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Beyond Spatial Materiality, Towards Inter- and Intra-Subjectivity: Conceptualizing Exclusion in Education as Internalized Ableism and Psycho-Emotional Disablement

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Beyond spatial materiality, towards inter- and intra-subjectivity: conceptualizing exclusion in education as internalized ableism and psycho-emotional disablement

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ABSTRACT

Of the little written about educational exclusion, much of it considers exclusion as disabled students experiencing less access, opportunities and participation in education when compared to their nondisabled same-aged peers. Our article aims to move beyond these narrow, parochial, and reductive postulates by centering the inter- and intra-subjectivities of disabled students to conceptualize exclusion as experiences with internalized ableism and psycho-emotional disablement that may (or may not) be experienced in any or all material and social spaces in education. We cast light on ableism and psycho-emotional disablement in education so that we and others can challenge, disrupt, and transform it given that it can impact negatively on the wellbeing of disabled students. We end by encouraging researchers to explore how ableism permeates the ideologies, discourses, logics, and traditions of education systems, and for policy makers, school leaders, and teachers to experience anti-disablism training and to adopt an anti-ableist perspective.

Introduction

When compared to educational inclusion, the concept of educational exclusion has received far less academic attention, especially when it comes to how it is lived, embodied, and internalized as a form of oppression by disabled students. We hope to change that here by drawing on the work of disability theorists Carol Thomas (e.g. 1999, 2001), Donna Reeve (e.g. 2002, 2004, 2020), and Fiona Kumari Campbell (e.g. 2001, 2009, 2017), and empirical work relating to school policy, resourcing, curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and teacher professional development, to add complexity and nuance to postulates of exclusion by moving them beyond what we consider to be their narrow, parochial, static and reductive parameters of exclusion as (a lack of) access to, and opportunities and participation in, physical and material spaces (Oliver 2013). To do so, we conceptualize, for the first time in education research, exclusion as inter- and intra-subjective experiences of internalized ableism and psycho-emotional disablement.

For us, education spaces are not fixed nor absolute. Material spaces such as schools, classrooms, playgrounds, and gymnasia are not blank canvases. Rather, they are liquid, dynamic and fluid because they are socially constructed and (re)produced through human interactions (Armstrong 2012) – students interacting with each other, teachers with students, students with teaching assistants, and so on. These interactions, together with the social institutions that are external to education spaces such a government, the economy, and civic society, shape school culture. By school culture, we mean the ideologies, values, discourses, practices, behaviours and forms of representation that become so firmly embedded in education that they are considered spatial logics (Imrie 2014). Here, it is crucial to note that power permeates relationships and interactions – both directly and indirectly – that work to structure and shape education spaces (Waitoller and Annamma 2017). In this article, we consider power as a structural characteristic of all human relationships that is often, but not exclusively, skewed towards those with their hands on the levers of power (Hoare and Nowell-Smith 1971) in education, such as policy makers, government officials, and senior leaders and administrators in schools. Power, for us, relates to the ways and extent to which an individual or group can shape the ideologies, values, discourses, and behaviours of others (Hoare and Nowell-Smith 1971). Thus, the meanings that disabled students ascribe to exclusion are influenced – by degrees – by those who are part of their relational networks. At the same time, disabled students are not passive recipients of the wants and wishes of others but, instead, actively involved in shaping their own lived, embodied experiences (Engelstad, 2009). In short, power relationships and interactions, that involve disabled students negotiating, contesting, and oftentimes resisting, act to structure school spaces and thus the inter- and intra-subjectivities of disabled students within those spaces (Kitchin 1998).

Intersubjective experiences shape a persons' perceptions of their interactions with the biological, social, and material entities that inhabit the world such as subjects and objects (Bottero 2010). A person's intersubjectivity acts as a filter that influences how they interpret the world through mental, sensory, and linguistic processes. Embodied experiences, and the meaning constructed about them that creates an internal world logic, are both shared and individual, which distinguishes the intersubjective from the subjective (Reich 2010). While subjectivity clearly distinguishes and arguably separates the self from others and thus constructs an alienated mode of being, intersubjectivity relates to a participatory consciousness whereby it is acknowledged that self and others are interdependently bound together (Reich 2010). Hence, intra-subjectivities – that is, the meanings and psycho-emotional feelings of disabled students about education – are inextricably linked to the interactions they have with others that are part of their relational network both inside (e.g. teachers, teaching assistants, other students) and outside (e.g. parents, family members, friends) of school.

Ideas about the primacy and significance attributed to the individual person and the collective group continue, by degrees, to be junctures of tension that can separate psychological and sociological work. As such, according to Goodley (2020), the psyche, and psycho-emotional wellbeing, is often considered the work of psychologists and thus sociologists should avoid it. That said, there is a rich history of scholars, such as Émile Durkheim (1972), Norbert Elias (1939, 1991), Anthony Giddens (1984), Kurt Lewin (1968), George Herbert Mead (1967), and Gabriel Tarde (1969), to name but a few, who have advocated for the fusion of the disciplines through, for example, an exploration of psychological states

through social analysis. In this respect, we agree with Thomas (1999) who suggested that it is crucial that sociologists explore psycho-emotional wellbeing and, in turn, psycho-emotional disablement so that it is not left to psychologist to apply an individual, deficit model to these issues. Consequently, we take up Thomas' (2007) call to broaden the theoretical base of psycho-emotional disablement, to extend the work of Campbell by connecting internalized ableism to psycho-emotional disablement, and by developing the work of Thomas and Reeve by conceptualizing, for the first time in education research, the inter- and intra-subjective dimensions to psycho-emotional disablement, which are lived, embodied, spatial, temporal and therefore transient. While we call for the centering of the voices and living embodiment of disabled students as part of our commitment to disrupting epistemic injustices by considering them as expert knowers (Fricker 2007), we also consider the ways and extent to which power relationships permeate the material and social spaces that disabled students' mind-bodies-selves inhabit and, accordingly, influence how they experience and construct meaning about those spaces. For us, it is crucial that bright light is cast on ableism and psycho-emotional disablement in education so that we and others can endeavor to challenge and disrupt it given that empirical research suggests that it can impact negatively on the wellbeing of disabled students (Haegele and Maher 2022; Reeve 2020). Before doing so, we first discuss concepts of inclusion to anchor our work to a firmer conceptual bedrock, before exploring understandings of exclusion as inter- and intra-subjective experiences of internalized ableism and psycho-emotional disablement.

Concepts of inclusion in education policy and practice

While it is difficult to trace the genesis of complex socio-cultural and political processes, 'inclusion' as we know it today came about mainly, but not exclusively, because of the work of social and political activist groups who campaigned for disabled peoples' equal access to and opportunities in all aspects of life (Hodkinson 2011). The disabled people's movement, which initially spread across Western Europe and North America, campaigned for an end to segregated special schooling and the integration (later know as inclusion) of disabled students into mainstream schools to be educated with their same-aged peers as a way of redressing the educational, social, and economic disadvantage experienced by the former when compared to the latter (see Barnes, Mercer, and Shakespeare 1999). It was the World Education Forums of 1990 and 1994 that significantly influenced the 'becoming' of inclusion as a global buzzword that now guides education policy and practice in many countries (Slee 2018). According to Haegele and Maher (2022), inclusion has become so deeply embedded in the ideologies, values, discourses, traditions, practices and forms of representation of education systems across the world that it manifests as taken for granted assumptions and spatial logics. Despite the seemingly privileged position that it occupies in education policy, practice and even scholarship, the use of the term inclusion remains contentious and varied (Moore & Slee, 2018), with unclear meaning that is 'constantly changing and liquid' (Imray and Colley 2017, p. 1) depending on the material and social spaces in which it is used. The fact that postulates of inclusion can and have been crafted and utilized to discuss identities, embodied experiences, and forces of oppression other than disability, such as those relating to race, gender, sexuality, socio-economic status, and nationality, both individually and as they intersect (Messiou 2017), adds to the nuance and complexity of it.

Scholars have pointed out that the varied and ambiguous meaning of inclusion, which is considered by Slee (2018) as a form of 'eduspeak' devoid of its original political and emancipatory intent, can have detrimental effects on educational scholarship and the education of disabled students. For example, Ridgway (2019) refers to inclusion as a weasel word because it masks complexity and real dilemmas in practice and supports marginalization and oppression of disabled people despite its propagated intent. Relatedly, the ambiguity of inclusion allows consumers to make their own assumptions about the concept's meaning, and many stakeholders, including policy makers, school leaders and teachers, use their agency to take the simplest approach to inclusion, conflating it with access to material and social spaces regardless of how those spaces are experienced by disabled students (Haegele 2019). This is problematic, as even though disabled and nondisabled students may be educated in the same material and social space, interact with each other, access the same curriculum, and experience the same pedagogical and assessment arrangements, they may construct meaning and make sense of those spaces and practices differently because of their lived and living embodiment and there is therefore potential for unintended negative consequences (Slee 2018). For instance, despite mainstream or integrated schooling being heralded as 'inclusive' (Cobigo et al. 2012), empirical research has shown that disabled students in mainstream schools are much more likely to experience marginalization, ostracization and bullying than their nondisabled peers, do not always receive the services and resources that they required and are entitled too, and are likely to experience curriculum and pedagogical approaches that are not suitably tailored to their needs and abilities (Crouch, Keys, and McMahon 2014; Messiou 2017).

The ambiguity associated with inclusion has been said to have stunted our ability to develop an understanding of how to embrace and enhance this concept in scholarship and education (Nilholm and Göransson 2017). To allay concerns, Graham and Slee (2008) have encouraged scholars to develop and be explicit with definitions and meanings about the term. To this point, we have, as have others (e.g. Ridgway 2019; Slee 2019), attempted to provide clarity to the meaning of inclusion and, perhaps, advance it by moving it beyond the parochial parameters of inclusion being about access to material and social spaces and opportunities and participation within them (see Haegele and Maher 2023). This work, thus far, has taken on a few different steps. For example, some scholarship has been presented to conceptually distinguish material spaces where disabled and nondisabled students are (educated) together, or integrated settings, from inclusion (Haegele 2019; Stainback and Stainback 1996). This is an important distinction, as it allows us to problematize integrated placements without challenging seemingly ubiquitous notions about the importance and value of inclusion. Accordingly, we have advanced efforts to (re)conceptualize inclusion as intersubjective experiences by centering feelings of belonging, acceptance, and value from the perspective of those being 'included (see Haegele and Maher 2023)'. These conceptualizations, taken together, help to move empirical research on inclusion beyond materiality and the disconnected and disembodied individual's presence within a material and social space, and moves it toward centering disabled people's experiences within the spaces that their mind-body-self inhabits (Richardson and Motl 2019). For us, these more nuanced, sophisticated, and disabled person-centered perspectives about inclusion represent important progress because it better aligns it with calls for empirical research to amplify disabled voices as well as minimize nondisabled power in education (Pellicano,

Dinsmore, and Charman 2014) as well as the *nothing about us, without us* movement calling for disabled people's involvement in understandings of their experiences (Charlton 2000). Despite the attention that the term inclusion has received, considerably less has been given to the concept of educational exclusion, particularly in relation to the lived, embodied experiences of disabled students. Therefore, it is to a discussion of educational exclusion that we now turn to connect it to internalized ableism and psycho-emotional disablement.

Concepts of educational exclusion

For some, exclusion is about the ways and extent to which those who have their hands on the levers of power in education, such as policymakers, local education authorities and school leaders, use their influence to detach one group from others who constitute a social mainstream (Bullen, Kenway, and Hay 2000). In this interpretation of exclusion, one group, generally those deemed of lower social and political status, such as disabled students, is separated from or even discarded or abandoned to a material space away from that occupied by the mainstream majority (Slee 2019). In education, empirical research has shown this to play out in local education authorities exercising the power that they wield to encourage, sometimes compel, parents to send their disabled students to a special school (Mawene and Bal 2018; Satherley and Norwich 2022) because their mind-body-selves do not confirm to ableist ideals about thinking, doing and being. In other instances, this takes the form of mainstream school leaders deciding to remove disabled students from, or restricting their access to, the learning spaces and experiences provided to nondisabled students in school by, for example, placing them in the school's 'inclusion department' (Slee 2019). Often, the rationale for these forms of spatial exclusion is that it is 'in the best interests' of the disabled students, despite local authorities and school leaders rarely enabling disabled students to demonstrate their agency by involving them in the decisions that impact on their educational experiences and life outcomes (Slee 2018). In fact, there is good empirical evidence suggesting that appeals and tribunals, which are the mechanisms that parents can use to contest school placement decisions, are extremely lengthy, difficult to navigate, and require a significant investment of time, money, and emotional energy (Marsh 2022).

For us, the concept of exclusion, like inclusion, must move beyond commonly adopted yet parochial definitions. We have several concerns about understanding educational exclusion as access to and opportunities in 'mainstream' material and social spaces only. First, these understandings tend to center on the disconnected and disembodied individual's presence, or absence, from a material and social space. As such, exclusion and, by extension, disability, are considered entirely structural forms of discrimination and oppression. While it is important to note that the challenging and transformation of structural forms of discrimination and oppression as they manifest in education, as well as other contexts, can and has impacted positively on the social and material conditions of disabled people (Oliver 2013), they do neglect how exclusion is inter- and intra-subjectively experienced and felt by, in this instance, disabled students. Indeed, it is notable that the voices of disabled students themselves are absent from dominant conceptualizations of exclusion, thus meaning that material and social spaces, whether that be mainstream, integrated, or segregated, are

considered either indicative of educational exclusion or not based largely on the decisions of (mostly nondisabled) adult stakeholders. What is important to note, here, is that while there are spatial dimensions to feelings of belonging, acceptance, and value, and thus feelings of 'inclusion', those feelings are also temporal and transient – rather than fixed and rigid – and thus, according to empirical research, can and do change as (disabled) students move through space and interact with different groups of people in school (Haegele and Maher 2022; Mahar, Cobigo, and Stuart 2013). We would argue, as we have vis-a-vis feelings of inclusion (Haegele and Maher 2023), that feelings of exclusion are transient, and can (and, perhaps, do) exist within a variety of educational spaces beyond just those typically thought of as exclusionary (e.g. segregated classes, special schools) and likely exist within integrated classes or schools as well.

Another concern related to exclusion as material space centers on spatial hierarchy. Given the moral and ethical higher ground that inclusion occupies in policy, practice, and scholarship when it comes of access, opportunities and participation in mainstream educational material and social spaces (Kauffman and Badar 2020), exclusion vis-à-vis segregated schooling takes the proverbial lower ground. As we have written elsewhere (Haegele and Maher 2023), we believe that positive, authentic, and meaningful education experiences, including those considered inclusive when understanding inclusion as feelings of belonging, acceptance, and value, can happen in all forms of educational spaces, including those typically thought of as 'exclusion', such as segregated schools. Despite the potential for inclusive experiences within segregated settings, which may be tied to the ability to specially design learning tasks and environments that are tailored to the wants, needs, and desires of disabled students, these settings tend to be deprioritized, dismantled, or phased out (Kauffman et al. 2021; Slee 2018) due to the spatial hierarchy assigned to integrated spaces in the name of inclusion.

To continue our work in developing understandings of the lived, embodied, and inter-subjective experiences of disabled people within, and outside of, educational contexts, it is critical for us to further develop understandings of exclusion, as we previously have inclusion. For us, current understandings of exclusion, namely those that center on material and social spaces, and simply and reductively thought of as the absence of inclusion, are limited and superficial. While perhaps these stances are logical when considering physical or observational forms of inclusion/exclusion, it is less understandable when thinking about inclusion as an intersubjective and lived experience, given the absence of one feeling does not create an experiential or emotional void, but is rather replaced by other emotions and lived experiences. Said another way, assuming exclusion to be the lack of inclusion, or the lack of feelings of acceptance, belonging, and value, is illogical and does not consider other feelings that may emerge and can be associated with exclusion. With this in mind, we center our conversations around exclusion understood as inter- and intra-subjectivities that centralize the lived, embodied, individual and shared experiences of disabled students. We view this understanding of exclusion to support distinctions between material and social spaces (i.e. separation) and feelings within those spaces (i.e. exclusion), as well as calls for empirical research to center the views and feelings of disabled people about their experiences to better understand those experiences (Pellicano, Dinsmore, and Charman 2014). To do so, we now move to conceptualizing exclusion as internalized ableism and psycho-emotional disablement by, in the first instance, unpacking ableism and the ways and extent to which it becomes internalized.

Ableism in education and its internalization as experiences of exclusion

We are not the first and hopefully will not be the last to explore the ways and extent to which ableism permeates the culture of education. For instance, ableism has been explored empirically in education policy and initiatives (Timberlake 2020), teacher education (Broderick and Lalvani 2017), medical education (Jain 2020), social work education (Kattari et al. 2020), art education (Penketh 2017) and physical education (Maher, van Rossum, and Morley 2023). Our conceptualization of ableism is situated in critical disability studies scholarship and influenced by the work of Fiona Kumari Campbell. According to Campbell (2001, 2019), ableism permeates all cultural formations, including education, in that it is inextricably bound to the hegemonic ideologies, values, logics, traditions, practices, interactions and forms of representation that produce a particular kind of mind-body-self that is projected, promoted, and celebrated as perfect, species typical, and therefore essential to being considered fully human. Those individuals and groups that do not conform to this conception of 'the human', which according to posthuman feminist Rosi Braidotti (2013) is tied to Enlightenment period ideal best represented *via* Di Vinci's white, western European, nondisabled Vitruvian Man, are cast as sub- or less than-human. As such, disability is cast as 'a diminished state of being human' (Campbell 2001, 44) because disabled people, especially those that inhabit mainstream education spaces, threaten normative and ableist percepts of how the mind-body-self should think, look, move, be and become. It follows then that ableism is an intersubjective mode of symbolic power and domination (Bourdieu 1991) that permeates all social relations and interactions in the cultural fields of education, producing processes and systems of entitlement for nondisabled students, and oppression, marginalization, and exclusion for disabled students because they do not conform to normative expectations. According to Goodley et al. (2019):

Schools [and education generally] are built upon highly regulated principles and policy discourses of individual achievement and progression. They are inherently individualistic and reward the entrepreneurial achievements of self-governing learners. The school is a literal and metaphorical ableist playground (p. 987).

As such, ableist educational systems, and hegemonic logics relating to policy construction and enactment, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment, act as what Antonio Gramsci called mechanisms of cultural (re)production (Hoare and Nowell-Smith 1971) by contributing towards creating hierarchized notions of the mind-body-self through the 'differentiation, ranking, negation, notification, and prioritization of sentient life' (Campbell 2019, 287–288). We see this most starkly through the Neoliberal performative culture of schools that is perpetuated through high stakes testing, league tables, state-orchestrated inspections (such as Ofsted in the UK), curriculum, and teacher education (see Apple 2017; Ball 2016). Such Neoliberal performative cultures shape perceptions of cognition and corporeality and thus the construction of legitimate forms of ability-related capital. Students who are positioned and perceived as possessing such capital are privileged over others. Too often, hegemonic beliefs about capital are based on normative perceptions of how the (able) mind-body-self should think, look, and move, thus resulting in many disabled students and some with special educational needs experiencing what Bourdieu (1991) considered symbolic violence because, according to empirical research conducted by Goodley et al. (2019), Lynch, Simon, and Maher (2023) and Maher, van Rossum, and Morley (2023), their cognitive and corporeal abilities are judged negatively and thus subordinated through an able-mind/body gaze. In

this regard, the able-mind/body gaze infiltrates associated practices that work to police and regulate nonnormative mind-body-selves by, empirical research by Maher, van Rossum, and Morley (2023) suggests, using normative tools for assessing learning, learner progress and learner achievement as a way of reinforcing ableist normalcy.

According to Wolbring (2008), ableism is so pervasive that it manifests as common-sense cultural ideologies and discourses underpinning taken-for-granted logics and thus is considered 'the natural' or 'common sense' way of being (in schools). So much so, in fact, that ableism becomes internalized; that is, it shapes the individual and collective habitus or personality structure (Elias 1978). It can be said, therefore, that ableism is structural, cultural, intersubjective, intrasubjective, and psycho-emotional in nature (Reeve 2020). Disabled young people are not immune to the internalization of ableist modes of thinking, doing and being, which act as a form of exclusion because they can lead to psycho-emotional disablement by impacting negatively on their self-esteem, self-confidence, mental health, and general well-being because they attempt, and often fail, to hold themselves to often unrealistic ableist thresholds (Reeve 2020). Hence, it is crucial that ableism-critical perspectives are utilized to disrupt, dislodge, and transform hegemonic ideologies, discourses, and practices that subordinate the nonnormative mind-body-self because of the negative consequences it can have for their sense of self and personhood. We hope that this article, which centers the lived, embodied experiences of disabled students to conceptualize exclusion as inter- and intra-subjective experiences of internalized ableism and psycho-emotional disablement, contributes in some small way to that cause.

Exclusion as internalized ableism and psycho-emotional disablement

Much of the work done by sociologists and disability scholars has been anchored to a social understanding of disability and thus focused on challenging spatial forms of exclusion to improve the material and social conditions of disabled people, especially in relation to access, opportunities and participation in education, employment, and housing (Oliver 2013). Far less attention has been given, however, to exploring exclusion as inter- and intra-subjective experiences that impacts the psycho-emotional wellbeing of disabled people, especially disabled students. For many disability and disabled scholars, this neglect is tied to a reluctance to personalize disability for fear of stoking the individual, medical, pathological, deficit and tragedy discursive fires that have been (and still are) bound to disability (Shakespeare 1994). Nonetheless, rather than thinking about disability as being external to the individual and collective, our thinking aligns with that of Shakespeare (1994) and Braidotti (2013) who contest that the (disabled)mind-body-self is a bio-psycho-social-cultural-political entity that is neither inherently good or bad, but instead exists and has meanings ascribed to it in the different material and social spaces that it inhabits. It is for these reasons that we explore how the structural forces that shape material and social spaces, whether that be segregated, integrated, or mainstream, influence how disability and exclusion are lived, embodied, and felt.

For us, the first component of exclusion as an inter- and intra-subjective experience is the lived, felt, and embodied experience of psycho-emotional disablement. Our conceptualization of psycho-emotional disablement is inspired by, but not anchored to, the work of Carol Thomas (2001, 1999) and Donna Reeve (2020, 2004, 2002). The genesis of psycho-emotional disablement as a tool to think with, make sense of and construct meaning

about inter- and intra-subjectivities of disability is tied to Thomas' (re)wording of the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation's (UPIAS, 1978) definition of disability. Thomas developed the UPIAS's definition to include a focus on the impact of disablism on psycho-emotional wellbeing:

> Disablism is a form of social oppression involving the social imposition of restrictions of activity on people with impairments and the socially engendered undermining of their psycho-emotional well-being (2007, 73).

According to Reeve (2020), psycho-emotional disablement is both structural and inter-actional in nature, thus meaning it can be experienced indirectly or directly. For instance, the natural and built contours of a school can restrict access to material and social spaces if lifts, ramps, or electronic doors are not installed or in good working condition. Moreover, government, local council and school funding models may limit the services and provision that teachers are able to use, regardless of integrated or segregated space or place, to meet the needs and abilities of some disabled students. For example, a lack of learning assistant support, or even limited access to colour overlays or low vision aids because of financial pressures, can impact detrimentally on disabled students' experiences of school and thus their psycho-emotional wellbeing. Finally, but by no means lastly, school curriculums and assessment arrangements may be normatively standardized and thus not appropriate to meet the needs and abilities of some disabled students. All these structural issues, which are shaped by those with their hands on the levers of power in government and education, none of whom disabled children will have met or even know, work to disable some disabled students, elicit or support feelings of exclusion, and impact negatively on their psycho-emotional wellbeing (Reeve 2020). Indeed, inaccessible material and social spaces, limited specialized services and resources, and poorly designed curriculum and assessments are forms of sym-bolic violence (Bourdieu 1991) that are exercised upon disabled students, making them feel that they are out of place, part of an undesirable and unwanted minority, and more of a burden than an asset (Haegele and Maher 2022; Reeve 2020). It is here where our concep-tualization of exclusion extends beyond materiality, and thinks more so about the feelings, subjectivities, and psycho-emotional wellbeing experienced by disabled people. In other words, structural forms of oppression can impact negatively on the ways and extent to which disabled students feel that they belong, are accepted and are valued in the material and social spaces that their mind-body-selves inhabit (Haegele and Maher 2022).

Together with indirect, structural forms of oppression, we conceptualize exclusion as direct, interactional, and thus intersubjective forms of psycho-emotional disablement. We tie this to Shakespeare's (1994) and Hughes' (2007) work on the 'disavowal of disability'. For Shakespeare (1994), disavowal of disability is the projection of unwanted fears about mor-tality, dying and physicality onto disabled people and is thus inextricably tied to what Shildrick (2020) calls the psycho-emotional framework of ableism. For us, it is a clear indicator of the ableism that saturates the culture of schools and thus the interactions that shape the material and social spaces within them (Campbell 2019; Goodley et al. 2019). The disavowal of disability manifests in the everyday micro-interactions – what Campbell (2001) calls the microaggressions – that disabled students have with all of those who are part of their relational networks in schools, such as teachers, support staff and same aged-peers. Being stared at, laughed at, talked about, and even not talked to are all examples of the everyday symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1991) experienced by disabled students that

can lead to feelings of exclusion and (ontological) invalidation. It is perhaps (un)surprising to know that disabled students are much more likely to experience bullying, both physical and symbolic, when compared to their nondisabled same-aged peers (Jessup et al. 2018; Ktenidis 2022). Such bullying is indicative of the symbolic power (Bourdieu 1991) that can result in marginalization and ostracization and, accordingly, mean that feelings of belonging, acceptance, and values are difficult to come by (Haegele and Maher, 2022; Slee, 2019). In fact, inter- and intra-subjective feelings of marginalization have been identified through empirical research as a threat to fundamental psychological needs of belonging and self-esteem for youth (Crouch et al. 2014) to a stronger degree than forms of physical bullying (Benton, 2011). Marginalization and ostracization can, according to empirical research conducted by Eisenberger and Lieberman (2004) and Kawamoto, Ura, and Nittono (2015), be intersubjectively experienced as social pain. Defined as a distressing experience arising from the perception of actual or potential psychological distance from social groups or close others (Eisenberger and Cole 2012), social pain is inextricably tied to group power dynamics and social interactions and relationships and has been shown through research to share neural similarities with physical pain (Eisenberger and Lieberman 2004). Over time, microaggressions and experiences of social pain build as a critical mass to impact negatively on the psycho-emotional wellbeing of disabled students (Reeve 2020). The negative effects of social pain on mental health and well-being are well-established in empirical research, where social pain has been linked to a range of deleterious psychological health indices, such as depression, anxiety, and reduced life satisfaction (e.g. Liu and Alloy 2010).

As well as being indicative of existential invalidation, microaggressions can lead to existential insecurity because disabled students approach the interactions that they have with nondisabled people with trepidation and even fear because of uncertainty about what will happen (Reeve 2020). One outcome of this fear of existential invalidation is self-isolation and self-removal. For instance, avoiding the gaze of and interactions with their nondisabled same-aged peers, especially as their mind-bodies-selves move through the spatial dimensions of schools, or removing themselves from formal schooling entirely. This is a well-known consequence of the systemic oppression that disabled people experience: feelings of exclusion resulting in self-isolation or self-removal (Slee 2018). Empirical research has shown that, oftentimes, there is an (unreasonable) requirement on minority groups, including disabled students, to invest significant emotional labor into assimilating in the ableist culture of schools and same-aged peer groups (Dawson 2019). Disabled students must pay an emotional tax to try and 'fit in' with others. When the emotional tax they must pay becomes too burdensome, some disabled students 'choose' to self-isolate. From an ableist perspective, the decision to self-isolate would be considered as the disabled student's 'choice' and thus would act as an ableist exemplar of a disabled person demonstrating their agency. As such, school leaders, teachers, support assistants and same-aged peers can absolve themselves of the burden of responsibility, which is a key feature of disablism (Goodley 2014). Accordingly, structural forms and intersubjective experiences of oppression are represented as personal problems and decisions, which is indicative of ableist victim blaming (Slee 2018).

Existential invalidation, perhaps most crucially, is inextricably bound to internalized oppression. For Marks (1999), internalized oppression concerns the relationship that disabled students have with their self and arises when disabled students internalize the prejudices that nondisabled others – same-aged peers, support assistants, teachers, and even parents – have about them. According to French (1994), young people may be more

susceptible to internalizing oppression because they are more likely to lack the knowledge, skill, experience, resources, support, and confidence to challenge and disrupt it. Internalized oppression can impact negatively on self-confidence, self-esteem, self-worth, and thus psycho-emotional wellbeing (Reeve 2020). While the concept of internalized oppression has done much to connect the individual and their psyche to wider social and cultural forces of oppression, we advocate instead for a focus on internalized ableism because it more adequately captures the ways and extent to which the ableist ideologies, values, logics, traditions, practices, behaviors, and forms of representation in schools – and, indeed, society in general – are lived, embodied, and internalized by disabled students (Campbell 2019). Like hegemonic ideologies, values, and logics generally, ableism can become so deeply embedded in the habitus or personality structure of individuals and collectives – whether disabled or not – that they become common sense cultural arrangement and assumptions that are perpetuated by all that have accepted them (Elias 1978). For Bourdieu, hence, disabled students, over time, create an ableist imaginary whereby they compare themselves to normative (and often unachievable) standards of mind-body-self. Failure, particularly when it is persistent, to reach such normative, ableist expectations can impact negatively on psycho-emotional wellbeing (Reeve 2020), and therefore, enhance feelings of exclusion.

Concluding thoughts

In this article, we aimed to shift hegemonic postulates of educational exclusion beyond their narrow, parochial, and reductive parameters of access, opportunity, and participation, towards a focus on inter- and intra-subjective experiences of ableism and psycho-emotional disablement. This was part of our commitment to centering the living embodiment of disabled students and a recognition of them as expert knowers. Saying that, we also considered the ways and extent to which power relationships permeate the material and social spaces that disabled students' mind-bodies-selves inhabit and, accordingly, influence how they experience and construct meaning about material and material spaces in education. We did this to broaden the theoretical base of work relating to educational exclusion, ableism, and psycho-emotional disablement. Given how we have (re)conceptualized exclusion, the natural tendency may be to associate it with disabled students' feelings of isolation, loneliness, worthlessness, inferiority, anxiety, and fear. While there is some evidence to support this claim, particularly when considered in relation to the emotional framework of ableism (e.g. Shildrick 2020), we argue that more empirical research is required which explores the emotions associated with internalized ableism and psycho-emotional disablement from the perspective of disabled students in education. What we do hope that this article can do is give policy makers, school leaders, teachers, and researchers tools to disrupt ableism and minimize, ideally prevent, disabled students from experiencing psycho-emotional disablement.

Even though ideologies, values and logics can become so deeply embedded in our personality structure that they become difficult to dislodge, there is no inevitability to internalized ableism. According to Reeve (2004), strong counter-ableist narrative resources are needed for disabled students to draw upon to disrupt the internalization of ableism. For instance, there are a distinct lack of positive disabled role models in the lives of disabled students (Coates and Vickerman 2016), thus meaning that disabled students lack the (counter) narrative resources to challenge psycho-emotional disablement. As such, there is an urgent need for schools to source, represent, champion, and celebrate the achievements

of disabled people as part of an endeavour to empower disabled students. While this is done to some degree *via* the celebration of the achievements of Paralympic athletes (McKay, Block, and Park 2015), it needs to become more firmly embedded in what Bolt (2020) refers to as cultural representations in schools to deepen understandings of disability and challenge the deficit metanarrative of disability. While positive disabled role models may go some way to enabling disabled students to exercise their power to disrupt ableism (McKay, Haegele, and Pérez-Torralba 2022), it is important to note again that ableism is so deeply entrenched in the culture of education – and, indeed, society generally – that more systemic and radical change is required. For instance, there is a need to disrupt and transform the ableism that permeates all mechanisms of cultural (re)production (Hoare and Nowell-Smith 1971) in schools, such as school policy, resourcing, curriculum, pedagogy, assessments, and teacher professional development, to name but a few. Before this important work can be carried out, though, it is crucial that all stakeholders in schools, especially those with their hands on the levers of power such as school leaders, experience anti-disablism education and adopt an anti-ableist perspective (Beckett and Buckner 2012) so that they have the knowledge and understanding of why this perspective and approach is important and how it may be utilised. Saying that, much more work needs to be done by researchers, ourselves included, to explore the ways and extent to which ableism manifests in education and the strategies that are to be used to challenge, disrupt, and transform it.

We consider empirical research about, with and for disabled students to be key to anti-ableist work in education. Indeed, for researchers to gain an understanding of feelings of exclusion within educational spaces, there is an urgent need to amplify the voices of disabled students about their embodied experiences (Pellicano, Dinsmore, and Charman 2014). As we have elsewhere (see Haegele and Maher 2023), we use the term amplify here purposely, as we do not ascribe to a position that we are giving or allowing voice because that would symbolically reinforce the power disparities that cut across traditional binary relationships between disabled and non-disabled people, adults and young people, and teachers and students. As such, we encourage scholars to amplify the voices of disabled participants to help to understand and demonstrate value for their perspectives and their expert knowledge about disability which is inscribed in their lived and living bodies (Maher, van Rossum, and Morley 2023). We, again, view this conceptualization and the need to amplify the voices of disabled people to be well aligned with the nothing about us, without us movement (Charlton 2000) as well as calls for participatory and/or emancipatory research which involves a partnership between academic researchers and disabled persons who are affected by the matter under investigation (Chown et al. 2017). While we of course are not suggesting that these recommendations will be a panacea to the ableism that pervades schools, it is a move in a direction towards (positive) systemic transformation in education.

Before ending, it is important to note that our exploration of psycho-emotional disablement drew primarily on UK, European and US ideas and published work and thus may be conceptualised and manifest differently in other countries and cultures. Indeed, our work is inextricably bound to the hegemonic ideologies, discourses, logics, traditions, rituals, practices, behaviours, and forms of representation of western European and North American social institutions and cultural formations, which are not representative of their counterparts that are situated in other parts of the world. While we would hope that our work here may resonate with our colleagues in other regions of the world, such as in the Global South, we are hesitant to suggest that our assertions reflect more than a Eurocentric ideal that

understands the landscape of Southern, neocolonised spaces (Grech 2015) within which disability is constructed and lived. Rather than assume our thinking permeates the thinking of those in the Global South, and other regions of the world, we encourage scholars to engage with and amplify the voices of disabled people to understand how various cultural, social, and neo-/post-colonial influences have shaped their experiences with access, separation, segregation, and feelings of exclusion.

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