



Children of Bill 82: Reflective Histories of Disability and Childhood in Ontario, Canada

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ABSTRACT *Through an analysis of personal histories, we reflect on changes in disability discourses in educational contexts since the 1970s. We argue that educational systems are deeply resistant to critical discourse of disability even while espousing social justice principles. We simultaneously recognize the disconnection between disability, education, and the lived experiences of disabled children, and the way in which their experiences are framed. We call for a more integrated discourse between academic theories of disability, professional systems, and children's lived experiences in order to better care for children and their families, and to address injustice in education systems.*

KEYWORDS inclusive education; history of disability; special education policy; disability and family

This article draws on our own experiences as children in the Ontario school system between the 1970s and 1990s, where social policy and education discourse claimed to be moving toward inclusion. Our shared experience is that school was a critical site for development of our understanding of disability. Disability constructs in school settings did not account for the diversity of children's experiences, or for the ways in which families were tasked with responsibility for disabled family members. Furthermore, successful inclusion was defined by the presence of disabled students, not their experiences within school spaces. We argue that disabled children's childhood studies must take up the institutionally produced constructs of disability, while also documenting and amplifying the diversity of disabled childhoods and experiences with disability that children embody.

Following Curran & Runswick-Cole (2014), we argue that there is a need for a specific research field of disabled children's childhood studies.

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ISSN: 1911-4788



Childhood Studies as a broad field of inquiry has been resistant to disability theory in part because it relies on institutional narratives of disability that construct disabled identities through assessment and documentation (Nusbaum & Steinborn, 2019). Disabled Children's Childhood Studies centres disabled children's experiences to disrupt normative developmentalism, but also to embrace developmental differences. Disability in the assessment and documentation approach is experienced by individuals, but as a social construct is a way of organizing groups of people through labelling. Erevelles and Minear (2010) posit that "individuals located perilously at the interstices of race, class, gender, and disability are constituted as non-citizens and (no) bodies by the very social institutions (legal, educational, and rehabilitation) that are designed to protect, nurture, and empower them" (p. 129). Schools play a pivotal role in organizing children and are spaces in which social categories are constructed and reinforced, through binary categories of disabled and non-disabled children, with implications for constructing whiteness and able-bodiedness (Connor & Ferri, 2010). Disability in education remains under theorised and poorly integrated into educational practice (Connor & Ferri, 2010; Forber-Pratt & Zape, 2017; Nusbaum & Steinborn, 2019). In addition, disability classification is implicated in structures that enact racism, sexism, heteronormativity, classism, and colonization (Annamma & Morrison, 2018; Ineese-Nash et al., 2017).

We are committed to sharing our stories for the purpose of reflecting on the centrality of "normalcy" in our experiences, and the power that educational institutions held in our early experiences with the aim of contributing to education systems that are more just. Educational settings have been the site of abuse and discrimination, however education systems can also act as forces for change or reinforce existing cultural norms ultimately either disrupting or sustaining oppressive systems. Our analysis presents the theoretical framing of the time in which we were in school to demonstrate how cultural and institutional discourses of disability act upon the everyday lives of children. Using the tradition of personal narratives in disability activism and scholarship (Forber-Pratt, 2015; Wong, 2020), and building on critical historical analysis (Connor & Ferri, 2010; Connor & Valle, 2017), we aim to contribute to a growing recognition of the value of children's experiences and disabled narratives.

Critical Disability Studies has been the forerunner in critiquing and changing language attributed to disabled experiences and people. However, this academic endeavour has been slow to capture the attention of educational policymakers, practitioners, and families to reduce systemic barriers, resulting in a lack of institutional recognition of disability as an experience and identity (Forber-Pratt et al., 2017). The institutions that constitute childhood in our society, including schools, childcare, and early intervention, are built to monitor for impairment and non-normative development. The system then responds with services designed to fix impairment. This organization of

services has resulted in spaces where children are exposed to ableism and where disability identity and experience is hidden.

In this article, we reflect on our own experiences of disability and childhood during a time of immense educational change. The authors were both born in Ontario, Canada, and began formal schooling in the 1970s. Our generation is the product of a time in education when “progressive” reforms and human rights were entrenched into the discourse of our society (Kudlick, 2003; Stiker, 1999). However, many of these discourses have not served to recognize the diversity of disabled people or experiences with disability. We believe that we are part of a generation that has benefited from the work of disabled activists and their allies, yet the educational reforms that resulted from that time are did not reach their promise. For this reason, we examine some of the disability theories that informed the educational reforms of our childhoods, and that continue to permeate education systems, and in turn children today.

The Context: Disability Theory of the 1970s and 1980s

Bill 82, the colloquial name for a significant change in educational legislation, marked a shift in how school systems operated in Ontario, Canada, with new responsibilities outlined for special education and the delivery of services to disabled students (*Education Amendment Act, 1980*). Prior to Bill 82, responsibility for education of disabled children was relegated to clinical settings or in social service agencies. With Bill 82, categorical definitions of disability were introduced that are still used to designate children’s “exceptionalities” for the purpose of providing them with “appropriate” services. The significance of Bill 82 cannot be under-estimated. All texts on inclusive education or special education in use in the province today describe Bill 82 as a substantive turning point for disabled children (Bennett & Wynne, 2006; Bennett et al., 2019; Jordan 2007).

Around the same time as Bill 82 was being conceived, disabled activists and academics were setting forth the early conceptualizations of the “social model” of disability (UPIAS, 1979). For us, the timing aligned with the early childhood experiences that contributed to our educational foundations. The combination of changes in practice, as well as the academic development of new social theories of disability brought hope for a more inclusive education system that recognised disabled people and their rights. In 1980, we were both in early elementary school when the historic Bill 82 was signed into law in Ontario.

Personal Narratives of the Authors

We believe that our experiences are useful in reflecting on the effects of educational reform and social attitudes toward disability through the past 30

years. Critiques of the social model are now common in the academic discourse of disability (Gabel & Peters, 2004), but they have yet to permeate the professional discourses in which we participate in our daily work in education. For this reason, we present our personal narratives and our current dilemmas with finding language that is socially accepted to talk about our experiences of disability and the experiences of people with whom we work. We begin with our personal narratives: Ayshia as a disabled child, and Kathryn as the child of a disabled parent.

Ayshia's Story

I am the middle child of seven of Arab, Muslim, and immigrant parents from Palestine. My father migrated to Canada as a “skilled labourer” in the mid 1960s, while my mother migrated here in the late 1960s after they were married. My mother had no English language skills and never attended English as a Second Language training. Also, she had minimal educational opportunities prior to arriving to Canada. My father worked two jobs to make ends meet. Like many parents, but especially immigrants to Canada, he held a very strong belief in obtaining a good education to have access to future opportunities and upward mobility. I share this context as an understanding that our experiences are not the result of a single dynamic, but a culmination of intersecting and interlocking factors that are social, political, economic, and environmental (Razack, 1998).

I was formally diagnosed with Stargardt's Disease, a common form of congenital juvenile macular degeneration, at the age of nine. Although I had shown signs and had articulated challenges with being able to see, for instance, words on a page or course material on the blackboard, most teachers and even our family optometrists concluded that there was no impairment. In fact, my teachers and doctors assumed I was not telling the truth; that, rather, this was my way of getting out of the difficult task of learning. This emphasises the grounding of disability within the medical model whereby accommodations and the needs of an individual cannot be met until or unless verified by a professional (Barnes et al., 1999). My mother, however, did not accept these findings and continued to take me to various doctors until one agreed to refer me to a specialist at a children's hospital. It was there during the 1983-84 school year that I was formally labelled as a person with a visual disability. It is unclear to me exactly how I was discussed within the school system. I was not privy to their conversations. From my perspective and from my parents' account, we did not discuss my accommodation needs or my learning needs with my teachers. At the time, it felt like a lot of awkward over-accommodations and over-concern for my “safety,” and I was embarrassed by it. However, I was not taken out of the “regular” classroom. Other students, who I believe had intellectual disabilities, were placed in a separate classroom and joined us in the regular class periodically for music class; these students

eventually disappeared from our classrooms entirely. I remember seeing some of them later during high school walking the hallways. In our younger years, some of us “regular” kids might have played with disabled children, but as time went on and they became more and more segregated from us, their peers, the less general interaction we had with them. The integration of disabled students in our early grade classes coincided with the passing of Bill 82.

Once diagnosed, my world changed. An immense cloud of sadness and guilt had settled upon my house, particularly for my parents. Sadness for the fate that had befallen me and guilt for the frustration and their harshness with me when they did not understand the barriers to learning, specifically with the challenges of reading. Also, what really changed was the school environment and the ways in which the adults and subsequently my classmates perceived and treated me. I was now a person to be helped; my limitations were emphasised, my abilities minimized, and how people could “help” me were central themes in my life. I resisted the limitations others imposed on me. For instance, in grade seven my class was divided into home economics and shop classes; there was total reluctance to allow me to attend shop class and immense restrictions placed on me for home economics. I was denied entry into the shop class until I advocated for myself to be given the opportunity to participate. Furthermore, my ability to participate in these classes was restricted not only by only teachers but students as well. I recall one day heating up a circular plastic sheet to create an ashtray. I walked away for a moment and upon my return, one of my classmates (who, incidentally, had never spoken to me other than to mock me), had completed my project. I am sure at the time this student believed he was “helping” me out, as the teachers and school in general believed they were creating a space of inclusion by simply allowing me in these classes with “due consideration” of my “safety.” However, for me this led to a feeling of further exclusion and marginalization. My mere presence in these spaces, without adequate and appropriate accommodations, and without allowing my full participation in the courses, led to an experience of tokenism. This kind of nominal, tokenistic experience is one that I and many people with disabilities continue to experience throughout our lives.

As the year progressed and I moved from grade to grade, especially in the early years of my diagnosis (i.e. grades six, seven, and eight), more and more people called me “the blind girl.” Less and less was I understood as a peer to my fellow students, and the less I wanted to be identified as such. I, as Ayshia the child, with my many facets both positive and negative, was reduced to my disability alone. I felt the stigma associated with disability so strongly, that I rebuked all supports and wanted to pass as “normal” (Thomas 2020). I remember refusing to use my visual aids and struggling to get through my classes and homework because of the size of the aids. The important thing was to get me through school with as little attention paid to me as possible. This, of course, impacted my ability to learn and achieve in school and continued

later in life as I continued this practice of attempting to “pass.” Avoiding personal supports or different treatment was important for my social identity.

Today my experiences have helped shape my work. I am an Accessibility Consultant at a college in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) who has worked in human rights and as a community organizer at a community legal clinic and community advocacy group: Ethno-Racial People with Disabilities Coalition of Ontario (ERDCO). All this work is in service of and with disabled people, for greater accessible environments, and full participation. My work, and that of my colleagues, places the person at the centre and includes an intersectional understanding of disability, knowing that disability is not the only piece of a person’s identity that may contribute to their interactions with institutions. It was my experience with ERDCO, in particular, that helped frame my experiences in a holistic, intersectional way and has led to both my political identity as a disabled person and my work in the advancement of disability rights. I credit the experience of working with ERDCO for developing my skills as an advocate. The organization and people of ERDCO validated my experiences and created a space of shared knowing and experience. We worked collaboratively to increase access to education, transportation, income, food security, etc., and we all brought our various skills, talents, and knowledge to the forefront. It is the combination of these two major life experiences alongside many others that inform my work today as an Accessibility Consultant, whose key role is to create equity and a level playing field for students with disabilities as well as to support the institution’s responsibility to access and equity.

Kathryn’s Story

I am the child of a disabled person. My father has a visible, physical disability, which has been part of his life since before I was born. My early understanding of disability, stigma, and social perception of disabled people has provided me with experience of disablement, exclusion, and also a bystander’s participation in othering. When my father was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS), I was seven years old. He had symptoms of MS before I was born and this was very scary for him and my mother. MS is hard to diagnose and it was even less well known in the late 1960’s and 1970’s. Before I was born, doctors raised concerns that had my parents question whether they should have another child because it was likely that my father would be “disabled.” The idea that people with disabilities do not make good parents is ingrained in our culture. This is a deficit view that builds on stereotypical notions of what makes a good parent. I was fortunate that my parents did not take this advice. However, my parents were also deeply concerned about the impact of my father’s diagnosis on his business and their financial security. They feared that disability discrimination would lead to the loss of clients in my dad’s business in the construction

industry if he disclosed his health condition. For this reason, we kept it a secret and no one at my school knew about my dad.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s the MS Society had a fundraiser in schools called the MS Read-A-Thon. I participated in the Read-A-Thon before and after my father was diagnosed. I liked reading and so I looked forward to this activity. A representative from the MS society came to my school and showed us a video of people with MS who were unable to care for themselves, who could not walk or access buildings, who were blind; all these things were portrayed from a deficit standpoint. This representation of disability in school was framed around pity, fundraising, and charity. The lives of people with MS were depicted as tragic. These depictions were very different from how my parents had shared the diagnosis at home; these images made me feel afraid that my dad would die, or that he could not care for himself or be cared for. The only option presented by the information at school was to find a cure. There was no information about interdependence, caregiving, and valuing of contributions that people with MS make in their families and communities. I felt ashamed and afraid, but no one at my school knew that my dad had MS. This social construction of disability created a polarizing need for security alongside a discourse of deficiency.

In addition to the influence school had on how I understood my father's diagnosis, other messages about disability were being communicated at school. There were very few representations in school that were of inclusion and participation. We did not interact with students who were in the special education class. One year, there was a girl, the same age as me, who used a wheelchair. Our class was on the third floor of the school and as a result, she was placed in the special education class on the ground floor. She attended our school for only one year, but we did not get to know her or really spend time with her because of the placement. Other students in the special education class spent some portion of the day in our classroom. These ways of organizing disabled children taught us that to be disabled meant separation from the "normal" class. Representation of disability and active exclusion taught us how to think about disability (Watson, 2020). In my world as a child, being different meant being excluded.

Disability exists in many forms and is experienced in many ways. In popular culture, disabled children are often portrayed as white, middle class, and bullied. Their experiences are used to provide moral messages to other children about being a good friend and caring for disabled people, with an underlying message that disabled people need to be helped and are the subject of charity. As the child of a disabled parent, I was in the position of having a disabled person hold responsibility for me, parenting and caring for me.

For the most part, I did not think consciously about "disability" growing up, even when it was part of my everyday experience. In a sense, growing up in a household where disability was "normal" made it less pronounced. My parents, through their responses to disability, have helped to give me a consciousness of being "able-bodied" that I would not otherwise have had. My

family are white settlers who have lived in Canada for four generations. My parents both have university education, and three of my four grandparents went to university. I am the younger of two siblings. My mother attended university after I was born and earned both a bachelor's and master's degrees. My father is an engineer and entrepreneur working in the construction industry.

My experience as a white middle-class child fit into normative framings of disabled people in many ways, but my experience was also very different from the charity and deficit approaches that were evident in school. My experience of disability was from the standpoint of a relationship that was totally absent from the narrative of disability. I share my story because few narratives of disability take up the diversity of interactions that children have with disability, and that are important for understanding children's experiences of disability. Disability is not a characteristic of individuals, but a way of organizing people in society, and it is therefore present in everyone's lives.

From my standpoint as an educational researcher, I can now reflect on my early experiences with disablement through a different lens than I had at the time I was in school. As I have aged, I also now have additional experiences both of my own disability identity, and that of other members of my family. This is likely the case for many, but how I understand my identity is shaped by my experiences. At the time of my father's diagnosis in 1979, schools were undergoing significant reform through Bill 82 (1980). The special education class in my school was likely constituted as a result of Bill 82. Most discussions of disability position disabled people and non-disabled people as separate and without shared experience. Yet, for me, the experience of disability was both personal and long lasting. Whole families experience being the object of pity, of exclusion, and of stigma (Abbas, 2017; Thomas, 2020). It is important for me to highlight that access in schools should not be designed just for disabled children, but for the community as a whole. Disability theory can move us past this individualizing narrative about disability.

Like Ayshia, my understanding of disability today is shaped by experiences in and beyond my childhood. In the 1990's I worked at the Canadian Abilities Foundation, which promoted disability lifestyles, as opposed to the many NGO's working to "support" disabled people. I also volunteered at the Women's Counselling Referral and Education Centre (WCREC), a feminist psychiatric survivor clinic that made referrals to psycho-therapy services that held the principles of de-institutionalisation. It was at WCREC that I was trained in early anti-oppression frameworks by psychiatric survivors. These experiences were grounded in the activism of the 1990's in Toronto, which inform disability movements today. My current position as a faculty member in a program that trains educators is informed by these collective influences and informs my teaching, research, and engagement with communities.

Analysis of the Authors' Narratives

From Normalization to Disability Studies in Education

Our narratives can be understood as illustrative of a particular way of thinking linked to a given time; the thinking of that time persists. The deinstitutionalization movement and the spread of the “normalization” movement contributed to the mindset that led to Bill 82. During the late 1960s and 1970s, professionals and academics such as Nirje (1969) and Wolfensberger (1972) argued a need for change in the roles and relationships between people with disabilities, especially those with intellectual disabilities, and professional service providers.

Bunch (1994) describes the extensive history of special education that led to the reforms of the early 1980s. He notes that a separate special education system arose out of a long history of educating disabled children in institutional settings. In 1969, Bengt Nirje and others began to advocate for the “normalization principle” to set a foundation to help integrate people with intellectual disabilities into “normal” life stages and expectations. These normative developmental stages are still evident in policy documents in use today (Ministry of Education, 2014a, 2014b). During that same time period Wolf Wofensberger also began advocating for the normalization principles with some modifications. He subsequently renamed his theory “Social Role Valorization” (SRV) (Wolfensberger, 1985). Wolfensberger (1972), relying on deviance theory, argued that in order to improve the social status of people with intellectual disabilities and their families, human service organizations had to take a pragmatic approach towards the integration of this “devalued” or “deviant” group of people. The social model critiqued this approach arguing that normalization and SRV push people to “pass” as “normal” rather than changing society to be inclusive of the diversity of abilities that exist (Oliver, 1990, p. 163). Oliver and other academics argued that neither normalization nor SRV challenges the current social structure but rather is complicit and acts to sustain the discriminatory and exclusivity of power structures (Oliver, 1999; Chappell, 1992). Similarly, Chappell (1992) states that the central concerns of the normalization principle and SRV are those of service providers. It does not explore the “material and ideological factors which socially construct learning difficulty and disempower and (literally) impoverish people with learning difficulties” (p. 31). These critiques continue to be relevant today.

The shift from theories that focused on access to institutions without critically examining disablement itself (as in the normalization and SRV approaches) to theories that recognized the sociology of disability are well documented (Rubinoff, 2017). In inclusive education discourses, the focus on childhood is largely linked to professional discourses of teaching and maintenance of the divisive structures of childcare and schooling (Underwood, et al., 2021). However, new theories are emerging which simultaneously recognize that disabled children’s experiences are shaped by their

classification through normative thinking and, therefore, require dialogue about how clinical and developmental information can be applied through an equity lens and inform education and care for disabled children (Dalkilic & Vadeboncoeur, 2016). As Connor & Valle (2017) note, “by focusing on where normalcy comes from, and ways in which it is enforced, we begin to see how, among many other things, it is frequently used as a mechanism to exclude people, deemed ‘unfit’ to be in certain social spaces” (p. 204). These recent contributions from disability studies give us insight into normalization as a governing and colonial practice.

Disabled Children’s Childhood Studies is committed to examining disabled children’s experiences alongside the other social identities and experiences they hold. Goodley et al. (2020) note that *humanism* gave rise to specific “cherished notions of autonomy, responsibility, self-determination, solidarity, community-bonding, social justice and principles of equality” (p. 128). These concepts were linked to the individual with substantive categories of exclusion of the valued human subject who was defined by his sex, race, class, age, and ability status, leaving the “other” (Goodley et al., 2020). Disability as a social category creates a space that de-centres what makes us human, and the institutions of childhood are implicated in the construction of what it means to be human for whole groups of people. Experiences of and with disability can provide a new entry point into understanding childhood and justice, particularly in the context of social institutions (Underwood et al., 2019). While these critiques seem obvious today, we both felt the need to be viewed as “normal,” and we believe this still shapes the lives of children today.

Activism of the 1990s

The 1990s were a time of legal and educational reform that led to a discourse on inclusion. We believe that there was a slow shift away from the rights-based discourse that was the catalyst for the social model of disability, toward more managerial approaches. Since that time there have been a number of policy documents that build from Ontario Regulation 181/98 (which outlines criteria for qualifying for special education). These documents are also reflective of the international trends in education reform. For example, in 2005 the Ontario Ministry of Education released “*Education for All: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Students with Special Educational Needs, Kindergarten to Grade 6,*” which illustrates the shift toward accountability and literacy and numeracy instruction that has characterized educational reforms in many jurisdictions. In Ontario, this report followed the implementation of standardized testing in the province with the establishment of the Education Quality and Accountability Office in 1996. The report outlines the principles of Universal Design and Differentiated Instruction, which are considered to be central to inclusive instructional practice (Jordan, 2007). Similarly, in their 2007 report, *Shared Solutions*, the

Ministry outlined strategies to engage with parents in special education disputes, which illustrated the challenges children and families faced in this system.

Accountability to parents is also a significant educational trend since implementation of Bill 82. In 2007 the Ontario Government published *Shared Solutions: A Guide to Preventing and Resolving Conflicts Regarding Programs and Services for Students with Special Educational Needs*. The focus on problem solving with parents may be a positive step, yet it also points to the perception that conflict with parents is such a problem that it warrants a guide to resolution. It also makes us wonder why parents are so antagonized.

Reindal (2010) and Hegarty (2001) stress that parents send their children to school to be educated, not to be included. Inclusion is something one expects from the school's practices so that their children will be treated fairly, protected from harm, and taken care of, as well as not being excluded and isolated from classmates. In other words, inclusion must be in line with core educational values. Reindal (2010) argues that inclusion should be seen through the lens of human flourishing, a pursuit that all students should have freedom to explore. Our experiences and the education reforms since show a focus on qualifying for service rather than understanding lived experiences of disabled students and disabled people.

Both of us have and do work in community organizing and activism alongside disabled, mad, and Black, Indigenous and racialized communities. We both currently work in higher education. This article arises out of our shared experience of resistance to talking about disability. In our work we use the term disability to describe experiences that many children have in schools. Through our personal experiences with disability, particularly as students who lived through the implementation of Bill 82, we argue that the ways that school systems construct disability is narrow, and that we need to better understand how all children learn about disability in schools while ensuring that disabled children are recognised as present and valued. Given the long period of educational reform that has sought to equalize opportunity for disabled students, but which has yet to achieve this end, we reflect on our frustration that disability theory and professional practice have yet to find an extended common discourse that allows for open conversations about disability and childhood. The 1990's, however, also sparked activism that centred racialized, queer and disabled voices and led to the disability justice movement that has roots in the Toronto of our childhoods (Piepzna-Samarashinha, 2018).

Reconceptualising Disability and Childhood Studies

Institutions that are spaces for children are implicated in the erasure of disability as a legitimate and valued way of experiencing the world (Davies et al., 2021). In part, this erasure results from the dominance of pathologizing discourse (Underwood et al., 2020), but also from emerging frameworks that

ignore disability (Lalvani et al., 2015). We share our different experiences to illustrate the importance of seeing disability in the lives of all children, not just those who are marked as disabled.

As adults now working in professional roles, we have greatly benefited from the sophisticated disability theories that have emerged. However, these theories do not permeate the professional discourses that we are exposed to on a daily basis. It seems that the vision of inclusion that is evident in the postsocial model theories of disability are not evident in our everyday lives. Pedagogical approaches to inclusive education are taught in teacher preparation programs without ever talking about the experiences of discrimination; this erasure evokes the same emotional responses that we felt 30 years ago. Parents and families are not using disability discourse to advocate for their children (Hegarty, 2001), perhaps because disability activism and theory of the kind we have described in this article has not yet permeated their social discourse. Our experiences as children are critical in how we understand disability today and that is true for today's children as well. We need a theory that is rooted in the everyday lives of all children, in order to address children's experiences of disability, ableism, and injustice. As Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2011) implored us, we need:

Theories that do not put the problems of disablism or violence back onto disabled people but magnify and expose processes of disablism that are produced in the relationships between people. This means taking seriously the role of institutions, culture and social relationships in the constitution of violence. Disabled children, we argue, are enculturated into the violence of disablism. (p. 604)

Access to clinical, medical, and educational services is a human right but should not shape all aspects of a child's life. Disabled people's lives, relationships, experiences, and contributions are a valuable site of pride, joy, and connection.

Critical Disability Studies and inclusion have an uncomfortable relationship. Inclusive education has focused on bringing disabled children into spaces that were not designed for them. While encouraging adaptation and accommodation, the normal child is still at the centre (Eilers, 2021). The historical discourse on disability shaped the education we experienced as children. In our experiences, the ongoing division between disabled and normal has impacted how we understood ourselves in school environments. We are interested, however, in the progress toward institutional representations of disability and identity that are both emancipatory and productive.

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