiments that link to my main research question: How do encounters between teachers and students in a segregated special needs classroom both sustain and resist the normalizing narrative of schooling?

The purpose of this chapter is to stop and wonder about how the story of pirates is implicated in both shaping and refusing to shape our orientations to disabled embodiments. I wonder here about what it means for pirates to inhabit a space where students and their teachers are perpetually oriented towards normalcy as the measure of conditional inclusion. I also wonder what it might mean to read William’s words “I am a bad pirate” not as a declaration of success but as a declaration of failing to inhabit disability as monstrous, lack and limit. What happens when both becoming pirates and becoming normal fail? How else do participants in this study inhabit disability? In reading and being read in disabbling ways, I aim to foreground how the entanglement between disabled and non-disabled bodies offers more than sustaining the hegemony of normalcy. This chapter is comprised of two parts. In the first part, I consider what the making of pirates by disabled students both reveals and conceals about the presence of normalcy in the production of the monstrous. In the second part of this chapter, I consider how disabled students speak through their bodies in ways that not only disrupt and refuse the monstrous but suggest the possibilities of how inhabiting disabling embodiments contribute to different conceptions of what it means to become human. By depending on the work of disability
studies scholars such as Shildrick (2000, 2015), Titchkosky (2012), and Mitchell and Snyder (2006, 2015) as well as on the work of Mignolo (2006, 2011a, 2011b) and Ahmed (2004a, 2004b, 2006), I explore how our bodily encounters are shaped through and with our entangled disabling relationships within spaces like the segregated special needs classroom.

The Troubling Matter of Pirate Hooks

What does the act of becoming bad pirates do within a space already inhabited by the failure of conforming to or reflecting normal even as normalcy insists on its hegemony? When I refer to the failure of normal here, I am evoking the work of Halberstam (2011), Mitchell et al (2014) and Mitchel and Snyder (2015) who serve as a reminder that failure can indeed be both good and productive as it offers the possibilities of exploring new trajectories. The normalizing narrative of schooling despite its numerous efforts to continue to capture and enchant, repeatedly fails and I wonder if the failure of normalcy has something to do with the presence of bad pirates and how they are embodied in this MID classroom during November’s school-wide spirit day.

While considering normalcy as a failed and failing story, it is important to recognize and confront that its failure is routed/rooted through its paradoxical insistence in its own hegemony. The hegemony of the normalizing narrative of schooling is evident in how it permeates segregated special needs classrooms through the teacher’s voice as representative of both general and specific curricular goals such as teaching students that improvement is tethered to their capacity to produce within the neoliberal capitalist economy (Mitchell & Snyder, 2015, Erevelles, 2000; Casey et al, 2013). The mere existence of segregated classrooms are part of the hegemonic assessment, evaluation and labeling practices that orient students towards normalcy and the prospect of conditional inclusion (Baker 2002, 2015; Mitchell & Snyder 2015, 2003, Mitchell et al, 2014; Slee 2008, 2013). The students present and participating in the readings and
becoming of pirates, Salam, Rick, Kirby, William and Nadar are present in this MID classroom because they have been identified as Intellectually Delayed and thus have been placed in a diagnostic category and physical space outside of normal. The segregated classroom remains both a place of containing disability and its difference as well as a place where striving towards normalcy remains a path associated with rewards, success, growth and improvement. Despite or perhaps because, of all of these efforts, the representation of bad pirates continues to haunt normalcy in ways that the making and wearing of Styrofoam cups and aluminum foil hooks by disabled students exposes.

On the one hand there is the potential of internal leakage and loss of form, while on the other, there is a risk from the circulation of all those dangerous bodies—women, racial others, the sick, the monstrous—who both occupy the place of the other and serve to define by difference the self’s own parameters. (Shildrick, 2000, p. 216)

The skin comes to be felt as a border through reading the impression of one surface upon another as a form of negation. Such impressions are traces on the skin surface of the presence of others. And they depend on the repetition of past associations, through which the other is attributed as the cause of bad feeling. (Ahmed, 2004b, p.33)

As Shildrick (2000) contends in the quote above, the risk of leaks continues to trouble the normative subject for they represent “a loss of form.” Ahmed (2004b) also suggests our orientations towards others are shaped by the repeated effects of impressions, including negative ones, that depend upon dehumanizing discourses that preserve the hegemonic status of the white, able-bodied subject. Taken together, the insights from Ahmed (2004b) and Shildrick (2000) place an emphasis on the vulnerability of the normative subject and its subsequent dehumanizing tendencies. In this sense the readings and becoming of pirates as part of a school-wide spirit day, suggests an enmeshed relationship between pirates and ongoing attempts of the story of normalcy to enact its own enchantments that ultimately foregrounds the vulnerability of embodied living. Thus, I follow the provocations from both Shildrick (2000) and Ahmed (2004b), in relation to pursuing the possibilities of being transformed through being touched by
varying disabled embodiments. There are three kinds of touch being embodied in the act of becoming pirates that I am particularly interested in for the purposes of foregrounding the import of disability in refusing normalcy’s containment. First, there is the troubling representation of disability in the figure of the pirate as bad. I want to think about how as Ahmed (2004b, p. 33) suggests, orientations towards disability “depend on the repetition of past associations, through which the other is attributed as the cause of bad feeling.” I wonder here what kind of touch is both accepted and refused in the repeated associations with disability as something or someone who is bad. Second, I want to consider how the touch of aluminum foil and Styrofoam cups offers the deeply troubling occurrence of disabled children trying to simulate disability really badly. What are we to make of simulations of disability that refuse the presence of disability? Third, is the impossibility of avoiding disability’s touch. As Shildrick suggests (2000, p. 216), “leakages” and their subsequent “circulation” leave the body exposed and vulnerable. Thus, in attempting to avoid disability’s touch, the normalizing narrative of schooling continues to fail in ways the prove potentially fruitful in the reimagining of becoming human amidst disability.

A Touch of Bad Pirates

The celebrations of spirit days are not an unusual practice. Indeed, while I was a staff member at Up North Public School between 2012-2014, it was one of the ways the school worked at building community spirit and belonging. That this tradition continues here as well as many other elementary schools is a component part of the rhythms of the school year. There are predictable themes for spirit days that are commonly used by many elementary schools including Up North Public School. Some examples of these spirit day themes include: Twin day (pick a buddy and come to school dressed in the same outfit), Comic Book Hero day (dress like your favourite comic book hero), Maple Leaf day (Toronto’s hockey team), Red and White Day (often
one or two colours are selected for everyone to wear). Showing that you belong to this school community on a spirit day, involves some form of copying the appearance of another person. Invariably, the distinction between belonging to community and being the same as people in your community, is blurred if not completely erased during a monthly school spirit day. Insofar as, the theme of Pirates and Princesses also conflates belonging with sameness, this day to some extent is reflective of other commonly used themes. Nonetheless, I find the theme of Pirates and Princesses particularly troubling. Though I do not voice my concerns during Ms. Postich’s lesson and the subsequent making of hook hands, both Ms. Sapper and Ms. Noya notice my discomfort. Ms. Sapper, Ms. Noya and I worked together while I was as staff member here and thus have experience in reading how my body is cringing even though I have not said a word. Ms. Sapper even asks: “Are you not a fan of Styrofoam?” (November 24, 2017).

It is not just the use of Styrofoam as a material that I find troubling. It is the use of a school-wide spirit day to foreground the circulation of stories of the disabled body as represented in the pirate, as bad and mean. Disabled students themselves are put to work in circulating the story of the bad pirate. Students are encouraged to growl, make hook arms, eye patches and pirate hats to imitate them. Participating in this month’s spirit day, also involves participating in the circulation of the story of disability as monstrous. According to Shildrick (2000, p. 218): “Transhistorically, the most widely accepted definition of the physically monstrous cites excess, deficiency or displacement as necessary properties.” Living a seemingly nomadic life at sea, stealing from others to survive and often depicted as partially blind with an amputated arm, the pirate of children’s stories and popular movies fits Shildrick’s definition (2000, p. 218) of the “physically monstrous”. One of the reasons, the children are making hook arms and eye patches to help them become bad pirates is because they themselves offered these descriptions of them.
The figure of the pirate is well-known, and it seems this spirit day dedicated to Pirates and Princesses offers yet another opportunity to repeatedly tell and inhabit the story of disability as monstrous that this pirate represents.

Thus, by placing pirates in the foreground of being included in this spirit day, the story of the kinds of bodies deserving of exclusion also circulates both in the verbal retelling of the story of bad pirates as well as in the non-verbal attempts to embody pirates by imitating physical and visual impairments. This spirit day helps to circulate the agreed upon story that pirates represent and inhabit the monstrous. The students in the Primary MID classroom already know this story well enough that they require little to no prompting to convey their impression of pirates as bad, mean and ghostly. In Shildrick’s (2000) contribution to questioning the mind-body split in Western philosophy through disability studies, she wonders about how the voyeuristic gaze toward the monstrous, works to preserve the boundaries of the normative subject. According to Shildrick (2000, p. 220): “We might say that no real encounter takes place, for the emphasis is not on exchange in which mutual transformation might occur, but precisely on forestalling such a move.” The presence of pirates on November 24th at Up North Public School is not an attempt to embrace disability or perhaps as Shildrick (2000) suggests being transformed by the touch of disability, rather, their presence seeks to emphasize the importance of being impervious to the touch of humans placed in the category of the monstrous. Thus, physical proximity to human difference as defined through categories of race, gender, class and disability, does not assure that you and I and us will be touched through encounters in a manner that disrupts and works to unravel the normalizing narrative of schooling. Indeed, in the case of this particular spirit day becoming a bad pirate requires remaining untouched by our daily encounters amidst varying human embodiments.
The persistent attempts to stay untouched by the difference of disability through our encounters with family, friends, colleagues, students, neighbours and ourselves poses a broader dilemma that that the presence of bad pirates in this Primary MID classroom seems to amplify. The presence of the stories of pirates both in their deeds and through their depiction of disability as monstrous, conceal the daily proximity to disability through the approximately fifty students that arrive by bus to the five segregated special needs classrooms that inhabit Up North Public School. Disabled embodiments are already here every day. The disabled students and their teachers who attend Up North Public School represent numerous cultures and backgrounds. The countries of which the students, teachers and this researcher have our stories routed/rooted through, include but are not limited to India, Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad, Argentina, Taiwan, Poland, Russia, Iraq, Iran, Egypt, South Korea and China. Attempting to stay untouched by the difference of disability, invariably becomes enmeshed with colonial legacies of marginalization and inclusion that have resulted in patterns of both forced and chosen human migration. This is integral to Shildrick’s (2000) own conception of fear of the monstrous whereby she traces how race and disability have been vilified through colonial western logics. I wonder here how the circulation of pirates and pirate stories during the school spirit day, plays a component part of remaining untouched by the everyday presence of disabled and racialized differences. In other words, how is it possible to keep human variation and difference at a distance whilst you are proximally next to each other and encounter human difference daily?

To guide me in my thinking here, I turn to the work of postcolonial scholar Ahmed (2004a, 2004b, 2006) and decolonial scholar Mignolo (2011a) to consider how the who (subjectivities), what (knowledges both vocal and silent) are enmeshed with the where (embodied and contextualized relations) that keep disability at a distance while remaining in the
midst of disability. According to Ahmed (2006, p. 27): “bodies are directed in some ways and not others as a way of inhabiting or dwelling in the world.” Significant for Ahmed (2006, p. 121) here is the ways in which orientations towards “racial others…come to embody distance. This embodiment of distance is what makes whiteness ‘proximate’ as the starting point for orientation.” Ahmed’s insight here reveals a nexus between subjectivities, knowledges and the embodiment of space that attempts to remain untouched through sustaining the hegemony of whiteness. Though distinct from Ahmed, Mignolo’s succinct phrase (2011, p. xvi) “I am where I do and think” also entails a continued confrontation with how colonial western logics simultaneously shape and refuse to shape our embodied encounters. Mignolo (2006, 2011a, 2011b) contends that an important part of “delinking” from western colonial logics entails harnessing border epistemologies and body-politics. Thus, attending to our embodied and contextualized relations can help to reveal the continued workings of colonial western logics amidst our encounters. Attending to our embodied and contextualized encounters also offers opportunities to foreground how we might engage in the kinds of storytelling practices that foreground the kinds of impressions disability leaves in and through our encounters. This will require attending to how we are oriented to each other in ways that both accept and refuse the possibility of touching and being touched by disabled and racialized bodies.

Thus far, I have considered how the circulation of pirate stories and bodies during the spirit day at Up North Public School, can be read as sustaining the hegemony of the normative subject through endeavouring to remain impervious to touch and be touched by embodied difference. In part, this has entailed wondering about how engaging in the repetition of pirate stories evokes the monstrous. Shildrick’s work (2000, p. 221) serves as a reminder that: “the post-Enlightenment ideal of autonomous subjectivity and agency relies on a spacing, an interval
between self and other that covers over the putative threat of engulfment by the other.”

Paradoxically, as pirates are brought into proximity in the MID classroom through the making of sounds (voice), hats, hook arms and eye patches, there is an ever-greater chasm created between the prospect of being touched and perhaps transformed by disabled embodiments. The generation of distance between those whom you share space with, I contend is at work here in at least two ways. First, there is the use of the ‘bad’ pirate to reinforce the ‘good’ of the normative subject. Second, there is the use of becoming pirates for a day that conceals the everyday stories of disabled children in this classroom and their subsequent potential to touch others through their encounters. The next subsection of this chapter will endeavour to address both of these points.

**Becoming a Really Bad Pirate through Touch**

Spirit days in schools are typically announced well in advance with numerous reminders so that as many students as possible can participate in these events for the purposes of fostering belonging and inclusion. None of the students in the Primary MID class arrived at school wearing a pirate or princess costume. This has led Ms. Postich to teaching a lesson on how to make a hook arm so that students can pretend to be pirates just like the other students at school today. First, Ms. Postich shows them how to poke a hole in their Styrofoam cups. Next, she shows them how to take their piece of aluminum foil and roll it as tight as possible so that they can shape the piece of foil into a hook. After, the piece of foil has been shaped into a hook, the long end is inserted in the Styrofoam cup. The cup is supposed to fit on each student’s hand so that they can hold on to the piece of aluminum foil inserted into the cup and move the hook around with their hand. Ms. Postich tells the students that after they are done assembling their hook hand, they can decorate it with colours and a variety of stickers of their choosing. Ms. Postich also tell students that if there is time before recess they might also have the chance to
make an eye patch. In focusing on looking just like a pirate, this lesson also emphasizes the importance of belonging to the larger school community who is also pretending to be pirates or princesses. In not offering the option of looking just like a princess, Ms. Postich states: “It’s pirates and princesses but we don’t have any princesses.” (Audio Transcript, November 24, 2017). Even though three of the six participants in this study prefer nonverbal forms of communication and none of the six participants have made any self-identifying statements about their gender identity, Ms. Postich reads her students as presenting as boys. Thus, she does not ask if students would like to participate in this spirit day by dressing as princesses. She assumes that all of her students will dress-up like pirates.

This encounter between Ms. Postich and her students and their efforts to participate in the Pirates and Princesses spirit day, offers yet another example of what inclusion currently represents within the context of elementary schooling. Inclusion remains an invitation to sameness. It is okay for boys to pretend to be pirates but, not princesses. It is okay to pretend to be disabled by making a hook arm because everyone else in the class is making the same arm so that they too can show their school spirit. This call to be just like everyone else is representative of the persistent presence of normalcy within daily encounters between teachers and students and in this case, it leads to an offensive and rather terribly executed attempt to imitate a physical disability by students who are disabled. Titchkosky, Healey and Michalko (Forthcoming), address simulations of blindness which offers useful insights that correspond with the troubling matters of pretending to be pirates. Titchkosky et al (Forthcoming) offer numerous examples of the trouble with simulations of blindness such as #HowEyeSeeIt awareness campaign where participants blindfolded themselves. Invariably, simulations of blindness reinforce blindness as lack, whilst sustaining “the normal authority of sight” (Titchkosky et al, Forthcoming, p. 5).
Thus, simulations of blindness remain untouched by the difference of disability in distinct yet
linked manner to how the presence of pirates on this school spirit day also remain untouched by
difference.

One similarity between the kinds of simulations that Titchkosky et al (Forthcoming) consider and the presence of bad pirates at Up North Public School, is that in pretending to be
pirates there is no effort and no pretense of attempting to know the experience of disability. According to Titchkosky et al (Forthcoming), in simulations of blindness, participants belief that
blindness is merely lack of sight is reinforced and sustained. During the pirates and princesses
spirit day, participants seem to already know that pirates are monstrous and pretending to be
them does not change their reading of pirates as bad, mean and ghostly. It is this untouched
imperviousness of the power in normalcy’s enchantments that generate the context and
circumstances by which an entire school can remain so unmoved by disability in their midst that
no one seems to be particularly troubled at the evocation of negative stereotypes of disability and
gender through this pirates and princesses spirit day. Titchkosky et al (Forthcoming) turn to the
work of Manning to foreground the ways that blindness is not lack of sight but its own way to be
in the world whilst disrupting the hegemony of normalcy. I turn to the work of Halberstam
(2011) and Mitchell et al (2014), to wonder about how to read Nadar, Rick, William, Kirby and
Salam as failing to become bad pirates in a manner that leaves its own impression.

As they try to make their hook arms, the pirate hats Nadar, Rick, William, Kirby and
Salam made earlier this morning, keep falling off their heads. On occasion, they remember they
are supposed to be pretending to be pirates and put their hats back on. They decorate their
Styrofoam cups with lots of colours and stickers and I comment: “These are looking less and less
scary with all of the decorations” (Audio Recording, November 24, 2017). In the meantime,
Salam’s Styrofoam cup has already broken apart. Instead of using more materials, Ms. Noya uses tape to put the pieces of the cup back together and insert the aluminum foil hook through. In the meantime, I notice no one has really used their pirate growl other than when Ms. Postich asked them to growl at the start of the lesson. Nadar places the Styrofoam cup over his hand and immediately reaches out for William’s hook. They hook into each other briefly before returning to add more decorations to their cups. Kirby loves art and he is taking his time adding decorations to his cup. Rick on the other hand, dislikes anything to do with art and finishes decorating his cup quickly. He takes out some unfinished work from his desk and focuses on that. Decorating their cups takes so long that they never get around to making eyepatches.

Needless to say, Nadar, Rick, William, Kirby and Salam are failing to become pirates. They do not attempt to duel each other, they do not practice their pirate growls with each other either. Perhaps the closest pirate-like act that occurred during this lesson was when Nadar and William snuck up behind me and started touching my hair without permission. I reminded them to ask first before touching my hair and they laugh while being quite happy that they tricked me (Audio Recording, Field Notes, November 24, 2017). The ‘trick’ here is in the surprise of their touch as a tangible reminder of the failure in becoming both ‘bad’ pirates and normative subjects.

Other than providing a canvas for using colours and stickers, the Styrofoam cups and aluminum foil hooks are never used and seem to be really bad copies of amputated or prosthetized limbs. Nadar, Rick, William, Kirby and Salam have demonstrated that they are really bad at pretending to be bad pirates on demand. As both Halberstam (2011) and Mitchell et al (2014) suggest, failure in this instance is productive. Neither completely enchanted by normalcy nor the stories of monstrous pirates, these disabled students make different kinds of stories with each other and their teachers. The conception of curricular cripistemologies offered
by Mitchell et al (2014) is useful here because it serves as a reminder about the import of interdependency that permeates their contention that failure is crucial to transforming teaching and learning encounters through disability. According to Mitchell et al (2014, p. 298): “curricular cripistemologies critically assess how communities place limits on the facilitation of crip/queer people’s participation.” Under the current parameters of school inclusion policies, failing to participate, in expected ways, in activities that continue to orient bodies towards normalcy, serves as a reminder, as Mitchell et al (2014) suggest, that exclusion of disabled peoples remains the goal. In failing to become either bad pirates or ‘normal’ children, Nadar, Rick, William, Kirby and Salam suggest that inhabiting the world amidst disability entails a reorientation to the kinds of stories that order our lives. In this sense, “crip success is, paradoxically, to fail to become normate” (Mitchell et al, 2014, p. 300), or in the case of my participants to fail to become pirate.

So, I return to William’s declaration through which this chapter started: “I am a bad pirate.” Disabled children inhabit a world, and more specifically and education system, that continues to circulate stories of disability such as those of pirates, that take for granted that disability is monstrous, undesirable and necessarily kept distant. Thus, reading and being read in disabling ways demonstrates how William and his classmates continue to be read as the kinds of students that inhabit segregated spaces. Failing to keep up with the demands of normalcy, the segregated classroom they inhabit continues to orient them towards finding ways to keep up with the demands of normalcy. On the other hand, William and his classmates not only fail at becoming normal, they are also bad at being the bad pirates that remain an ever-present fixture of children’s stories. This failure is productive in two ways. It helps to confront, and trouble taken for granted normative demands that disabled children and their teachers encounter daily. This
failure is also productive because it generates a new set of questions about the import of disability’s impress on how we might reimagine how to become human differently. First, what kinds of stories can work to break through the seemingly impervious and unmoving set of enchantments that the normalizing narrative of schooling continues to depend on? Second, how might engaging in the act of reading and writing about disabled bodies, find ways to point toward embodied encounters, in a manner that touches and moves the human imaginary in different directions? Third, if as Haraway indicates (2016, p. 5): “bounded individualism…has finally become unavailable to think with,” how might human subjectivities be reconfigured in a manner that generates opportunities for varying embodiments to thrive? In the following portion of this chapter, I seek to consider these questions by focusing on the necessity, dilemmas and import of telling small moment stories that foreground embodied encounters with disabled children.

**Everyday Moments of Touch Amidst Disability**

The representation of the disabled body in the stereotypical pirate as monstrous, sadly remains one of the few ways disabled and non-disabled children encounter the disabled body in storybooks and movies. During Ms. Postich’s lesson about how to make a hook hand, both William and Nadar mention having seen the movie The Pirates of the Caribbean. Perhaps it is Nadar’s encounter with this movie that shapes his reading of pirates as ghosts (Field Notes, November 24, 2017). While there are several memoirs and/or narratives that foreground the everyday experience of inhabiting disability available to adults (Bérubé, 1998; Clare, 2017; Frank, 2013; Grandin, 1986; Michalko 2002, 2017), finding, accessible stories to share with young children and youth in the classroom about disabled people’s daily lives are exceedingly rare. In three recent reviews of both the absence and presence of the representation of the lives of
disabled peoples in storybooks, chapter books and adolescent novels, findings of researchers substantiate my own experiences with literature for children and youth (Aho & Alter, 2018; Meyer, 2013; Emmerson, Fu, Lendsay & Brenna, 2014). For example, in an extensive review of hundreds of storybooks, Emmerson et al (2014, p. 16) noted on one of their bookstore explorations that: “out of the collection of 252 Canadian picture books sampled in one store on August 7, 2012, only one representation of characters other than “typical” was found.” In a more detailed comparison which focused on two storybooks that features disabled characters, Aho & Alter (2018) discovered in their analysis that promising attempts to include disabled characters, was negated by insisting on a narrative of sameness rather than difference. In sum, even when disabled characters are represented in stories, they rarely contribute to a change in the onto-epistemological and/or subjective orientations of the story (Aho & Alter, 2018; Meyer, 2013; Emmerson et al, 2014).

Perhaps what this brief synopsis of the analysis of both the absence and presence of disability in narratives for young children and youth points towards, is one of the reasons stories of pirates continue to be repeated and to circulate so readily. It is also indicative of what I have described in this chapter as the seeming imperviousness to being touched by disability. When I use the term touch, I mean both in terms of embodied proximity as well as the kinds of stories that circulate in schools. In other words, I am referring to the ways embodied encounters with disability both shape and refuse to shape our relationships in ways that are simultaneously captured and escape the grasp of verbal and written communication. In this sense, I am guided by Ahmed (2006) and Butler (2015) who convey the import of embodied encounters while also being troubled by the power and powerlessness of both embodied encounters and words to shape our orientations towards each other. According to Butler (2015, p.45): “To undergo this touch
means that there must be a certain openness to the outside that postpones the plausibility of any claim to self-identity.” In a distinct yet linked way, Ahmed suggests (2006, 8-9): “The ‘here’ of bodily dwelling is thus what takes the body outside itself, as it is affected and shaped by its surroundings.” What both Butler (2015) and Ahmed (2006) seem to indicate here is the dependency of the self to social relations and structures is a necessary human condition that simultaneously generates the possibility of stasis (preserving and sustaining the western colonial logics of the normalcy) and transformation (becoming troubled by and resisting the neoliberal order by contributing to the reimagining of the human). What I continue to wonder about is how might both embodied encounters amidst disability as well as the stories we tell and circulate about those encounters come touch and move both individuals and collectives to reconfigure our social relations?

One of the ways I have been exploring “disenchanting discourses” (Wynter, 1987, p. 207) is by focusing on encounters with disabled students and their teachers within the small everyday moments of the elementary classroom. I would contend that this form of storytelling is both necessary and important in contributing to an understanding of both the pervasiveness of normalcy as well as the resistance that occurs between the gaps and spaces of normalcy’s grasp. However, this form of storytelling is riddled with its own dilemmas. One of those dilemmas is acknowledging the necessary limit of words and indeed the stories we inhabit while also insisting on the importance of the kinds of stories that are told about disability through trying but failing to convey the impact of embodied encounters. Thus, placing monstrous pirates and the taken for granted assumptions related to their roles as antagonists in the story aside for a moment, I want to think about the necessity of and trouble with telling more complicated stories where the lines between monster and hero are more blurry than clear. The kinds of stories that seriously consider
the conundrum of human dependencies outlined by both Butler (2015) and Ahmed (2006) in ways that consider the contrapuntal engagement (Chowdhry, 2007) of our embodied encounters. In other words, while I agree with the analysis and conclusion stated in the work of Aho & Alter, (2018), Meyer (2013) and Emmerson et al (2014) that we need more stories that feature the experiences of disabled children, I would also contend that disability can play an integral role in reconfiguring how stories are told so that the hegemony of the normative subject is both refused and disrupted. I turn now to an example.

I want to reconsider my encounter with Mesan, Nadar, a clock and a window. It is December 4, 2017 and as soon as I arrive, Mesan takes me by the hand and points to the spot where I will be sitting today that happens to be right beside him. Mesan has just returned from five-week long trip to Iraq with his family. When I ask Mesan about his trip, he points to the clock and he stretches out his hand to pretend to be a plane. Next, he starts pointing at me, pointing at the window and then pointing at the clock. I am not sure what he is trying to communicate. He very patiently repeats the same motions again. After Mesan’s fourth repetition of the same motions and my fourth apology for not understanding, Nadar says: “He wants you to come outside and play with us at recess.” Mesan nods in agreement and I thank Nadar for his help (Field Notes, December 4, 2017). Unlike monstrous pirates which generate a sense of imperviousness to disabled bodies or what Shildrick (2000, p.216) describes in her context as “covering over the vulnerability of the human body”, this moment between the clock, the window, myself, Mesan and Nadar foregrounds a moment of exposure. We encounter each other along with the risk of misreading each other’s intentions. My difficulty understanding uncovers the vulnerability we inhabit in this moment.
In addition to inviting me out to recess, Mesan and Nadar are perhaps more acutely aware than I am that if I want to know about Mesan’s trip, recess is the best time to ask and find out. Mrs. Postich will be beginning her lesson soon and Mesan and Nadar seem to know that this is not the right time to share his story. This is Ms. Postich’s time. In this sense, by asking Mesan about his trip at the wrong time, one of the vulnerabilities here is in the potential trouble of not using class time in ways permitted by the teacher in this moment. This bad timing on my part also foregrounds the ways that Nadar and Mesan have come to read the classroom they inhabit as a place where they remain exposed to the trouble of telling stories that they seem to know are out of place in this space at this time. Thus, recess comes to matter as a time to both play and tell stories. If I want to hear about his trip, I need to come outside to the playground. As students who anticipate the time when recess will begin, pointing to the clock and pointing to the window where the playground is in full view, is commonsensical to Mesan and Nadar. Nadar and Mesan do not need words to mediate the meaning of this non-verbal exchange. Our orientations to people and objects, is shaped by the process of repetition and habit (Ahmed, 2006). Thus, Mesan and Nadar are oriented to each other, the clock and the playground they see through the window. My presence disrupts this taken for granted relationship between the clock, the window and the subsequent fifteen minutes of time and space to encounter each other and make different stories together outside of the normalizing demands of the classroom. He repeats himself four times and during this exchange, I expose him to the uncomfortable possibility that the gestures which convey a commonsensical message for him, may be misread or even ignored.

Stories that foreground our interdependencies also foreground the risk of encounters that are embedded in the uncomfortable dilemmas of our orientations in place and space. Ahmed (2006, p.158) considers the import of moments of disorientations and “whether they can offer us
the hope of new directions, and whether new directions are reasons enough for hope.” My presence has disoriented Mesan and this moment is also disorienting to me in a manner that helps me to stop and wonder. I wonder about the habit of looking at the clock and the window while waiting for recess as a habit formed and impressed upon Nadar and Mesan through the predictable rhythms of the school day. I wonder about my own dependence on spoken English and how that has shaped, impressed and oriented my readings in ways that seem inescapable. It is only through Nadar’s reading of Mesan’s gestures, which he conveys in English, that the moment of disorientation for both Mesan and myself dissipates. The impressions left by the normalizing narrative of schooling are a component part of the disorientation and reorientation that occurs in this moment. Ahmed’s work (2006, p. 11) serves as a reminder that: “some spaces extend certain bodies and simply do not leave room for others.” Within the context of this disorienting moment between myself, Mesan, Nadar, the clock and the window, the able-bodied normative subject occupies the space in this classroom in pervasive ways. It is in the clock, it is in the hope of escape to the playground visible through the window, it is in speaking the colonial language of English. I ask Mesan about his trip and after briefly extending his arms out in the motion of an airplane, he points to the clock, he points to me, then the window and finally he points to the clock again. There is no room for his story in this space. Ms. Postich is about to start her lesson.

In being put straight, as Ahmed (2006) might say, through Nadar’s insertion of English, there is a moment of covering and uncovering our exposure to each other (Shildrick, 2000), and our subsequent dependencies on the hegemony of western colonial logics even as we endeavour to resist and disenchant ourselves from their grasp. Even while seeking new directions and new stories to tell about how we might become human with each other we remain exposed to the risk
of reproducing the hegemonic conditions of marginalization and oppression. A consideration of the import of intersubjectivity through the impressions we leave upon each other (Ahmed 2006, 2004a, 2004b; Butler, 2004, 2015, Shildrick 2000, 2015), must also continue to account for and confront the ways western colonial logics are reproduced within our everyday encounters in ways that continue to be taken for granted. According to Mitchell et al (2014, p. 307): “curricular cripistemologies insert the creative alternatives of interdependency, the politics of atypicality, and a more critical assessment of neoliberalism’s founding in(ex)clusions.” Through their argument they reject current practices in public education that continue to segregate disabled children from non-disabled children through placement in segregated classrooms. As Mitchell et al (2014) and numerous other disability scholars have contended, this distance making tactic that seeks to extend the touch of the normative body while limiting the touch of disabled embodiments is unjust and inequitable. Yet, even though proximity to disabled embodiments holds the promise and power of being touched and moved differently in our encounters, we must remain attentive to the risks of reproducing the western colonial logics that have touched and shaped our imaginaries through the daily (re)formation of non-verbal and verbal daily habits.

Concluding Thoughts

Throughout this chapter, my aim has been to explore how the touch of normative and disabled bodies both shapes and refuses to shape encounters between teachers and students in segregated classroom spaces. In exploring what happened during pirates and princesses spirit day, I suggested that representations of the disabled body as monstrous through the presence of pirates, generated the conditions of imperviousness to the touch of the disabled body. Through their identification of the attributes of pirates as mean, bad, ghostly as well as through imitating a pirate growl, Kirby, William, Nadar, Salam and Rick demonstrate how they are already oriented
toward the stereotypical figure of the pirate as monstrous. Yet, in the process of trying to become pirates through the making of hook arms, they fail to do so in ways that are productive. Through using stickers, colouring and a broken Styrofoam cup, the disabled children in this classroom refuse the monstrous and find ways to take this activity away from its original intention to inhabit disability as something monstrous. There remains something deeply troubling about the ease through which the story of the pirate continues to circulate as representative of the undesirability of disability and the subsequent repetition and attempted enactment of this story within a special needs classroom for disabled children. It is the kind of trouble that should touch, disrupt and shake readers out of their complacency. It is the kind of trouble that continues to point towards the failure of inclusionary policies and practices in schools that ultimately point toward practices that continue to exclude disability.

Undoubtedly this is also representative of the need to reorient ourselves and the stories that are told in elementary classrooms. Several scholars (Shildrick 2000, 2015; Mitchell et al 2014; Butler 2004, 2015; Ahmed 2004a, 2004b, 2006), have suggested the import of our interdependencies and exposing the vulnerabilities of our embodied encounters. There remains the hope that the proximity of the touch of disability holds the promise of disenchantment (Wynter, 1987) from the hegemony of normalcy. There is a need for both embodied proximity to disability as well as being touched through stories of disability, that would serve the goals of both troubling the hegemony of normalcy while also foregrounding the import of disabled embodiments in reconfiguring the human imaginary through finding ways to tell stories differently. Yet, in pursuing stories whereby the disorientation of normalcy is the goal, there remains the ever-present risk of remaining oriented towards normalcy. Normalcy is there in the tyranny of the clock in the classroom and the presence of English as the colonial language that
keeps students, teachers and this researcher “in line” (Ahmed, 2006, p. 15). While thinking through and with our interdependencies and vulnerabilities via the proximity of touch, embodied encounters hold fruitful possibilities for transforming our social relations. However, the power of the pervasive reach of normalcy in the smallest moments of our encounters must never be discounted. The risk of reproducing normalcy remains present both despite and because of the vulnerability of our interdependencies. This has implications for considering both the import and the subsequent limits of the impact of stories that foreground disability. This also has implications for considering the limits of touch through embodied proximity, the stories we tell and the relationship of those limits to the transformation of unjust social relations.
Chapter 8—Magic Beads and the Matter of (Un)Settling Touch

“‘border gnosis’ is the subaltern reason striving to bring to the foreground the force and creativity of knowledge subalternized during a long process of colonization of the planet, which was at the same time the process in which modernity and modern Reason were constructed. (Mignolo, 2011a, p13)

“The flesh is not something one has but, rather the web in which one lives; it is not simply what I touch of the other or myself, but the condition of possibility of touch, a tactility that exceeds any given touch and that cannot be reducible to unilateral action performed by a subject.” (Butler, 2015, p. 36)

I read Mignolo (2011a) and Butler (2015) and their distinct conceptions of subjectivity and its relationship to knowledge and power as a way to wonder about how to tell stories differently through touch. Mignolo, in outlining ‘border gnosis’ or elsewhere what he refers to as border epistemology or border thinking foregrounds the importance of embodied place as an important reorientation intended to confront colonial legacies of oppression while also producing possibilities of new ways of becoming human with each other (Mignolo, 2011a, 2011b, Mignolo & Tolstanova, 2006). Mignolo (2011a, 2011b) contends that while the modern subject has been shaped by the injustices of colonialism, that opportunities remain to pursue different trajectories that subsequently involve rejecting the mind-body dichotomy of Western philosophy by foregrounding embodied knowledges. In a distinct way Butler (2015, p. 36) too considers subjectivity as the simultaneous significance and trouble with what she refers to as “flesh… the web of connections in which one lives.” There is a sense here that the social conditions inhabited by the subject through touch are unequally distributed and thus support some forms of human life more than others (Butler, 2015). In a distinct way from Mignolo (2011a, 2011b), Butler (2015) also rejects the mind-body dichotomy of Western philosophy and suggests that even as the subject remains dependent upon its social conditions, the complex non-synchronous aspect of touch is integral to both resisting and producing new stories.
Together, Mignolo’s concept of “border gnosis” (2011a, p. 13) and Butler’s (2015, p. 36) concept of “flesh” point toward the conundrum of touching and being touched amidst our social relations. In other words, touching and being touched is simultaneously necessary and troubling. Necessary, because unlike conceptualizations of the subject that privilege the mind, foregrounding the import of embodied knowledges demonstrate the import of touch in how the subjective self comes to know the world through social relations. Touch is also troubling because it can be unwanted, coercive, corrosive or even absent in ways that impact how the very same subjective self comes to know the world through social relations. Invariably, touching and being touched implicates power, knowledge, place and varying subjective embodiments. For instance, there are numerous accounts of the detrimental impacts of the power imbalances between education and medical professionals and disabled peoples when touch has exceeded its bounds in ways that cause physical and emotional harm (Adams & Erevelles, 2017, Annamma, 2014; Costa et al, 2012; Curran & Runswick-Cole, 2014; Titchkosky, 2012) The who, what, when, where and how of power are implicated in the abuses of touch in a manner that cannot be ignored or denied. Thus, in seeking to tell stories differently while continuing to trouble the western colonial logics and their detrimental impacts on disabled peoples, what touch can or should do in our storytelling practices necessarily impacts how stories are told and embodied.

In part, this chapter considers the abusive aspects of touch when it is encountered in its most excessive and hegemonic forms. Yet, I also want to suggest that despite or perhaps because of the unquestionably harmful legacy of touch and its continued abuses, touch remains necessary to transforming our social imaginary through disability. How can touch reach beyond the self as it must, without overreaching in the ways the oppressive western colonial legacies of exclusion and marginalization continue to do? In the phrase “I am where I do and think” Mignolo (2011a,
p. xvi) suggests that exploring both the constraints and extensions of touch entails a continued confrontation with how colonial western logics simultaneously shape and refuse to shape our embodied encounters. This insight proves to be particularly salient for my research project as I wonder how daily embodied encounters between disabled children and their teachers demonstrate the trouble with touch while also insisting on its importance.

**Power Imbalances and the Matter of Touch**

It is November 27, 2017 in the Primary LD classroom and Mrs. Robinson is in the staffroom for some professional development. Mrs. Sharek is the occasional teacher today. She is a familiar presence to the students and to me because she has been an occasional teacher for several years and she also volunteers regularly by reading with disabled students in this classroom on a weekly basis. This week the students have been reading a book entitled *Magic Beads* (Nielsen-Fernlund, 2007) and Mrs. Robinson has asked Mrs. Sharek to reread the story this afternoon. *Magic Beads* is one of the few stories accessible to an audience of young children that addresses the everyday life of children who experience domestic abuse. The main character Lilian starts attending a new school and is informed by the teacher that she will have to participate in “show and tell” at the end of the week. Unbeknownst to her teacher, Lilian and her mother are living in a women’s shelter for women and children fleeing domestic abuse. Throughout the week as her peers “show and tell” about their favourite toys and hobbies, Lilian’s anxiety grows. She realizes she has nothing of value to show or tell about and her mother has no money to buy anything worth showing or telling her peers about. Lilian finds some coloured beads at the shelter. She brings them to school for show and tell and uses her imagination to turn her beads into magic beads. She tells a series of fantastical stories that captures the imagination.
of her classmates. Her classmates want their own magic beads and Lilian finds a way to turn (no)thing into an opportunity to connect with her peers.

Even though Bella, Lance, Scott, Bruno, Steven are familiar with Mrs. Sharek there are numerous interruptions of the reading of Lilian and her magic beads (Field Notes, November 27, 2017). Bruno indicates on more than one occasion that his sister and cousin are teaching him sign language and he wants to teach me too. Bella who is holding one of my hands while she bites the nails of her other hand, breaks the skin around her finger nail and asks Ms. Voyant for a band-aid. Lance, who usually sits directly in front of the teacher while paying attention and participating is unusually quiet. Scott on the other hand, is more talkative today. Steven repeatedly moves around the carpet while briefly taking a turn to sit close to each of his classmates and myself before moving on and around the carpeted area. The constant buzz of this activity is occurring while Mrs. Sharek tries to read the story. Mrs. Sharek is moved by their movement. At times, she stops and waits for a lull in the activity before continuing the story. At times, she calls out the names of specific students and asks them to stop interrupting. At times, she pauses to ask questions, or she goes back a few pages to reread what has happened in the story. Needless to say, the constant verbal and nonverbal interruptions mean that we stay on the carpet with each other a little longer as we sit with the trouble of Lilian and her magic beads.

Like stories about the everyday lives of disabled children mentioned in the previous chapter, stories about touch and specifically, physically abusive touch, are rarely the topic of books read aloud in elementary classrooms. In reading Magic Beads (Nielsen-Fernlund, 2007), the import of touch in sustaining, resisting and telling stories differently comes into the foreground in ways that suggest the risks of embodied encounters. Perhaps, it is my own discomfort with the story of Lilian and her mother’s physical abuse, that has impacted and
touched me in a way, that I am more attentive too the numerous interruptions while Mrs. Sharek reads the story. What and how I am noticing Mrs. Sharek, Bruno, Bella, Steven, Scott and Lance is irrevocably impacted by how this story of abuse has touched me in a manner that serves as a reminder of the impossibility of objectivity in my role as a researcher. I am struck by how Lilian never reveals the details about her temporary living situation or home life to her teacher or her classmates and I wonder how much concealment is always and already occurring during our classroom interactions. I have ‘known’ many of the children in this classroom for two or three years and I have ‘known’ many of the staff members for a far longer period of time. To what extent, have our interactions already been shaped by the hegemonic discourses of schooling that privilege a demonstration of intellectual capacities as the medium of communication which simultaneously generates the conditions whereby talking about touch remains a subject of discomfort? I sit with Lilian’s story along with Mrs. Sharek, Bruno, Bella, Steven, Scott and Lance and I am troubled by how striving towards normalcy, constrains the conditions of our social relations in a manner that sustains the power imbalances and subsequent risk of abusive touch that is frequently concealed and rarely revealed.

Thus, one reading of the discomforting moment, between those of us on the carpet, emphasizes the ways in which this story demands that we notice the abusive impacts of touch. It allows for a confrontation with the troubling and traumatizing impacts of sustaining unjust social structures whereby power imbalances physically endanger the lives of some humans more so than others. This insight is foregrounded in the work of numerous scholars including Mignolo (2011a, 2011b) and Butler (2015) who point out the detrimental impacts of colonialism and patriarchy in shaping the social conditions of becoming human. It is also a prominent concern with disability studies scholars whom continue to do the work of troubling the seeming ease with
which disabled peoples and disability is taken for granted as counting as less than human. For example, Titchkosky (2012) critiques Peter Singer’s contention that a disability is a limit and/or end that is juxtaposed to human life. In troubling the taken for granted division between ‘person’ and ‘disability,’ Titchkosky (2012), demonstrates how the power imbalances that favour the hegemony of normalcy, leave disabled peoples exposed to increased incidences of marginalization, exclusion, harm and even death. Within the context of educating young children and youth, several disability scholars have conducted qualitative analysis as well as relied upon quantitative data to show the increase vulnerability of disabled children to emotional, physical and sexual abuse (Adams & Erevelles, 2017; Annamma, 2014; Curran & Runswick-Cole, 2014; Erevelles, 2011a). Specifically, Curran & Runswick-Cole (2014, p. 1620) note that “deficit discourses” and the subsequent assumptions of representing disabled children as “tragic” have led to medical professionals and the justice system ignoring and/or not attending to the abuses experienced by disabled children and youth. In other words, in repeatedly refusing to be impacted by the stories of disabled children and youth, disabled children remain exposed to the worst excesses of the hegemonic power of normalcy.

Thus, within the context of the disproportional exposure to risk of abusive touch to disabled people, the story of the Magic Beads (Nielsen-Fernlund, 2007) and the subsequent discomforts evident in the student and teacher responses are particularly relevant. First, there is the ethical conundrum of participating in the circulation of stories that reinforce and reiterate the power imbalances between normative embodiments and disabled embodiments. As outlined by Titchkosky (2012) and Curran & Runswick-Cole (2014), the disabled body continues to be read as less than human in ways that assume that disabled lives are more disposable and more likely to be ignored. On one hand, confronting the abuses of power seem necessary if not integral to
questioning and troubling the continued hegemony of normalcy in socio-cultural practices generally and in elementary schooling more specifically. According to Titchkosky’s critique of Singer (2012, p. 4): “he holds that a departure from normal expectations should be used to shore up the distinction between human and disability, where the latter category can disqualify one from participation in the former.” Titchkosky’s (2012) work serves as a reminder of how Singer’s view of human life as an exclusion of disability remains pervasive in ways that continue to expose disabled peoples to greater risks which, in the case of Singer, includes no life at all. In a distinct yet linked way, Curran & Runswick-Cole (2014) also seem to suggest that the mechanisms and procedures in place in medical and social service institutions often ignore or poorly respond to reports of abuse that involve disabled peoples. Therefore, in the moments during the reading of Magic Beads (Nielsen-Fernlund, 2007) when Mrs. Sharek stops to explain what a women’s shelter is and that nobody’s touch should hurt you, it remains simultaneously a too rare moment of candour about abusive touch, while also perniciously necessary to state that, disabled embodiments like their own should be able to thrive without the fear of abuse or harm from unwanted touch.

The risks of participating in the circulation of stories that preserve the hegemony of normalcy as the measure of what it means to be human, also seem to continue to be a necessary undertaking, because it also serves the purpose of troubling the divide between mind and body taken for granted as a tenet of modern western philosophy and schooling practices. Perhaps one of the reasons I feel uneasy and I sense an unease in my participants during the reading of Magic Beads (Nielsen-Fernlund, 2007), is because of a curriculum that privileges the production and demonstration of intellectual capacities as somehow separate and superior to embodied knowledges. In part, the work of emphasizing the import of embodied knowledges questions the
normative subject by refusing the conception that the mind and what it knows is somehow separate and apart from the body. For example, the enmeshment between ‘knowing’ and ‘sensing’ is exemplified both in the story Mrs. Sharek is reading as well as in the verbal and nonverbal responses from the students. Bruno identifies the father (the abusive character in the story) as “mean” (Audio Transcription, November 27, 2017). Scott echoes the words in the story: “He hit her and her mom” (Audio Transcription, November 27, 2017). In the meantime, Steven remains in restless motion on the carpet, Bella has left and returned with a band-aid covering the broken skin on her finger and Lance remains unusually quiet (Field Notes, November 27, 2017). The story follows Lilian through her first week at her new school and on each page, Lilian’s level of anxiety is described as growing from butterflies in her stomach, to buffaloes (Nielsen-Fernlund, 2007). Through these moments of discomfort that are occurring simultaneously in the classroom, not only I am unsure in this instance how to distinguish what the mind ‘knows’ from what the body ‘senses,’ I am unsure where the sensation of discomfort begins and/or ends. I feel I am sitting in the middle of an assemblage of verbal and nonverbal expressions of embodied discomfort and unease while confronting the lived realities of abusive touch.

Amidst the risks involved in recirculating stories that feature the hegemony of normalcy, there is also the possibility of troubling normalcy by contributing to its erosion. One of the ways to contribute to such a troubling is to foreground embodied knowledges while questioning the oft repeated sentiment of mind over body. If the line between ‘knowing’ and ‘sensing’ is neither as distinct nor as indicative of the superiority of the ‘mind’ (Butler, 2015) then, what are the implications for the kinds of stories that have yet to be told and the possibilities of reconceptualize the human in a manner that you and I and us sense and know the world? The discomfort in the classroom on the day we are reading *Magic Beads* (Nielsen-Fernlund, 2007) is
palpable. In part, this is because of the rarity of moments like these, where the disabled children and their teachers in this classroom, encounter a story where the impacts of abusive touch are in the foreground of the everyday events of the main characters life. This includes placing into the foreground the risks of recirculating stories of abuse and the ensuing reminders of disproportional exposure to abuse to disabled peoples. The abusive touch I am referring to here is both physical abuse as well as the less tangible and visible forms of abuses implicit in practices of exclusion, marginalization and isolation of disability from the category of the human (Titchkosky, 2012; Curran & Runswick-Cole 2014; Adams & Erevelles, 2017). In part, one of the reasons the trouble with touch is so salient is because of the difficulty in distinguishing the effects of the discomforting impacts of the story from the affective responses of the research participants and this researcher. According to Titchkosky (2012, p. 8): “embodiment is separate neither from others nor from personhood but is, instead, that intermeshed place where the meaning of human is made, unmade, and remade.” In recognizing the multiplicity of discomforting readings while Mrs. Sharek reads Magic Beads (Nielsen-Fernlund, 2007), there is a stringing together of a different story that is formed through our encounters with each other. This new story emphasizes how embodied ways of sensing and knowing are enmeshed within the social context of their becoming.

“Hands off, don’t touch” and “Not yet”

Even as numerous contemporary philosophers such as Haraway contend that (2016, p. 5): “bounded individualism…has finally become unavailable to think with,” elementary school policies and practices continue to remain grounded in a form of bounded individualism that paradoxically insists on its boundless reach while remaining unmoved by the ensuing consequences of injustice, inequality and abuse. In other words, striving to attain normalcy as
defined by western onto-epistemological curricular goals remains the overarching goal of schooling practices even as this very same goal, continues to conditionally include if not outright exclude disabled students. For example, during the reading of *Magic Beads* (Nielsen-Fernlund, 2007) and the responses of discomfort, Mrs. Sharek repeatedly uses the phrase “hands-off, don’t touch” to remind Steven in particular, and the other students more generally, to stay in their own space and keep all their limbs to themselves (Audio Transcription; Field Notes, November 27, 2017). Steven is having an especially difficult time staying in his own space today. When he is not moving around the carpet trying to talk to me or one of his classmates, he has his hands in anyone of a number of bins full, of blocks, or counters, or shapes. “Hands off, don’t touch,” in this instance is meant in a literal sense. The phrase simultaneously connotes an unease with touching while the quantity of repetitions (at least five times within this 20-minute lesson), indicates the impossibility of living in a world without touch. Despite the risks, not the least of which is being reprimanded by the teacher for extending your touch toward another, Steven continues to reach out beyond himself.

Steven’s reaching out in his environment toward his peers and the objects in his proximity, represents a different kind of touch than the abusive form that is the subject of Mrs. Sharek’s read aloud. Steven’s touch is part of how disabled students and their teachers negotiate daily along the boundaries of touch and the precarity in between a touch that goes too far or not far enough. When I refer to touch in this sense, what I mean is the discourses that shapes and refuse to shape in tangible and intangible ways our relations with each other. According to Butler (2016, p. 19):

> We cannot talk about a body without knowing what supports that body and what its relation to that support—or lack of support—might be. In this way the body is less an entity than a relation, and it cannot be fully dissociated from the infrastructural and environmental conditions of its living. Thus, the dependency of human and
other creatures on infrastructural support exposes a specific vulnerability that we have when we are unsupported.

I quote Butler at length here to indicate the import of the embodied relations through which disabled students like Steven come to know and sense both the level of precarity and support for how they might embody their humanity within a school context that expects the ‘typical’ student body to be still, quiet and contained in its gestures towards others. Every time Mrs. Sharek pauses in the reading of today’s story to either verbally or non-verbally indicate to Steven to keep his hands to himself, Steven’s touch is read as out of place. In this context, it is taken for granted that Steven’s movements toward and away his classmates and peers require containment and management. Whereas it also taken for granted that Mrs. Sharek’s adherence to normative standards is intended to extend its reach and touch to each person in the room. Not only is the power imbalance between teachers and students evident in this instance, the far-reaching touch of normative expectations and valorization of the normative body, repeatedly leaves its impression not only on Steven but on all the students and the researcher who happen to be sitting on the carpet today. There is nothing particularly out of the ordinary about this moment. Rather, it is the ubiquity of these kinds of small moments in daily student and teacher encounters that convey in tangible and intangible ways, the kinds of bodies that are supported in classrooms and the kinds of bodies, disproportionally disabled bodies, that live on the edge of conditional support and precarity.

The discomforting story of physical abuse and the ensuing discomforting responses from participants and this researcher, have subsequently placed an emphasis on the import of embodied encounters and what those encounters say about touching and being touched amidst disability. In part, I have been wondering here about the fine line between touch that goes too far as well as touch that does not seem to have enough of a reach to leave a lasting and/or
transformative impression. How might the stories told about the everyday moments of embodied encounters, serve to shake readers out of complacency, while avoiding the harming and harmful impacts of the kinds of stories that touch through their abusive and/or hegemonic uses of power?

I mentioned earlier, that Bruno, Steven, Bella, Scott and Lance are exhibiting their own discomforts with this story of Magic Beads (Nielsen-Fernlund, 2007). When Bruno tells me more than once, that he wants to show me the sign language his sister and his cousin have taught him at home, I respond by saying “Not yet.” In one of Steven’s many returns to the spot where I have been sitting, he tries to engage me in a staring contest and I respond, “Not yet.” After Bella returns with a band-aid on her finger, she invites me to come outside and play at recess as she does during each of my visits. I respond, “Not now” as I typically do when she asks me in the middle of a lesson (Field Notes, November 27, 2017). Despite or perhaps because of being repeatedly told to keep their ‘hands off” by Mrs. Sharek as well as my own requests for delay and deferment in my responses of “not yet” and “not now,” the disabled children in this classroom remain undeterred in their attempts to reach out and leave their own impressions. Through their ongoing attempts to reach out despite the risks of admonishment and/or deferment, the participants in this study demonstrate the impossibility of “bounded individualism” (Haraway, 2016, p. 5) while also enacting Butler’s (2016, p. 19) conception of the body as “less an entity than a relation.” Perhaps then, one of the ways to tell and embody stories differently lies in attending to the touch of disability as it persists even as it encounters the repeated requests of “hands off” and “not yet.”

The ‘Magic’ of Magic Beads

It seems in the classroom that the touch of disability in both its tangible and intangible forms, is occurring at the wrong time and is almost always read as out of place. Even during a
rare reading in the classroom of a story that addresses the harm of abusive touch, other than Mrs. Sharek’s reminder that no one has the right to hit you, the matter of touch is not addressed. Touch remains an awkward and discomforting subject full of ethical conundrums that are poorly addressed in schooling practices generally and specifically in relation to disabled students. In between the kinds of abusive and hegemonic expression of touch that go too far and the repeated admonitions and deferments of the possibilities of the impressions of disability, disabled students and their teachers encounter each other in the small moments of their everyday relations. In some ways, the story of the *Magic Beads* (Nielsen-Fernlund, 2007), places these everyday moments in the foreground. For example, Lilian conceals rather than reveals both her growing anxiety about being assigned the task of ‘show and tell’ and the aspects of her precarious homelife that amplify her unease about the parts of herself that she would feel safe to share with an audience of her peers and teachers. When the day for Lilian’s ‘show and tell’ arrives, the colourful glass beads she brought from the women’s shelter, serve the purpose of deploying her imagination to escape, even for a little while, her own exposure to the detrimental impacts of abusive touch. Mrs. Sharek reads aloud, Lilian’s presentation of her magic beads: “If there is a monster in my closet, I can turn my beads into a snake which eat the monster” (Nielsen-Fernlund, 2007). Lilian shares the ways her magic beads help her escape into fantastical places. The story happily ends when Lilian’s fantastical tales result in her inclusion into the classroom through invitations of friendship from peers who also want to use the magic beads. Mrs. Sharek asks: “What happens next?” Scott replies: “They got so happy and they want to get some and see what they could do with it” (Audio Transcription, Field Notes, November 27, 2017).

There is an allure here in the ‘magic’ of Lilian’s magic beads, that invite escape into other worlds whereby the harms and risks of touch can be avoided. Escape, if only as a
temporary respite, is possible through the reach of the human imaginary and its manifestation in our embodied encounters. These kinds of moments are evident in the everyday moments in Mrs. Robinson’s classroom whereby Haron, Bruno, Bella, Scott, Lance and Steven engage in their own kind of magical play whereby adults are not welcome. One such example, occurred on the afternoon Mrs. Robinson’s class was making potato and leek soup in the staffroom kitchen (Field Notes, October 24, 2017). While the students are waiting for their turn to peel potatoes and chop leeks, they start dabbing. They start with the original dab and then make and show each other their own variations. I am specifically told that dabbing is for kids only and that no adults are allowed. When I go home that day, I look up what a ‘dab’ is with the help of google. Wikipedia offers the following definition:

Dabbing, or the dab, is a simple dance move in which a person drops the head into the bent crook of a slanted arm, typically while raising the opposite arm in a parallel direction but out straight; both arms are pointed to the side and at an upward angle. Since 2015, it has also been used as a gesture of triumph or playfulness, becoming a youthful American dance fad and Internet meme. The move looks similar to someone sneezing into the “inside” of their elbow. (Retrieved from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dab_(dance), September 3, 2018).

The act of dabbing with each other, also entails the process of boundary making whereby the disabled children in this class ask for their own space to reach out and connect with each other outside of the realm of adult involvement and interference. Significant here is even as they seek some even temporary form of escape from adult demands, the inclination to engage in embodied encounters as a way to connect with and relate to others remains integral to how touching and being touched is inhabited. Just like Lilian’s form of escape involved using magic to reach out to her peers, the participants in this study seek their own forms of escape that invariably find them in the midst of forging their own connections with each other.

According to Haraway (2016, p. 31): “Nothing is connected to everything; everything is connected to something.” Haraway rather succinctly suggests here that while living in relation to
human and non-human life is inescapable, touching and being touched necessarily has its limits. Perhaps what Haraway also alludes to here, is that one of the most harmful aspects of the ways in which the Western philosophy’s narrow conception of the human as a white, able-bodied, heterosexual male remains its inclination to extend and sustain its reach to every corner of the globe. “Man, and its over representation” (Wynter, 2003, p. 268), is emblematic of a touch and reach that has gone too far, for too long in too many places and spaces. The movement towards embodied ways of sensing and knowing is a refusal of such a reach that subsequently holds the possibilities of telling multiple stories whereby disability is no longer considered outside the narrow category of the human but rather, an integral part of a complex series of interconnections between varying human embodiments. In distinct yet linked ways, decolonial scholars Wynter (2003, 2015) and Mignolo (2011a), contend that human storytelling possibilities can thrive outside of “Man, and its over representation” (Wynter, 2003, p. 268). For example, Mignolo & Tlostanova (2006) suggest that one of the important contributions of border epistemology is its opening to the possibilities of pluri-versality as a refusal of the universalism of colonial western logics. According to Mignolo & Tlostanova (2006, p. 216): “One of the tasks of border thinking and the decolonial shift is to contribute to a pluriversal world in which many worlds can co-exist.” Wynter (2003, p. 328-329) offers the provocation for invention of a “new science” that would focus on the “study of the Word” and “how we come to experience ourselves as this or that genre/mode of being human.” Taken together the work of Mignolo & Tlostanova (2006) and Wynter (2003), point toward a complex and multi-faceted conception of embodied humanities that refuse the legacies of hegemonic power and the subsequent abuses of colonial western logics.
I wonder how the conceptions of becoming human through a conception of embodied sensing and knowing as articulated by scholars like Haraway (2016), Butler (2015, 2016), Mignolo (2011a) Titchkosky (2012) and Wynter (2003) might transform schooling practices and more specifically encounters between disabled students and their teachers. Even as I have focused in this chapter on troublesome aspects of abusive touch and the subsequent discomforts encountered by teachers and students in reading the story *Magic Beads* (Nielsen-Fernlund, 2007), throughout this chapter, I have also attempted to focus on the ways disabled students persist in reaching out in an effort to live in relation to their peers and teachers. This reaching out occurs perhaps despite or because of the disproportional risk of disabled peoples to tangible forms of physical abuse as well as intangible ways the hegemonic structures of normalcy leaves disabled children on the edge of conditional inclusion or outright exclusion. In part, this has entailed considering the ways participants are read as reaching out as out of place and at the wrong time. In part, this has also involved a pointing towards disabled students making connection with each other as a form of boundary making of their own while dabbing with each other. These readings of the touch of disability have endeavoured to convey the complexities of storytelling practices through embodied sensing and knowing that have simultaneously sought to trouble the figure of the normative subject and the ongoing orientation of schooling practices towards normalcy. Embodied sensing and knowing and the potential promise of its curricular implications, is not being offered here as a solution to the problem of normalcy. Rather, evoking storytelling practices that foreground the relations between varying human embodiments, is intended as a call to sit in the midst of the ethical conundrums of how to become differently human while refusing the hegemonic touch of colonial western logics and its worst abuses.
The touch of disability implicates considerations of precarity, discomfort and boundary making. The touch of disability also implicates the human in the embodiment of our interdependencies and the subsequent fragility of our relations with each other (Butler, 2015; Burke, 2008, 2014; Mitchell et al 2014; Titchkosky, 2012). As mentioned earlier, the phrase “hands off, don’t touch” and its variations are repeated with great frequency in the classroom, largely due to the impossibility of staying untouched. The touch of disability that serves as a reminder of human interdependencies occurs in myriad of small everyday gestures. As I mentioned earlier, it could be in an invitation to play at recess from Bella or to learn some of the sign language Bruno wants to teach me or in an invitation to engage in a staring contest with Steven. It could also be in the way I have come to know my spot on the carpet is between Haron and Bella as they hold my hands during lessons. It also involves noticing how any child that becomes upset or frustrated during a lesson moves immediately toward Ms. Voyant. Mrs. Robinson has chronic knee pain which makes the stairs up to the second floor of the classroom an experience that is slow and painful. When she sits in the classroom rocking chair to start the lesson, Lance and Scott take turns rubbing her knees. Mrs. Robinson calls it her “magic medicine” (Excerpts from Field Notes September 27, 2017- December 19, 2017). These moments of touch that emphasize the connections of interdependencies within a segregated special needs classroom occur alongside calls for “hands off” in a manner that questions and troubles the presence of touch even as it reaches out in non-hegemonic ways in classroom encounters between disabled students and their teachers.

Non-hegemonic embodiments of touching and being touched have a power of their own within the everyday moments of the classroom. The touch of disability reaches out and leaves its own impressions in ways that amplify the trouble and troubling hegemonic of normalcy while
also calling attention to how foregrounding embodied ways of sensing and knowing continues to leave the subject precariously exposed and vulnerable. Mrs. Robinson’s chronic knee pain leaves her exposed to the “magic medicine” of touch from other disabled embodiments represented here in the hands of Scott and Lance. They reach out, for a few brief seconds, as Mrs. Robinson’s wincing face relaxes. I wonder if it is the recognition that a wincing face represents an encounter with pain that initiates the motion of hands reaching out to knees. In some ways, it seems that the moment of first touch occurred before hands touched knees in a manner where I wonder how the touch of disability subsequently leaves its impressions without tangible touch. Through a stopping and wondering about the extent to which touching and being touched are not quite distinguishable from each other in a manner where humans become humans both despite and because of the vulnerabilities of our exposures amidst each other, I am guided here by the work of Butler (2015) and Burke (2014). I wonder here if the touch of disability is to leave its impression while refusing the hegemony of normalcy, how can touching and being touched reach far enough to reorient the human imaginary and human becoming, without risking the hubris of colonial western logics and its subsequent ongoing legacy of abuses. In other words, how might novice researchers like me engage in storytelling practices that treasure the touch of magic beads and magic medicine while also refusing to be fully captivated by the power of touch.

According to Butler (2015, p. 53): “I am not touched as I touch, and this noncoincidence is essential to me and to touch.” In other words, both despite and perhaps because of being shaped by the touch of social injustices embedded in the valorization of normalcy in public schooling, that there remain opportunities to refuse, trouble and reimagine our relations through a distinctly different relation to touch and more specifically a different relation to the touch of
disability. As Butler (2015), Shildrick (2000, 2015) and Burke (2008, 2014) remind us, ruptures, breaks and leakages are an integral and component part of refusing normative demands and finding ways to inhabit our vulnerabilities amidst each other while refusing to be captured by the mythic bounds of the neoliberal subject and its paradoxical insistence on its own hegemony. This is evident in everyday moments of the classroom while I make stories with disabled children and their teachers. For example, Mrs. Robinson could easily refuse the touch of the hands that reach out to rub her knees for a few brief moments. She could repeat the words that are very regularly repeated daily in public schools. She could say: “Hands off.” Yet, it seems that her wincing face has already touched before hands reach out to knees. Touch both makes and breaks the subjective self through and in our relations with each other (Butler, 2015). In conveying the risks to grounded conception of self-identity, Burke (2014) considers how Alzheimer’s touches not only the individual who has been diagnosed but their family and friends. “The fiction of an inviolable or unitary identity is disturbed… when parents cease to recognise their own children and children are forced to re-orient their own sense of self in the face of this violation of foundational intersubjective relationships” (Burke, 2014, p. 31). Reading Butler’s conception of the import of touch along with the example of Mrs. Robinson’s wincing face, Lance and Scott’s hands on soar knees as well as Burke’s (2014) dilemma of the risk of touch that undoes the self, indicates both the necessities and inescapable risks of the touch of disability. This makes touching and being touched integral to engaging in the kinds of storytelling practices that rewrite and reread human becoming amidst disability.

**Concluding Thoughts**

In engaging in a methodology of reading and being read in disabbling ways, this chapter has endeavoured to expose the trouble with touch within the context of the segregated special
needs classroom through three distinct yet linked moves. First, through the foregrounding of the story *Magic Beads* (Nielsen-Fernlund, 2007) and the subsequent discomforting responses from the disabled children and their teachers, I focused on confronting the abuses of touch implicit in the power imbalances that continue to disproportionally impact disabled peoples. This reading focused on the ways, normalcy continues to read disability not only as a problem but also as taken for granted that disproportional exposure to abuse, neglect and marginalization for disabled peoples are the way things are. Participating in the repetition of this story simultaneously risks sustaining the hegemonic status of normalcy even as I seek to confront and trouble the ongoing injustices of this particularly reading. Second, this chapter explored the impossibility of remaining untouched by disability. By evoking examples of how the touch of disability leaves its own impressions, this reading focused on the import of disability in reorienting the human imaginary through our embodied encounters. This reading evokes the possibilities of non-hegemonic and/or non-abusive touch and the ways such disabling touch is infused with its own power to resist, refuse and reimagine our relations outside of the normative demands of schooling. Last, there are the ongoing ethical conundrums of the precarity of being exposed to touch that is necessarily inescapable while also being weary of touch that reaches too far. How can touch be evoked in the making and telling of stories in ways that go far enough to work toward a reconfiguring of our social relations while also refusing the abuses of the touch that goes too far? What are the implications for our teaching and learning relationships in the midst of the touch of disability? As I near the end of this project, I remain touched enough by disability that questions continue to linger in ways that seem to carry no substantive resolutions. I continue to stop and wonder about the touch of disabling relationships.
Part V – Chapter 9: Conclusion

This study has focused on the question: how do encounters between teachers, students and the researcher within segregated special needs classrooms both perpetuate and resist the normalizing narrative of schooling? In exploring this question through engaging in participant observation of a Primary MID class and Primary LD class, the intention has been to inhabit this method as necessarily troubling by situating this method amidst a methodology I have referred to in this study as reading and being read in disabling ways. Through a dependence on my own interactions with participants as well as my own critical interpretive analysis, I have endeavoured to inhabit both a method and methodology that has sought to trouble normalcy while also, considering disability as integral to the reimagining of becoming human with each other. Thus, the methodology explored in this study has focused on three moves. First, it has been focused on demonstrating how the normalizing narrative of schooling persists in reading disability and disabled peoples as a problem in need of management and/or cure. The second move has involved, resisting, questioning and refusing readings of disability through a western ontological conception of normalcy. In part this kind of reading has endeavoured to demonstrate the transformative force of disability and disabled peoples in troubling normalcy. The third move of reading and being read in disabling ways has worked toward considering the kinds of stories inhabited in the classroom that work both within and against normalcy in ways that suggest what might be possible amidst our relations when disability is accounted for as integral to our human encounters.

As a practicing elementary school teacher, this project holds a particular resonance as it has provided me with the opportunity to question and reconsider long engrained practices that remain taken for granted in the everyday moments of teaching and learning. The normalizing
narrative of schooling remains pervasive in policies and practices that account for disability and disabled children in a manner that holds out the promise of conditional inclusion and continued experiences of exclusion while assuring lived realities of precarity for disabled peoples (Baker 2002, 2015; Slee 2008, 2013; Erevelles 2011a, 2013; Stephens & Cryle, 2017). As a practicing elementary teacher since 2002, I have encountered the impacts and impressions of a western onto-epistemological orientation so steeped in colonial logics that it remains impossible to ignore the trouble. As much as the normalizing narrative of schooling insists on its hegemony in a manner that persists in reading disability as a problem, disability continues to trouble such readings (Titchkosky, 2011, 2007). This trouble is evident within my own experiences with families who are reluctant to sign a seemingly endless series of consent forms for access to services such as speech and language support, occupational therapy, Autism support services, only to encounter such services as yet another mode of scrutiny and insistence of experts in orienting disabled children towards demonstrating progress in the direction of normalcy. Within this context disabled children encounter the teaching and learning relationship as an invitation to precarious belonging whereby the humanity of disabled embodiments remains in question.

This lived reality for disabled children and their families has persistently haunted this study in ways that I have sought to address by contributing to the amplification of the dilemmas of research practice as well as teaching practice. My intention has been to contribute to the broader conversation about how disabling relationships remain relevant and salient in endeavouring to reorient both research and teaching practices. Thus, the methodology of reading and being read in disabling ways pursued in this study, places in the foreground the extent to which disabling relationships are embedded in the normalizing narrative of schooling. This study used concepts such as contrapuntal engagement (Chowdhry, 2007; Said, 1994, 2003), narrative
entanglement (Wynter, 1984, 2003, 2015; Burke, 2014) and cripistemological/glocal embodiments (Mitchell et al, 2014; Johnson & McRuer, 2014; Halberstam, 2011) to not only confront and question the ways the normalizing narrative of schooling continues to have detrimental impacts on disabled peoples but, also, to contribute to storytelling amidst disability lived differently. In this sense, a methodology of reading and being read in disabling ways is a mode of exploring disabling relationships that also places in the foreground methods and strategies of reading orientations towards normalcy as troubling while inhabiting disability as integral to reimagining our becoming human with each other. In other words, disabling relationships in our teaching and learning encounters is both committed to delinking (Mignolo, 2011) to the colonial western logics and its subsequent dehumanizing practices while simultaneously endeavouring to contribute to a new set of string figures (Haraway, 2016) that conceptualizes disability as integral to becoming human.

The purpose of this final chapter is to consider the potential contributions of this study to researching with disabled children within the context of elementary public school settings in a manner that endeavours to convey the necessity of reconfiguring the disabling relationships that remain a component part of current teaching practices. I consider here how inhabiting a methodological orientation that is supported by an eclectic set of concepts, offers opportunities to contribute to research as a practice of refusal, disruption, questioning and reimagining. This concluding chapter includes three parts. The first part will consider the necessity of foregrounding the import of inhabiting research relationships as inescapably troubling. Significant here, is stopping and wondering about how to engage in the practice of research while remaining cognizant of the risks of the power imbalances that historically have led to the exploitation of marginalized peoples and disabled peoples in particular (Smith, 2012; Acker-
Verney, 2016). Here I offer an overview of my research relationships with participants and the subsequent opportunities to perpetually engage in research practice as an ethical dilemma that risks harm. The second part of this chapter will consider the significance of the ongoing work of decentering the normalizing narrative of schooling through disability. I offer an overview here, of the ways this study has inhabited a methodology that contributes to the questioning, erosion and critique of the conception of the ‘normal’ subject along with the western onto-epistemologies that persist in valorizing normalcy. Third, I will stop and wonder about the import of making new string figures (Haraway, 2016), by which I mean contributing to the making of distinctly different constellation of stories, as a way to reimagine disability as integral to becoming human amidst each other. I contend here that there remain fruitful possibilities in reconfiguring our teaching and learning relationships through a conception of the human amidst disability. Overall, I aim to show that this study offers contributions to the field of social justice education more broadly as well as being specifically relevant to elementary educators and researchers in the fields of disability studies, poststructural feminisms, decolonial studies and postcolonial studies.

**Embedded in the Ethical Dilemmas of Research Relationships**

Something I have struggled with throughout this research project is the very real risk of participating in the legacy of harm that has justifiably generated weariness, suspicion and doubt around the intentions and purpose of research (Acker-Varney, 2016; Alcoff, 2009; Mac Lure, 2009; Mazzei & Jackson, 2016, 2012; Smith, 2012; Stephens & Cryle, 2017; Tuck & Yang 2014a, 2014b). This is a particularly salient concern in relation to research relationships with marginalized groups such as disabled peoples who despite repeated struggles for access in their communities remain disproportionally at risk of segregation and isolation (Acker-Varney, 2016;
Curran & Runswick-Cole, 2014; Adams & Erevelles, 2017; Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012; Stephens & Cryle, 2017). As I consider some of the ways I endeavoured in this project to minimize the risks of harm while also focusing on contributing to the academic/research community, I return to a quote by Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2012, p. 53) who provocatively ask: “Are we in danger of empowering dangerous readings that create pathological versions of childhood?” Through this question, Goodley & Runswick-Cole (2012), place in the foreground the ever-present risks and the subsequent responsibilities involved in telling other people’s stories. It seems that the risk of harm never quite dissipates, and in fact benefits from remaining in the foreground, especially as novice researchers like me engage in research practices with the intention of challenging accepted norms and practices both methodologically and onto-epistemologically.

It seems that even using the term marginalized to describe disability and disabled peoples, already leaves this project mired in the potential risks of “empowering dangerous readings that create pathological versions of childhood” (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012, p. 53). How might novice researchers like me, engage in work that aims toward reimagining becoming human with each other differently, while also acknowledging the risks of potential harm that is attendant with addressing the lived realities of disabled children, who encounter schooling in particular and lives in their communities more generally, as at best an experience of conditional inclusion? In my specific context of situating my research within two segregated special needs classrooms, the risks of further contributing to research that has scrutinized, pathologized and exploited the experiences of disabled children and their teachers, remained a primary, unavoidable and inescapable concern throughout my study. For example, several of the disabled children who participated in this research project preferred to communicate in nonverbal
or minimally verbal ways. What does the much extolled as well as critiqued practice of research as an expression of voices who have been historically marginalized mean in this context? What happens when centering voice in research in fact sustains the mechanisms of marginalization and exclusion when voice becomes a performance of the hegemonic discourses of normalcy (Alcoff, 2009, Mac Lure 2009; Mazzei & Jackson 2012, 2016; Mazzei, 2007, 2003)? Similarly, to what extent is the centering of voice complicit in the (re)centering of the demands of the neoliberal western subject in its aims to sustain its own hegemony? While in the midst of my research relationships with my participants, these questions among several others provoked me to wonder about how to convey my research encounters amidst disabled peoples and disability differently.

One of the ways, I aimed toward decentering voice and subsequently decentering the subjective self in this study was through inhabiting research as a contrapuntally engaged, narratively entangled and cripistemologically/ glocally embodied process within which this research project considers itself one component part of an affective assemblage. In other words, this study does not claim to represent the voice of disabled peoples or, in the case of this study, disabled children and their teachers. Neither does this study claim agency on behalf of the standpoint of a disabled identity or identities. Rather, through the practice of a contrapuntally engaged methodology, this study has endeavoured to refuse to centre any voices, including the voice of this researcher, in a manner that seeks to question the normative demands of research while also foregrounding the import disability in becoming human. For example, there are many instances throughout this study whereby silences, voices and nonverbal gestures trouble each other in ways that question the definitive meaning of voice in research practice. One such example is evident near the end of chapter 7, when Mesan, Nadar and I, are exposed in a vulnerable moment. This occurred during an exchange between us when Mesan and Nadar
express in verbal and nonverbal ways a different sense of context, place and timing of both stories and play than the ones that I verbalize through my voice as commonsensical. In this sense, the clock, the window with the view of the playground, Mesan’s gestures, my verbal expressions of confusion and Nadar’s intervention, work in tandem with each other to convey the constraints of timing (e.g. the teacher is about to start her lesson) and place (e.g. Mesan’s response to my question about his vacation will have to wait until recess time outside) to the kinds of meanings and stories that are tethered together in this study. Therefore, in addition to offering opportunities for disabled children like Mesan to be represented as an integral part of the meaning making process in this study, a contrapuntally engaged methodology that endeavours to contribute to the decentering of voice in research practice, also exposes the partiality of knowledge claims as voices, silences and bodily gestures are read alongside each other.

Contributing to the work of other scholars (Alcoff, 2009, Mac Lure 2009; Mazzei & Jackson 2012, 2016; Mazzei, 2007, 2003) that has troubled the centrality of voice in research specifically, and in the conception of the category of the human more broadly, has been a component part of how my study has sought to inhabit the theoretical and methodological dilemmas of research practice. In part, the troubling of voice in this study has been an ethical move intended to foreground the import of research relationships and more specifically, remaining attentive to how power circulates in research relationships. Thus, in many ways the troubling of voice has been a way to wonder about what it means to participate in research and the subsequent risks of knowledge production (Smith, 2012; Mitchell & Snyder 2003, 2015; Mac Lure, 2009; Alcoff, 2009). The troubling of voice has also been significant to the methodology of this study as it has generated the conditions to read multiple voices, silences, gestures and movements both together and a part in a manner that has troubled the hegemony of any one
mode of human meaning making. For the purposes of my study, this move has posed both necessary ethical challenges, as well as offered potentially fruitful opportunities to engage in research relationships with disabled children in a manner that read their gestures and silences as integral to telling stories differently. Also, the troubling of the centrality of voice has been part of my efforts to contribute to the theoretical turn endeavouring to refuse, resist and subsequently reimagine what it might mean to become human with each other both within and against the hegemonic force of “Man, and its over representation” (Wynter, 2003, p. 268). My contribution to this theoretical move has been dependent on tethering together the work of scholars in the fields of disability studies, decolonial studies, postcolonial studies and post-structural feminisms in a manner that has intended to honour the distinctive character of these fields while also intermingling with them in ways that aimed to demonstrate the possibility of what Mignolo and Tlostanova (2006, p.216) refer to as “pluriversal” and what Chowdhry (2007), via the work of Said, refers to as contrapuntal engagement. Thus, questioning the centrality of voice has been ethically, methodologically and theoretically significant for the work of my study.

My efforts in this study to decentre voice have included endeavouring to decentre my own voice. In part this has been evident in this study through my declared dependencies on the impressions and provocations from both participants and the theorists and scholars who have helped to shake me out of my own complacency in order to ask questions of myself about how our teaching and learning practices continue to sustain practices of exclusion that disproportionally impact students marked, labeled and/or diagnosed as disabled. Throughout this study, I have likely overused the words, followed, guided and supported to describe my particular relations to the scholars that have transformed how I have come to attend to the small everyday moments that comprise classroom learning. In alerting the reader to how and who I
follow, where I am guided and whom I depend on for support, I only seek to amplify my sense of responsibility to the kinds of knowledges I am both questioning and reproducing. In other words, even as I have endeavoured throughout this study to question and resist the mechanisms of capture enacted by the normalizing narrative of schooling, I have to perpetually confront the ways that I too have become captured by particular kinds of provocations. I am provoked and, in many ways, captured by the kinds scholarly, philosophical and research methodologies that situate themselves in critical relation to western colonial logics in a manner that foregrounds the import of disabling relationships. Therefore, in an effort to decentre my own voice and in order to leave room for distinctly different kinds of stories, I am admittedly simultaneously captured while also resisting capture. Engaging in a study with the express purpose of decentering voice, leaves me and this study exposed, vulnerable and dependent upon its entangled social relations.

In addition to contributing to a decentering of voice in research practice, another aim of this study has been to inhabit participant observation as a troubling method. Therefore, the partiality and constraints of this study are also integral to amplifying the trouble with the method of participant observation that this study inhabits. Unlike numerous educational policy documents (Learning for All, 2013) that continue to convey the import of classroom observation as an objective method of monitoring, assessing and evaluating student progress towards learning goals in the curriculum, I inhabit participant observation in this study as a necessarily partial and constrained practice. Pointing out the necessity of inhabiting participant observation as a partial and constrained practice, is significant for several reasons. It is intended to question classroom observation as one of the ongoing mechanisms through which disabled children continue to be monitored, scrutinized and as Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2012) indicate, pathologized. This form of long ingrained practice of engaging in observation as part of
pathologizing disabled students in my own teaching career is called into question in this study through my own refusals to read disability as problem in need of solutions that orientations toward normalcy are supposed to provide (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012; Titchkosky, 2007, 2011). In questioning the seeming neutrality of observation as a mode of knowledge gathering, I also aim here to contribute to the work of scholars whom have already demonstrated the trouble with claiming observers can ever know the whole story and/or be neutral transmitters of information (Angrosino & de Perez, 2000; Jones et al, 2010; Gabel et al, 2013; Smith, 2012). As a practicing elementary school teacher, contributing to the work that questions the role of observation as a taken for granted ‘best practice’ has been particularly transformative in ways, that I hope prompt and provoke other educators into questioning the role of this practice in sustaining the normalizing narrative of schooling in elementary schools.

In inhabiting a form of participant observation that is intentionally partial and constrained, my aim has been to keep in the foreground the import of ethical research relationships. When I think about defining the term ethical research relationships as it relates to my project, I am guided by the work of scholars and researchers who inhabit the field of indigenous studies (Simpson, 2007; Smith, 2012; Tuck & Yang 2014a, 2014b), disability studies (Curran & Runswick-Cole, 2014; Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012, 2013; Snelgrove, 2005) as well as feminist poststructuralisms (Jones et al, 2010; Mac Lure et al, 2010; Mac Lure, 2013; Sellers, 2010). In part, participating in ethical research relationships has involved sharing stories about our moments together within a particular duration of time (once a week for 20-30 minutes during September – December 2017) for a specific purpose (to participate in readings about small group instruction in reading). This constraint of time and duration was particularly significant for my context, as it assured participants that disclosures made prior to the start of this
research study (I had pre-existing relationships with participants) or, outside the time frame of the 20-30 minute audio recording of small group lessons, as well as any disclosure that were made after the formal end of the research project (I continued to visit weekly), remained out of bounds for this study. These constraints were emphasized in both formal and informal process of consent (see Appendices) with the intention of emphasizing, the concerted efforts of this project to refuse to exploit the experiences of disabled peoples. In this way, part of the ethical research relationship that I evoke here follows the work of Tuck and Yang (2014a, p. 239, 2014b) and an approach they refer to as “a methodology of refusal” whereby foregrounding constraints on knowledge production calls into question knowledge making practices by researchers that exploit and expose participants.

Therefore, I contend that part of engaging in ethical research relationships necessitates a methodology that is explicitly partial and constrained. This is evident in this study both in its commitment to a contrapuntally engaged methodology that endeavours to refuse the hegemony of any one voice as well as through the trouble that is amplified in research while using the method of participant observation. In addition to questioning the role of observation as a neutral transmitter of knowledge through placing constraints on time, frequency and duration of moments that are the focus of this study, another component part of endeavouring to engage in ethical research relationships involves a consideration of the partiality of this study. There are two key considerations that I evoke here in further seeking to define what ethical research relationships represent within the context of this study. The first, is my partiality toward sustaining my relationships with participants. My relationships with participants pre-existed and continued outside of the timeframe of this study. Due to my own commitments to participants that exceeded the scope of this study, the practice of research only amplified my concerns
Regarding sustaining ethical research relationships. For me this represented a commitment to step gently into the role of researcher and the potential risks of the power imbalances between us. For example, even after parents had formally signed consent for their children to participate in this research study, participants in this study had the option not to participate for a day or series of days. The periodic absences of some participants from the small group lessons in reading are indicative of both formal and informal arrangements (see Appendices) between me and participants to determine the frequency of their participation within this study. One example of how this arrangement manifested itself is evident in chapter 6, where I focus on one example that includes five of the six students who have consented to participate in the study are participating in the lesson about reading codes. Within the same chapter, I refer to another instance of small group reading of Candyland where three students participated. For a variety of reasons, throughout my weekly visits, the number of participants in the study varied. This variability is accounted for in my commitment to participants to foreground sustaining our relationships with each other in a manner that remains conscious of the risks of the power imbalances between the researcher and participants as well as between adults and children.

I am, it seems, perpetually concerned in both my encounters with participants as well as the analysis and recounting of those encounters, how power circulates amidst our relationships and what that circulation simultaneously indicates and refuses to indicate about the who (subjectivities), what (knowledges) and where (complex implications of place, space and embodiment). In part, this concern with the dilemma of power imbalances that remain a component part of research practice, has been amplified by the method of participant observation situated in a methodology that endeavours to thread together multiple perspectives in reading and being read in disabling ways. I have outlined how the partial and restrained mode of participate
observation pursued in this study is intended to contribute to a decentering of the subjective self, specifically in this case, me as the researcher. Invariably, I failed in ways that can be regarded, in following Halberstam (2011) and Mitchell et al (2014), as productive and indicative of pertinent contributions that may support the work of other scholars and researchers. Perhaps one of the most evident failures I display in this study is the failure to completely know or convey what I know about participants. For example, in chapter 5 and chapter 6, I describe to distinct moments during the research where there was such a flurry of movement between disabled children and their teachers that I found it impossible to notice and/or capture everything that was happening. This really foregrounds both the failure of this observer’s gaze and the subsequent confrontation with the limits of I what can definitively know or claim to know through my experiences amidst disability. Thus, one of the productive failures emphasized in studies like mine, is the questioning of totalizing knowledge claims that depict the gaze of the observer as all knowing.

This failure serves to foreground how embodied ways of sensing interrupt and disrupt the seeming taken for granted association with eyes and knowing. Often it is not what I saw during the course of my study that was troubling (e.g. a teacher reading a story, a child answering a question) rather, it is what I was sensing (e.g. an awkward laugh, a bodily cringe, a nervous stomach) that helped me to notice how classrooms, and in my case segregated classrooms with disabled children, persist in sustaining the hegemony of normalcy. These moments when the import of bodily sensations trouble observation as the often taken for granted association between seeing and knowing, also represent moments whereby embodied sensations guide the process of troubling what I think I know. Butler (2015, p. 6), refers to these kinds of moments where repetitions of the normative order are disrupted as “break or ruptures.” Mac Lure (2013) refers to these moments in research as moments of wonder where meaning is made due to the
unique combination of human and nonhuman variables in a given moment and place. Titchkosky (2011, p. 129) refers this as “the politics of wonder.” These kinds of moments trouble the hegemonic correlation between seeing and knowing that for me also suggests the import of attending to embodied sensations as integral to troubling knowledge claims and engaging in different kinds of conversations about what engaging in participant observation can or should do in research practice. Similarly, in foregrounding the import of other bodily senses, it has also been my aim to contribute to the troubling of the observer’s gaze and its hegemonic claims to knowledge.

Throughout my work in this study, troubling normalcy comes to be inextricably linked with the ethical conundrums embedded in research relationships that foreground the import of disability and disabled peoples. This is in large part due to my focus on how the circulation of power in unjust and hegemonic ways risks sustaining mechanisms of exploitation in the practices of research as well as in the practices of teaching and learning. Thus far, I have worked towards outlining some of my key concerns as a novice researcher as well as how my project has focused on addressing those concerns through inhabiting the justifiably troubling method of participant observation and through situating that method in a methodology I have referred to in this study as reading and being read in disabling ways. One of my intentions is for my work to contribute to the work already initiated in several critical fields about how to trouble research practices and in particular practices that perpetually risk exploiting experiences of participants and/or as Goodley & Runswick- Cole (2012, p. 53) consider, “creat[ing] pathological versions of childhood.” For me this represented my commitment to engage in a study I have described here as both constrained and partial as a way to prompt a sense of wonderment that might offer opportunities to read disabled children and their teachers as integral to storytelling/researching practices. In
the next part of this chapter, I will focus on outlining some of the contributions my study has endeavoured to make in relation to troubling normalcy through disability. Specifically, I consider here how subjectivities, onto-epistemologies and varying embodiments encounter each other in everyday classroom moments in ways that reveal the pervasive impacts of the normalizing narrative of schooling as well as the ways such impacts are refused, questioned and resisted.

Troubling the Normalizing Narrative of Schooling

This study has focused on exploring encounters between participants and this researcher as well as participants with each other. This study has also focused on how we as a group encounter the normative demands of schooling. One of the contributions my study offers is readings of how the normalizing narrative of schooling is simultaneously sustained, resisted and questioned as a component part of the affective assemblage within segregated special needs classrooms. In this regard I have been inspired by the work of Sellers (2010) in some instances in both attempting to depict the movement of such encounters in the various chapters (see for example Figure 2 and/ or 3) as well as trying to describe such experiences as part of what happens in a small group setting during audio recorded portions of my research visits. Through many of the examples of these small moment classroom encounters, voices are undeniably present yet, no one voice, or series of voices, ever tells the whole story. Just as significant in reading these moments are the combination of silences and nonverbal gestures that often question, and trouble taken for granted readings of disabled children and their teachers and the extent to which orientations towards normalcy impress upon all of us. One such example is evident in chapter 3, where I describe my encounter with participants when I endeavoured to engage and ultimately failed at having most of the participants in my study select their own pseudonyms. The teacher and teacher assistants in the Primary MID class indicated that they
trusted me to choose their pseudonyms. The disabled children in the classroom at the time responded with shoulder shrugs. The shoulder shrugs were integral to the meaning making of the moment as they made me wonder then, as I do now, what might their responses have been if I had taken the time to orient all of my participants to the import self-selecting their own pseudonyms. I wonder still if the shoulder shrugs in that moment indicated an ambivalence towards having a say in the process of selecting their own pseudonyms and/or if the shoulder shrugs indicated their uncertainty toward explicitly questioning their teachers. The methodology of reading and being read in disabling ways, inhabits these moments where shoulder shrugs become an integral part of questioning the authority of this researcher and/or teachers.

Throughout this study, I have wondered about how to confront and question the impacts of the kinds of knowledges that sustain processes of categorizing and labeling that justify readings of disabled children as separate from ‘normal’ children. I decided early on in my study (see Chapter 3) to refer to participants as disabled children. In part, this decision was indicative of the limited instances of explicit disclosure from participants about the ways in which they have been labeled by the education system. In part, this decision was also indicative of a troubling of the nearly mandated phrase in education of persons with disabilities (PWDs). Scholars such as Titchkosky (2001) and Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2013) have outlined the ways the phrase PWDs continues to read the human as separate from disability and how this separation subsequently generates an imperviousness to the possibility of human transformation through inhabiting disability as embedded in the social. Even as I have repeatedly used the term disabled children and/or disabled children and their teachers, I have also been endeavouring to trouble the conception of the western subject by suggesting the impossibility of definitively pinning down the identities of participants. For example, much of Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 offer
examples that exposes the trouble with naming, categorizing and labeling in relation to sustaining the hegemony of normalcy. There is an undeniable tension here between the naming practices I have enacted in my study and my own subsequent discomfort/ concerns with these practices and their potentially detrimental impacts. How can naming practices be refused, questioned and resisted while I simultaneously depend on naming and categorizing practices to undo what has be done?

In taking back and reconceptualizing the term crip, McRuer (2006) also traces the way queer has been transformed to represent pride in the refusal of heteronormative demands through the work of numerous scholars and activists. McRuer’s (2006) work in conceptualizing crip theory serves as a reminder that meanings of categories, names, labels and identities can be reoriented and/or reimagined and thus serve the purpose of transforming the stories we live through and with each other. When defining crip theory McRuer (2006, p. 31) states: “in contrast to an able-bodied culture that holds out the promise of a substantive (but paradoxically always elusive) ideal, crip theory would resist delimiting the kinds of bodies and abilities that are acceptable or that will bring about change.” I take McRuer’s work here as a provocation to persist in contributing not only to the troubling of normative categories but also to the transformation of how disability is read and encountered in everyday schooling practices. In other words, if normalcy continues to read disability as a problem in need of a solution and/or cure, the purpose of my study is not only to question or refuse such a reading but, to offer readings of disability and specifically disabled children that demonstrate their integral role in reimagining what it means to become human with each other. In this instance, I am thinking of an example from chapter 4, where Bruno has a moment of wondering about who he is and how that is connected to where he is from. A disabled child that is also Jewish and Korean. Bruno is
also from Toronto. His subjective self is comprised of many true things (Michalko, 2002) that compose his contrapuntally engaged and narratively entangled way of being in the world amidst his encounters with the similarly and distinctly entangled lives of his fellow classmates and teachers. Bruno’s way of being in the world is subsequently indicative of how a component part of reading disability differently entails reading disability alongside other practices of naming and knowing as integral to troubling normalcy and reimagining what it means to become human with each other.

I am discomforted by my own participation in naming and categorizing practices even as I recognize the inescapable necessity of contributing to the work of troubling the normalizing narrative of schooling through breaking with current conceptions in order to reimagine new ones. Therefore, I hope that my study demonstrates the significant role of disability and in my specific instance, disabled children in undoing the hegemonic grip of normalcy while also stringing together new readings through different kinds of storytelling practices. The different kinds of storytelling practices that I am referring to here, offer the possibility of telling stories without a main protagonist and/or subjective centre. Similarly, even though I repeatedly refer to the trouble with normalcy, normalcy per se does not reside in any particular individual and/or antagonist through which any one person can be depicted as the problem. Rather, I have endeavoured to demonstrate how you and I and us, have come to be enchanted by normalcy in both implicit and explicit ways, in a manner that requires confronting the normative socio-cultural context we are embedded in, so that you and I and us, can find ways to support each other in enacting various disenchantments. In evoking the ways, the normalizing narrative of schooling acts as a form of enchantment and the subsequent necessity of disenchantment, I am guided by the work of Wynter (1987) and her contention that the seemingly powerful spell cast by colonial western
logics and its ongoing detrimental impacts, are in the process of being undone. This work of disenchantment is not being accomplished by any one particular subject and/or strand of critical discourse. Rather, acts of disenchantment with normalcy are occurring in small everyday moments through our encounters with each other.

Theoretically, this follows the work of Halberstam (2011), Walcott (1994, 2016), Mazzei and Jackson (2016, 2012) and Titchkosky (2011) who demonstrate how attending to theory’s presence in small everyday moments subsequently troubles taken for granted practices. In endeavouring to enact a methodology that worked to question the normalizing narrative of schooling, stopping and wondering about encounters that might otherwise taken for granted, focusing on the small moments proved particularly fruitful. For example, in chapter five I describe a moment in the Primary LD classroom that I refer to as passing it around. There is a lot of movement in this moment. Some of this movement can be read as sustaining normalcy while other aspects of this movement questions and disrupts normative curricular demands. On this day when disabled children are oriented toward learning about plants and seeds (Audio Transcript, Field Notes, October 13, 2017), Mrs. Robinson’s lesson can be read as attempting to reinforce concepts that sustain the hegemony of normalcy. These concepts include for example: claims of ownership (e.g. the vegetables belong to Mrs. Robinson and they come from a farm which belongs to someone else), the valorization of the human as a producer and consumer (e.g. the farmer grows vegetables that are for sale), non-human life is valued only to the extent to which it serves human utility (e.g. Mrs. Robinson explains the purpose and human use of each vegetable). The conceptions of ownership, production and consumption are taken for granted as describing what it means to be human. Unspoken in this lesson, are the distinctly different valuations of the human based on their “productive capacity” (Erevelles, 2000, p. 42) that disproportionately
impact disabled people within a neoliberal structure that sustains the colonial logics of “Man, and its over representation” (Wynter, 2003, p. 268). This orientation of disabled children towards these assumed qualities of normalcy (e.g. owner, producer, consumer), occurs in the seemingly ordinary moment of reading the cycle of a seed. Thus, attending to this small moment exposes the efforts to keep students oriented towards the normalizing narrative of schooling. It also reveals the ways that disabled students themselves interact with each other and non-human life to disrupt the story of normalcy.

In briefly reviewing this example from chapter 5, I wanted to show how sustaining and disrupting the normalizing narrative of schooling can be read as occurring simultaneously in everyday classroom encounters. In offering this reading, I follow (Wynter, 1987, p. 268) in contending the import of the kinds of stories we make with each other and subsequently pass on in ways that sustain the enchantments of “Man, and its over representation.” This kind of work includes asking difficult questions about the forms of resisting normalcy that paradoxically reinforce and sustain the normalizing narrative of schooling as it reforms its hegemonic force. Thus, another one of my aims in this study has been to wonder about how the normalizing narrative of schooling manages to persist in sustaining its hegemony despite or perhaps because of the numerous breaks and ruptures that also persists in repeatedly demonstrating the ways in which it remains routed/rooted through unjust western colonial logics. Whether its through the story of how seeds grow or through learning about computer coding by following a sequence of direction through a path, daily encounters with curriculum perpetually keep disabled children and their teachers focused on developing “productive capacity of future workers” (Erevelles, 2000, p. 42). Therefore, while the disabled children in this study found ways to disrupt and
trouble the pervasive curriculum orientations that assumes having more, knowing more and doing more is always better, must be continually questioned and troubled.

Disabling Relationships and the Reimagining of Becoming Human

How might questioning, resisting and working to trouble normalcy become something other than a seeming never ending struggle against the ways colonial western logics find new mechanisms to sustain their hegemony? How might the stories we tell (e.g. curriculum practices) to and with disabled and nondisabled children evoke the possibilities of becoming human that are distinctly different from the production of neoliberal subjects and the attendant adherence to sustaining heterosexual, white-male, able-bodied power? How might inhabiting disability differently help teachers and students to find ways to become human differently too? My encounters with disabled children and their teachers along with my encounters with the work of scholars and philosophers that are broadly linked through their interest in social justice, has made the foregrounding of these questions salient for me and my work. This study represents a small and admittedly partial contribution towards the much needed efforts to transform our relationships amidst disability and subsequently transform what it means to become human. I have repeatedly emphasized the small and partial nature of my project for three reasons. First, I am guided here by the work of scholars such as Ahmed, (2006), Halberstam (2011), Sellers (2010), Walcott (1994, 2016), Titchkosky (2007, 2011) and Mitchell et al (2014) who convey the import of noticing small everyday interactions as a critical response that both reorients and refutes the hegemonic orientation of normalcy as moving upward and rightward. Second, in following the provocations from these scholars, I am also prompted to follow the provocations from my participants and the ways in which their everyday encounters with each other suggest that becoming human amidst disability offers tangible examples of what it might mean to inhabit
each other’s lives in contrapuntally engaged ways. Third, I hope that the small and partial scope of this study, is regarded as an invitation and provocation to commit to the work of troubling normalcy while reimagining becoming human amidst disability.

I have repeatedly used the phrase or variations of the phrase, reimagining becoming human amidst disability, as my way to suggest that by the intentional omission of disability from categorizing the human in colonial western logics, any transformation of what it means to become human entails inhabiting disability and the critical ways in which it foregrounds encounters with the varying human embodiments as tangibly vulnerable and precarious. Becoming human amidst disability invites the possibility of learning from and with disabled peoples and in the case of my study, disabled children. Throughout this study, I have suggested that disabled children who prefer to communicate with gestures contribute to meaning making processes in ways that challenge the hegemony of voice as well as current onto-epistemological orientations that assumes having a voice is hierarchically superior to the work of silences and gestures. Some examples of the import of gestures and silences in my study are evident in the moment in chapter 6 when students in the Primary MID classroom taught me how to play their version of Candyland. In the version of Candyland, we played together, the motion of play was no longer oriented towards a race against others that started at the bottom and reached the top. Rather, the motion of play was oriented towards zigzagging encounters with other players that neither insisted on winners or losers. In another instance in chapter 7, the Primary MID students silently demonstrated their unwillingness to play the part of bad pirates. These examples are indicative of the ways gestures and silences leave their own impressions in a manner that troubles the hegemonic status of voice while also suggesting the limits of what any one voice can claim to know. Thus, the phrase becoming human amidst disability, is intended to foreground
hope in the possibilities of reconceptualizing the category of the human through finding ways to reorient our social relations in our daily encounters with varying embodiments.

Therefore, the provocation to reimagine what it means to become human amidst disability, offers a reading of disability that exposes the necessity of human vulnerability and precarity through embodied encounters with each other. My encounters with disabled children and their teachers involve confronting the limits to what I think I know and who I think I am as the conditions of my becoming shift and transform. How could I ever play Candyland or any other of the numerous oriented children’s games without evoking the tangible memory of how Nadar, Mesan, Kirby, Salam, Rick and William showed me how they change the rules of the game? How could I not be perpetually troubled by the stereotypical image of the pirate as both disabled and monstrous after encountering the way students in the Primary MID classroom silently disengaged from enacting the role of bad pirates during a school spirit day? Invariably these encounters have left their impressions in ways that not only trouble the hegemony of normalcy but suggest that disabled readings offer opportunities to live distinctly different narratively entangled lives. Rather than pathologizing and/or labeling embodied differences as a mechanism of sustaining normalcy, it might be time to consider what happens when becoming human amidst disability foregrounds our dependencies and vulnerabilities as a component part of social relations as well as teaching and learning practices. Invariably for me, this evokes the work of post-structural feminist scholars such as Haraway (2016) and Butler (2004, 2015) as well as the work of disability scholars such as Burke (2014), Shildrick (2000, 2015) and Mitchell et al (2014) in a manner that focuses on the import of embodied encounters with differences that tangibly transforms how stories are read, told and formed.
The move towards vulnerability and precarity in many ways acknowledges the disproportional impacts of both within the current western onto-epistemological structure. This move also follows the work of numerous scholars, who claim as Haraway (2016, p. 5) does, that: “bounded individualism in its many flavours in science, politics, and philosophy has finally become unavailable to think with, truly no longer thinkable, technically or any other way.” If the stories we tell disabled and nondisabled children about the bounded individual who paradoxically has an apparent boundless potential to produce and consume, is as Haraway (2016) suggests no longer thinkable, then finding ways to tell children different stories about the import of being bound to a myriad of distinctly different and varying human embodiments becomes increasingly more significant. How might teaching and learning occur within a context where disabled and nondisabled children are focused on our inescapable dependencies to each other and non-human life? Through asking this question, I am not trying to evoke the imagining of some kind of panacea. The normative demands of colonial western logics have generated too much injustice and harm that subsequently cannot be ignored and whose consequences continue to reverberate on both a local and global scale. I ask this question as a way of wondering about the numerous challenges, uncertainties and ethical conundrums entailed in reading, telling and forming the kinds of stories that thrive amidst disabled and nondisabled embodiments. Therefore, reimagining the human and/or inhabiting the possibilities of becoming human differently amidst disability, for me is tethered to the risks of conceptualizing the self as inescapably vulnerable, exposed and precarious.

What does that mean for how researchers might inhabit their research relationships? What does that mean for how disabled students and their teachers might come to be oriented to each other and toward knowledges differently? These questions as well as many others continue
to linger around and in this project. My aim as a novice researcher in this study has been to both contribute to the work of existing scholarship while also suggesting that my small, partial and constrained study depends upon the continued work of many others from a variety of critical fields and scholarly interests. In practicing a methodology of reading and being read in disabling ways in this study, my aim has been to contribute both to a questioning of current research methods as well as current teaching and learning practices in elementary schools, as those practices pertain to the exclusion and/or conditional inclusion of disabled children. Along the way, I have been candid about my own failures as a way of supporting the prospective work of other scholars and researchers who might also engage in the work of researching with disabled children. I have also endeavoured to foreground my own dependencies and vulnerabilities in my research relationships with participants as well as an eclectic group of concepts from scholars from a variety of critical fields. I intended to enact a methodology that was contrapuntally engaged, narratively entangled as well as focused on cripistemological/glocal embodiments in order to show how integral disability is to the troubling of normalcy and to the reimagining of how we might become human with each other. For me the matter of reimagining is not oriented towards a utopic future. Rather, I consider the work of reimagining our becoming human amidst disability as urgently necessary. It is urgently necessary to confront and question the continued harms wrought by the injustices of colonial western logics. It is urgently necessary to find innovative ways (Snelgrove, 2005) to assure that disabled children contribute to new ways of reading, telling and making stories with each other. It is also urgently necessary for elementary schooling practices to begin the process of refusing the normalizing narrative of schooling while transforming curriculum foci, assessment and evaluation practices. Similarly, the work of reimagining becoming human through disability entails many disabled and nondisabled networks
of support. I hope this study ultimately contributes to a constellation of stories that support each other in transforming the conditions of what might be possible in foregrounding disability in our social relations.
References


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Appendix A—Principal Letter of Consent

Dear ____________,

The purpose of this letter is to formally request your consent to conduct my qualitative research study at ________ Public School as part of my completion of Doctoral studies at OISE/UT through the Social Justice Education Department. Pending approval from University of Toronto’s Ethics Review Board as well as the Ethics Review Board of the Toronto District School Board, my intention is to engage in a participant observation of two classrooms at ________ Public School. As I have discussed with both you and the teachers and support staff of the classrooms, my research question focuses on observing the relational interactions between teachers and students during group instructional lessons in reading. Examples of some relational interactions that might be observed during a small group lesson about reading might include: moments of confusion or misunderstanding between teachers and students (e.g. asking lots of questions, repeating statements, change in tone of voice, change in body language) as well as moments of clarity and connection between teachers and students their communication with one another during lessons in reading (e.g. following of routines, responding to questions that indicate a clear understanding of purpose, affirmative body language between teachers and students). My intention is to audio record student and teacher interactions during group instruction as well as record my observations through the use of field notes. I intend to visit each classroom for half a day, once a week over a period of 3-4 months. I will only audio record and take observational notes for the 20-30 minute period that will comprise the duration of the small group lesson. The two classrooms I am interested in focusing on for my participant observation, are two classrooms where I already have an established rapport with the students through my work as an occasional teacher. The two classrooms are the classrooms designated to support students labelled with a Learning Disability (Primary LD class) as well as the classroom designated to support students labelled with a Mild Intellectual Delay (Primary MID class).

In terms of my commitment as both a researcher as well as an experienced elementary/ special education teacher, to respect the confidentiality of the personal
information of both students, my colleagues as well as the school, I also want to be explicit about my intentions to use pseudonyms for all participants as well as the name of the school site in all transcriptions, analyses and reporting of findings in my dissertation. I will not be collecting nor reporting on any personally identifying information such as names and addresses. In my role as a researcher, I will also not be participating in the collecting, reporting and/or assigning of academic assessments/evaluations of participants. Similarly, in keeping with my affiliations as both a member of ETFO (Elementary Teacher’s Federation of Ontario) as well as the OCT (Ontario College of Teachers), I am bound by professional ethics to work with by fellow teaching colleagues in a manner that is collaborative and is respectful of their classroom responsibilities. Therefore, in keeping with the policy guidelines of both ETFO and OCT, I will not be engaging in any assessment or evaluation of my fellow colleagues. All data collected during my participant observation of teaching and learning occurring during moments of group instruction, will be stored securely in a locked cabinet as well as on password encrypted files on an encrypted USB key. In accordance with TDSB policy, a consent form will be sent home to parents of children in both classrooms. I have attached a copy of the parental consent form, teacher consent form as well as support staff consent forms for your records. I have also attached a procedure of how I intend to go about informing students of the purpose of my research visits as well as how students might choose to engage as well as disengage from the group lessons I will be recording if at any time they or their parents choose to revoke consent. I have discussed these procedures with both classroom teachers and support staff and they remain in keeping with already established procedures for differentiating instruction based on student readiness for particular tasks and learning goals and thus will not disrupt classroom routines and learning objectives.

I encourage you to please review the attached consent forms as well as the attached procedures to accommodate students whose parents might refuse consent either at the beginning or in the middle of the study, or alternately children who on a given day may not be prepared to participate in the group instruction that will be audio recorded. If you have any questions or concerns about any of the forms, processes and procedures, I have outlined, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can be reached via email at:
maria.karmiris@mail.utoronto.ca. I also can be reached by phone at 416 566-8651. You may also direct any inquiries to my thesis supervisor Dr. Tanya Titchkosky, Professor, Disability Studies, Department of Social Justice Education, 12-236, Ontario institute for Studies in Education (OISE) of the University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada, M5S 1V6. Similarly, if you have any questions or concerns about participant rights you may also contact the Office of Research Ethics (ethics.review@utoronto.ca, 416-946-3273). Please note that to help ensure participant protection procedures are followed, that the research ethics program may have confidential access to data.

If you choose to give your consent to the research, I hope to conduct on your school site, please sign the consent portion of this letter below. Please remember that your participation throughout the study is entirely voluntary. I want to take this opportunity to thank you in advance for taking the time to review and consider my request to conduct my qualitative participant observation research on your school site. I look forward to the opportunity to continue to work with you, my fellow colleagues as well as the students at your school site.

Sincerely,

Maria Karmiris (PhD Student OISE/UT Social Justice Education Department)

As the principal of _____________ Public School, I have read, reviewed and discussed the research procedures outlined by PhD student Maria Karmiris for her research project. I understand her research goals and intentions to conduct a qualitative study of participant observation as well as this project’s adherence to respecting the confidentiality of participants and the school as well as respecting participants rights to refuse consent.

______________________________
_________________, Principal _____________ Public School
Appendix B—Teacher Letter of Consent

Dear Ms. __________,

The purpose of this letter is to formally request your consent to conduct my qualitative research study in your classroom as part of my completion of Doctoral studies at OISE/UT through the Social Justice Education Department. Pending approval from University of Toronto’s Ethics Review Board as well as the Ethics Review Board of the Toronto District School Board, my intention is to engage in participant observation in your class that supports students labelled with Learning Disabilities (LD). As we have discussed with both you and the support staff members in your classroom, my research question focuses on observing the relational interactions between teachers and students during group instructional lessons in reading. Examples of some relational interactions that might be observed during a small group lesson about reading might include: moments of confusion or misunderstanding between teachers and students (e.g. asking lots of questions, repeating statements, change in tone of voice, change in body language) as well as moments of clarity and connection between teachers and students their communication with one another during lessons in reading (e.g. following of routines, responding to questions that indicate a clear understanding of purpose, affirmative body language between teachers and students). My intention is to audio record student and teacher interactions during group instruction as well as record my observations through the use of field notes. I intend to visit each classroom for half a day, once a week over a period of 3-4 months. I will only audio record and take observational notes for the 20-30 minute period that will comprise the duration of the small group lesson.

In terms of my commitment as both a researcher as well as an experienced elementary/ special education teacher, to respect the confidentiality of the personal information of both students, my colleagues as well as the school, I also want to be explicit about my intentions to use pseudonyms for all participants as well as the name of the school site in all transcriptions, analyses and reporting of findings in my dissertation. I will not be collecting nor reporting on any personally identifying information such as names and addresses. In my role as a researcher, I will also not be participating in the collecting, reporting and/or
assigning of academic assessments/evaluations of participants. Similarly, in keeping with my affiliations as both a member of ETFO (Elementary Teacher’s Federation of Ontario) as well as the OCT (Ontario College of Teachers), I am bound by professional ethics to work with by fellow teaching colleagues in a manner that is collaborative and is respectful of their classroom responsibilities. Therefore, in keeping with the policy guidelines of both ETFO and OCT, I will not be engaging in any assessment or evaluation of my fellow colleagues.

All data collected during my participant observation of teaching and learning occurring during moments of group instruction, will be stored securely in a locked cabinet as well as on password encrypted files on an encrypted USB key. In accordance with TDSB policy, a consent form will be sent home to parents/caregivers of the students in your class. I have attached a copy of the parental consent form for your records. I have also attached a procedure of how I intend to go about informing students of the purpose of my research visits as well as how students might choose to engage as well as disengage from the group lessons I will be recording if at any time they or their parents choose to revoke consent. As we have discussed, the procedures I have outlined are in keeping with already established procedures for differentiating instruction based on student readiness for particular tasks and learning goals and thus will not disrupt classroom routines and learning objectives.

I encourage you to please review the parent/caregiver consent form as well as the procedures to accommodate students whose parents might refuse consent either at the beginning or in the middle of the study, or alternately children who on a given day may not be prepared to participate in the group instruction that will be audio recorded. If you have any questions or concerns about any of the forms, processes and procedures, I have outlined, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can be reached via email at: maria.karmiris@mail.utoronto.ca. I also can be reached by phone at 416 566-8651. You may also direct any inquiries to my thesis supervisor Dr. Tanya Titchkosky, Professor, Disability Studies, Department of Social Justice Education, 12-236, Ontario institute for Studies in Education (OISE) of the University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada, M5S 1V6. Similarly, if you have any questions or concerns about participant rights you may also contact the Office of Research Ethics (ethics.review@utoronto.ca, 416-946-3273). Please note that to help ensure participant
If you choose to give your consent to the research I hope to conduct in your classroom, please sign the consent portion of this letter below. Please remember that your participation throughout the study is entirely voluntary. I want to take this opportunity to thank you in advance for taking the time to review and consider my request to conduct my qualitative participant observation research in your classroom. I look forward to the opportunity to continue to work with you, as well as the students in your classroom.

Sincerely,

Maria Karmiris (PhD Student OISE/UT Social Justice Education Department)

As the teacher of the LD class, I have read, reviewed and discussed the research procedures outlined by PhD student Maria Karmiris for her research project. I understand her research goals and intentions to conduct a qualitative study of participant observation as well as this project’s adherence to respecting the confidentiality of participants as well as respecting participants rights to refuse consent.

____________________________
___________Teacher (Primary LD class)
Appendix C—Support Staff of Letter of Consent

Dear Ms.___________,

The purpose of this letter is to formally request your consent to conduct my qualitative research study in your classroom as part of my completion of Doctoral studies at OISE/UT through the Social Justice Education Department. Pending approval from University of Toronto’s Ethics Review Board as well as the Ethics Review Board of the Toronto District School Board, my intention is to engage in participant observation in your class that supports students labelled with Learning Disability (LD). As we have discussed with both you and the classroom teacher, my research question focuses on observing the relational interactions between teachers and students during instructional lessons in reading. Examples of some relational interactions that might be observed during a small group lesson about reading might include: moments of confusion or misunderstanding between teachers and students (e.g. asking lots of questions, repeating statements, change in tone of voice, change in body language) as well as moments of clarity and connection between teachers and students their communication with one another during lessons in reading (e.g. following of routines, responding to questions that indicate a clear understanding of purpose, affirmative body language between teachers and students). My intention is to audio record student and teacher interactions during group instruction as well as record my observations through the use of field notes. I intend to visit each classroom for half a day, once a week over a period of 3-4 months. I will only audio record and take observational notes for the 20-30 minute period that will comprise the duration of the small group lesson.

In terms of my commitment as both a researcher as well as an experienced elementary/special education teacher, to respect the confidentiality of the personal information of both students, my colleagues as well as the school, I also want to be explicit about my intentions to use pseudonyms for all participants as well as the name of the school site in all transcriptions, analyses and reporting of findings in my dissertation. I will not be collecting nor reporting on any personally identifying information such as names and addresses. In my role as a researcher, I will also not be participating in the collecting, reporting and/or assigning of academic
assessments/evaluations of participants. Similarly, in keeping with my affiliations as both a member of ETFO (Elementary Teacher’s Federation of Ontario) as well as the OCT (Ontario College of Teachers), I am bound by professional ethics to work with by fellow teaching colleagues in a manner that is collaborative and is respectful of their classroom responsibilities. Therefore, in keeping with the policy guidelines of both ETFO and OCT, I will not be engaging in any assessment or evaluation of my fellow colleagues.

All data collected during my participant observation of teaching and learning occurring during moments of group instruction, will be stored securely in a locked cabinet as well as on password encrypted files on an encrypted USB key. In accordance with TDSB policy, a consent form will be sent home to parents/caregivers of the students in your class. I have attached a copy of the parental consent form for your records. I have also attached a procedure of how I intend to go about informing students of the purpose of my research visits as well as how students might choose to engage as well as disengage from the group lessons I will be recording if at any time they or their parents choose to revoke consent. As we have discussed, the procedures I have outlined are in keeping with already established procedures for differentiating instruction based on student readiness for particular tasks and learning goals and thus will not disrupt classroom routines and learning objectives.

I encourage you to please review the parent/caregiver consent form as well as the procedures to accommodate students whose parents might refuse consent either at the beginning or in the middle of the study, or alternately children who on a given day may not be prepared to participate in the group instruction that will be audio recorded. If you have any questions or concerns about any of the forms, processes and procedures, I have outlined, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can be reached via email at: maria.karmiris@mail.utoronto.ca. I also can be reached by phone at 416 566-8651. You may also direct any inquiries to my thesis supervisor Dr. Tanya Titchkosky, Professor, Disability Studies, Department of Social Justice Education, 12-236, Ontario institute for Studies in Education (OISE) of the University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada, M5S 1V6. Similarly, if you have any questions or concerns about participant rights you may also contact the Office of Research Ethics (ethics.review@utoronto.ca, 416-946-3273). Please note that to help ensure participant
protection procedures are followed, that the research ethics program may have confidential access to data.

If you choose to give your consent to the research I hope to conduct in your classroom, please sign the consent portion of this letter below. Please remember that your participation throughout the study is entirely voluntary. I want to take this opportunity to thank you in advance for taking the time to review and consider my request to conduct my qualitative participant observation research in your classroom. I look forward to the opportunity to continue to work with you, as well as the students in your classroom.

Sincerely,

Maria Karmiris (PhD Student OISE/UT Social Justice Education Department)

As the support staff member of the Primary MID class, I have read, reviewed and discussed the research procedures outlined by PhD student Maria Karmiris for her research project. I understand her research goals and intentions to conduct a qualitative study of participant observation as well as this project’s adherence to respecting the confidentiality of participants as well as respecting participants rights to refuse consent.

_____________________________
_____________________, Special Education Assistant (Primary LD class)
Appendix D—Parent/Caregiver Letter of Consent

Dear Parents/ Caregivers,

The purpose of this letter is to request your permission for your child to participate in my research study that will be taking place your child’s classroom. This research project is being completed as part of my Doctoral studies at OISE/UT. As I have discussed with your child’s classroom teacher, my research question focuses on observing the interactions between teachers and students during group instructional lessons in reading. **My intention is to audio record student and teacher interactions during group instruction as well as record my observations using field notes.** I intend to visit your child’s classroom for half a day, once a week over a period of 3-4 months. I will only be using an audio recorder to record interactions during group lessons in reading as well as record my observations using field notes during this 20-30 minute period of group lessons in reading. I will not be recording any other classroom learning.

In keeping with TDSB policy and procedures as well as OISE/UT research protocols, all personal information about your child will remain confidential. In my role as a researcher in the classroom, I will not be assigning grades nor involved in the assessment and evaluation of your child. **Pseudonyms will be used in place of your child’s name, the teacher’s name and the school’s name within this research study.** Participation in this research study is entirely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent at any point during the study. Please take the time to review and keep for your records the information about participant rights as well as the responsibilities of a researcher on the back of this page which include some possible examples of what might be observed during my research visits.

Please complete, sign and return the bottom portion of this form. If you have any questions or concern about my role in the classroom and or your child’s participation within the study, please feel to contact me and I would be happy to arrange a meeting with you. You can email me directly at maria.karmiris@mail.utoronto.ca. Alternately, you can write a note in your child’s agenda or contact the school (___) _____-____ and I will respond to your inquiries. You may also direct any inquiries to my thesis supervisor Dr. Tanya Titchkosky, Professor, Disability
Studies, Department of Social Justice Education, 12-236, Ontario institute for Studies in Education (OISE) of the University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada, M5S 1V6. Similarly, if you have any questions or concerns about participant rights you may also contact the Office of Research Ethics (ethics.review@utoronto.ca, 416-946-3273). Please note that to help ensure participant protection procedures are followed, that the research ethics program may have confidential access to data.

Sincerely,

Maria Karmiris (PhD Student OISE/UT)

☐ Yes, I give my consent for ________________________ to participate in the research study that will be taking place in the classroom which includes audio recording group instruction and observational notes taken by the researcher.

☐ No, I do not give permission for ________________________ to participate in the research study that will be taking place in the classroom.

__________________________________________
Parent/Caregiver Signature
Participant Rights

- Your child’s participation is entirely voluntary.
- Your child will be explicitly taught about their rights to withdraw consent as participants.
- Your child will be encouraged/reminded of their right say yes or no to participating, through the use of verbal and visual cues.
- Your child’s academic program will not be disrupted. He/ She will continue to develop needed skills.
- Some possible examples that might be observed during small group lessons might include: moments of confusion or unease on behalf of the teacher and/or student during a lesson (e.g. repeatedly asking questions, repeating information, change in tone of voice/ body language to indicate that meaning as has been disrupted), moments of clarity and affirmation (e.g. teachers and students affirming their understanding of one another, following the rhythm and routines of lesson goals, tone of voice and body language that indicates effective communication between teachers and students)
- If your child experiences any socio-emotional distress (e.g. sad, upset) they have the right to withdraw from participation.
- You may withdraw your consent on behalf of your child at any point during the study without explanation.
- Both you and your child will be informed of the end of the study. You will receive an outline of some preliminary findings.
- At the end of the study you will also receive a letter that will remind you of your participant rights which include a final opportunity to withdraw from the study. You will have two weeks after the last visit to your child’s class to consider if you want to withdraw from the study and inform the researcher of your intent to withdraw.
- Key results from the study will be shared with participants and their parents/ caregivers at a time to be determined with school staff after the study has been completed.

Researcher Responsibilities
• For the purposes of this study, the researcher’s role will be to observe interactions between participating students and teachers during group lessons for 20-30 minutes during half day visits that will occur once a week for 3-4 months.
• The researcher will not be involved in assigning of grades or assessing and evaluating students.
• The researcher will only audio record participants who have consented to part of the study.
• The researcher will respect the confidentiality of participants by using pseudonyms.
• The researcher is required to follow the safety policies and procedures as outlined for TDSB staff while conducting research in the classroom. This includes the duty to report a reasonable suspicion of any child abuse or neglect. In such an instance the safety and well-being of the child would require a breach in confidentiality.
• The researcher values participant rights which include the right to withdraw from the study up until the final withdrawal date.
• The researcher will inform participants of the deadline for withdrawal which will be two weeks after the final participation visit.
• After the study is complete participants will be informed of the date, time and location of the sharing of key findings from the study with the researcher.
Appendix E- Lesson: Introducing Research Processes to Children: My Purpose and Role as a Participant Observer

The lesson is intended to orient children to research practices and my role in their classroom as a researcher will only occur after formal approval processes from OISE and TDSB ERB’s. This lesson will take place after formal permissions have been gathered from the school principal (Appendix A), Teachers (Appendix B), Support Staff (Appendix C). This lesson will take place before Parent/Caregiver permissions have been distributed (Appendix D).

Data collection will begin after students are oriented to the research process. This orientation will include ways to say yes and say no to participating in research before, during and after the research process (Appendix F). This will also include an explicit emphasis on my role as a researcher in the classroom as being distinct from the role of the teacher in that I will not be assigning grades or participating in any way in the assessment and evaluation of student progress. No data gathering will occur until formal permission from parents (Appendix D) is received by the researcher and students have been oriented towards their rights as participants which include an understanding of the ongoing voluntary nature of participation as well as the right to withdraw.

Material Needed for Lesson

- Picture Book – Silent Music by James Rumford
- Classroom Interactive Whiteboard (IWB)/ Promethean Board
- Images of Research Activities and Activities that are not Research
- T-chart, blank paper, scissors, glue
- Chart Paper for Brainstorming and Recording student responses

Lesson Goals

- To clarify with children what research is and is not
- To introduce my role in the classroom as a researcher/participant observer in their class
- To introduce children to the question I will be exploring with them and their teachers in their classroom

Accommodations/ Modifications
This lesson is intended to be scaffolded (conducted in chunks over 2-3 days) prior to the collection of any data so as to orient children to my recurring presence and the purpose of my weekly visits in their classroom.

Various auditory, sensory, kinesthetic, visual and social strategies will be used to support students with a range of abilities to engage in the concepts being developed through the use of technology, the identifying and sorting of images through hands-on activities as well as the use of oral communication.

All resources and materials will be left with teachers and support staff to practice with and review with children.

Part 1 – What is Research? What is not Research?

1. After their daily routine of journal writing about their favourite event/activity of the previous day, students will gather on the carpet.
2. I will ask them about what kinds of things they like and want to learn more about.
3. Their responses will be recorded on chart paper.
4. I will share with them what I am curious about and want to learn more about by showing them the question I plan to study while in their classroom: What happens when teachers and students learn about reading with and from each other?
5. I will show them on the IWB in their classroom a t-chart with images of activities that can be sorted in two groups. Students will take turns coming up to the IWB and sorting the images into activities that represent what research is (e.g. reading books, learning from others by listening and watching, learning from the world around you by touching and feeling, respecting the rights of participants to volunteer or withdraw from a research study) as well as what research is not (e.g. assigning grades, sharing feedback about academic progress, sharing personal information).
6. Students will then have a turn to review what they learned in partners and with the assistance of support staff by sorting a paper copy of the same images and pasting the images on their copy of the t-chart.
7. Students will then return to the carpet. We will review the chart together. I will show them an image of what participant observation looks like in the classroom. I will show them the audio recorder, I plan on using to record classroom lessons after the research starts. I will
remind them that their participation is voluntary and will not have any impact on their academic learning.

8. Teachers and support staff will review these items prior to my next visit for part 2 of the lesson


1. Following up in a couple of days from the previous lesson, I will return and review the T-Chart we created with the children on the IWB as well as their own personal copies of the same chart that they cut and pasted with their partner.

2. I will also review the question I will be researching in their class: What happens when teachers and students learn about reading with and from each other?

3. I will Read Aloud the story entitled Silent Music and ask the children to think about how the main character Ali, goes about learning about his favourite activities. I will stop and pause periodically during the reading of the story to point out how Ali is in the middle of his own research.

4. Students will take turn coming up to the IWB to sort images in a Venn diagram about how Ali and I will be doing some things the same (e.g. reading books, writing about reading) and some things different (e.g. audio recording in the classroom, asking for permission to watch, listen and learn in the classroom)

5. With support of a partner as well as their support staff and teacher, students will be provided a blank sheet of paper and a list of words and images about what I will be doing as a participant observer in the classroom. Students will paste the words and images on their pages as a way to review what research is as well as to begin to introduce the idea that as students, they have the right to give and or refuse consent.

6. Students will come to the carpet to review the images and words of what Ms. Karmiris plans to do in when researching in the classroom.

7. All materials will be left with teachers and support staff to review with children prior to the next visit.
Appendix F- Lesson: Consenting to and Refusing to Consent to Research – Implementing procedures with children to refuse participation

This lesson will take place before Parent/Caregiver permissions have been distributed (Appendix D).

Data collection will begin after students are oriented to the research process and this lesson is specifically oriented toward the importance of the researcher to respect the word no from participants. This lesson will include ways to say yes and say no to participating in research before, during and after the research process (Appendix F). No data gathering will occur until formal permission from parents (Appendix D) is received by the researcher and students have been oriented towards their rights as participants. Visuals (Appendix H1 green paper, Appendix H2 red paper) will remain posted in the classroom throughout my research visits and will serve as a reminder to children about their rights to say yes and no to being participants in my research study.

Material Needed for Lesson
- Picture Book – No David! By David Shannon
- Classroom Interactive Whiteboard/ Promethean Board
- Words and Images of ways to say no and ways to say yes during Ms. Karmiris’ Research Visits
- T-chart, blank paper, scissors, glue
- Colour Coded Green and Red Visual Aids with pre- sorted yes and no visual images for prominent classroom display (Appendix H1, Appendix H2)
- Parent/Caregiver Letter of Consent (Appendix D) – to be distributed at the end of the lesson about consent

Lesson Goals
- To clarify with children what it means to say yes and what it means to say no to research
- To remind students of my role in the classroom as a researcher/ participant observer in their class
To remind students of the question I will be exploring with them and their teachers in their classroom: What happens when teachers and students learn about reading with and from each other?

Accommodations/ Modifications

- This lesson is intended to be scaffolded (conducted in chunks over 2-3 days) prior to the collection of any data so as to orient children to my recurring presence and the purpose of my weekly visits in their classroom as well as to the ongoing voluntary nature of participation during the study
- Various auditory, sensory, kinesthetic, visual and social strategies will be used to support students with a range of abilities to engage in the concepts being developed through the use of technology, the identifying and sorting of images through hands-on activities as well as the use of oral communication
- All resources and materials will be left with teachers and support staff to practice with and review with children

Process

1. Review with students both the t-chart as well as the research chart of what Ms. Karmiris will be doing when researching in the classroom as well as she will not be doing.
2. Remind students that before and during my classroom visits, I will need the permission of their parents as well as their permission to collect information to help me with my question.
3. Ask students to think about ways to say no. Record possible responses on chart paper
4. Read Aloud story entitled: No David! – Periodically stop and ask about why it’s important to respect someone when they say No. Talk about how No is an important word and it is okay to say No and how I as the researcher will respect their No, if they don’t want to participate.
5. Students will take turns coming up to the IWB and sorting the images and words of how to say No and how to say Yes that are in keeping with established classroom routines.
6. Students will work with a partner, support staff and teacher to sort images and paste them on their own individual chart of ways to yes and ways to say no during research.
7. Students will be called back to the carpet to review the chart.

8. I will distribute a consent form for students to take home and return with parent/caregiver signature so that the participation observation can begin only for those students whose parents consent to their children’s participation in the study. While distributing consent letters I will remind students through both visual and verbal cues generated during previous lessons, that their participation is entirely voluntary. I will be explicit in reminding students that I will not be assessing or evaluating their progress and that they will continue to learn and develop their skills with the support and guidance of their teachers throughout the research study.

9. All materials will be left for teachers and support staff to review with children.

10. The green and red visual of ways to say yes and ways to say no will be prominently displayed and repeatedly referred to so that students are aware of their right to refuse consent at any point in the observation process.
Appendix G - Protocol for Students whose parents refuse consent before or during the commencement of the Research Study (To be distributed to Principal, teachers, support staff)

Refusal of Parental Consent Before Data Collection Begins
Any student whose parent refuse consent (Appendix D) will not be audio recorded during any group lessons that I will be observing. I will not take any observational notes on any children whose parents refuse consent. Students will be accommodated through working with support staff or choosing to work independently on other learning tasks that are differentiated for their needs and ability levels while the teacher is working with the students who have consented to be part of the research study. In a classroom that is accustomed to differentiating instructions for varying learning needs this type of routine is already embedded and familiar to students who are accustomed to multiple activities occurring at the same time within the same space to accommodate for the range of learning needs and achievement learning goals within the classroom.

Refusal of Consent by a Student for a Day or a Series of Days During the Research Process
My research design embeds within itself a sensitivity to varying needs of students which are impacted by a variety of socio-emotional factors. Students will be reminded of their right to accept or refuse consent through the visual aids (Appendix H1, H2) that will remain posted in the classroom during my research visits. It is an understandable for example that if a student had a conflict at recess time or during lunch, that he/ she may be too upset to engage in the learning occurring in the classroom. In such a circumstance a student may refuse to participate or alternately may be encouraged by the teacher or support staff member to take a break in order to nurture his/her own emotional well-being. Another circumstance that may result in a refusal to consent on a given day or series of days may be a traumatic event such as the loss of a pet or a serious illness/ loss of a close family member. In such a circumstance a child whose parents may have originally granted consent, may go through a series of several days where they may not be socio-emotionally prepared to engage in group lessons with their peers. Alternately, students might refuse to participate for a variety of reasons that they may not be interested in disclosing to myself as the researcher of to the teacher and support staff that work with them daily. In such
circumstances where children might refuse consent for a day or a series of days, children may choose to have quiet time to themselves or they may choose to work with one of the support staff in the classroom rather than engage in learning with their teacher and their peers. Thus, I would not audio record or make any notes about those students on the days when children themselves refused consent on a given day or series of days.
Appendix H 1 - Protocol for Students whose Parents have consented but may refuse to participate for a day or a series of days during the Participant Observation (Visual Display for Classroom on Green Paper)

Yes!

1. Parent/Caregiver Permission

2. Sit with teacher

3. Share your ideas

Words Pictures Body Language Objects
No!

1. No permission from parent/caregiver.

2. Need a break

3. Quiet Work Time

4. Work with support staff
Appendix I
Protocol for Discounting Data collected from students in the event consent is revoked during or before the final opt-out date for parents/caregivers (To be Distributed to Principal, Teachers, Support Staff)

For a variety of reasons, parents/caregivers may change their mind about the consent originally granted when completing the consent form (Appendix D) at the onset of the study. At the end of the study, a letter will go home informing parents that the data collection portion of the research study has been completed (Appendix K). This letter (Appendix K) will advise parents that they have a final opportunity to revoke consent by the date outlined in the letter. The final opt-out date has been established for two reasons. First to remain in conversation with both parents and students about their rights as participants through the data collecting stage. Second, this date also intends to provide closure to the data collection process as the research study moves into the analysis/interpretation stage. Parents may request either verbally or in writing that all references to their child be removed from the data. In such a circumstance, I would discount any contribution from the student whose parents revoke consent during or before the final opt-out date outlined in Appendix K. Discounting any contribution in the event consent is revoked also means that I would discount any thread of discussion (e.g. responses from teachers, support staff, students or myself that were generated from the original contribution of the now discounted data). I would discount any observational field notes in which a previously consensual participant, engaged in their write to revoke consent. This would include discounting all notes from teacher, support staff, students or myself that were generated as a part of the contribution from the participant whose has opted to revoke consent.
Appendix J - Lesson: Reviewing with children about how they helped me learn: Communicating with Community

This lesson will take place at the end of the data collection process. It will provide me with an opportunity to share some of the important lessons the children helped me learn through their participation. It will also allow for an opportunity to support children and myself in the transition to ending my weekly visits in their classroom.

Material Needed for Lesson
- Picture Book – The Wonderful Happens By: Cynthia Rylant
- Classroom Interactive Whiteboard/ Promethean Board
- Teacher Writing Model Template- The Wonderful happened when…
- Student Writing Template- The wonderful happened when…
- Parent/Caregiver Letter to Inform of Completion of Study/ Data Collection (Appendix K) – to be distributed at the end of the final participant observation visit

Lesson Goals
- To remind students of the question I was exploring with them and their teachers in their classroom: What happens when teachers and students learn about reading with and from each other?
- To share with student some the things they helped me to learn
- To provide students an opportunity to share something wonderful that they experienced during research process.

Accommodations/ Modifications
- Various auditory, sensory, kinesthetic, visual and social strategies will be used to support students with a range of abilities to engage in the concepts being developed through the use of technology, the identifying and sorting of images through hands-on activities as well as the use of oral communication
- All resources and materials will be left with teachers and support staff to practice with and review with children
Process

1. I will begin by reminding students that today is my final research visit with them and reviewing the questions I have focused on during my visit.

2. I will read aloud the story: The Wonderful Happens by Cynthia Rylant.

3. I will show them on the IWB my list of wonderful happenings while I have shared time with the students, their teachers, and support staff in their classrooms.

4. Students will have the opportunity to share their own wonderful moment that is either related or unrelated to my research visits with the help of a partner and/or support staff.

5. We will all gather on the carpet and share our wonderful happenings.

6. I will distribute Parent/ Caregiver Letter to inform parents/caregivers of the formal completion of the data collection phase (Appendix K).
Appendix K—Parent/ Caregiver Letter to Inform of Completion of Study/ Data Collection

Dear Parents/ Caregivers,

The purpose of this letter is to extend my sincerest gratitude for giving consent to your child to participate. I have learned a great deal from the weekly visits to your child’s class. I shared with your child a list of some things I learned. I have given you child a copy of this list as a way to share with both you and your child some of the important things I learned during my experience participating in the learning happening in your child’s classroom. This list is my way of sharing with both you and your child some of my initial findings about what happens when teachers and students learn to read with and for each other.

Please know that I will no longer be visiting your child’s class for the purposes of collecting information as today was the last day of my formal research visits. As my initial letter stated, I remain available to answer any questions or concerns that you may have about how I have collected data during my time in your child’s classroom. I would be happy to arrange to speak with you about any questions or concerns you may have. You can email me directly at maria.karmiris@tdsb.on.ca or at maria.karmiris@mail.utoronto.ca. Alternately, you can write a note in your child’s agenda or contact the school (___) _____ - _____ and I will respond to your inquiries. If for any reason, you wish to revoke your consent, please contact me by Friday January 12, 2018.

Thank you again for your time, consideration and participation.

Sincerely,

Maria Karmiris

PhD Student OISE/UT