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Breaks and Ruptures: Crippling the Reading of Resistance

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Abstract

With the support of the work of scholars in critical disability studies, crip theory, and poststructuralism, my intention in this paper is to explore some narrative fragments of my experiences teaching 'Leonard' and the ways we both accepted and resisted each other. Judith Butler's question: "What does it mean to require what breaks you?", will be central to investigating our mutual dependency on each other in ways that emphasize the tensions between my 'authority' as a teacher and his 'resistance' as a student. The first part of this paper will apply the work of critical disability studies scholars such as Erevelles (2011, 2013), Titchkosky (2008) and Gabel et al. (2013), as a way to contextualize and orient my relation to Leonard within an educational landscape that reads Leonard as a problem that needed fixing (presumably by me as the teacher). The second part of this paper will seek to 'crip' the image of the teacher 'fixing' the 'problem' child and demonstrate the ways this story is perpetually, always and already disrupted and failing. In applying the work of McRuer (2006) among others, the intent in this section is to explore how resistance in both its passive and active forms is necessary in both the (re)forming and breaking of the distinct yet linked subject positions that Leonard and I inhabit. The final section of this paper will turn to the work of Mitchell et al. (2014) and their conceptualization of cripistemologies as desiring failure as resistance to success, alongside a retelling of my persistence in the face of Leonard's resistance. Ultimately the intention of this paper is to make a contribution to critical disability studies and crip theory by exploring both the limits and potential of the intertwining 'matrix of relations' Butler (2015) offers as hopeful possibility.

Keywords

Crip theory; Reading; Resistance; Relationality; Intellectual disabilities; Ableism; Elementary curriculum

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"What does it mean to require what breaks you?" (Butler, p. 9, 2015). In this question that Judith Butler (2015) poses, she points to the inescapable tensions within which the "Subject" is implicated, in both its passive and active (re)formations. Through the work of Merleau-Ponty and Malebranche, Butler (2015) evokes and contemplates the inescapable ways through which the subject is intertwined in a social world predicated on its relationships with others. It is in this necessary separable/inseparability, where for Butler, the subject is inexorably troubled by its relationships to others. Butler reminds us: "Acting does not liberate any of us from our formations...Our formation does not suddenly fall away after certain breaks or ruptures, they become part of the story we tell" (p.6, 2015). We are enmeshed in a "matrix of relations" that seems to simultaneously make and break 'us' and within which the 'ideal' Subject of the Enlightenment remains a looming figure of import (Butler, p.9, 2015). While Butler almost exclusively interrogates the 'I' in her contribution to further erode the authority of the Subject of the Enlightenment, in so doing she implicates 'you' and she implicates 'us'. Even when I feel at odds with the world, I cannot stand apart from the world as I am enmeshed in it in ways, that it not only makes and breaks me but also, makes and breaks you too.

With the support of the work of scholars in critical disability studies, crip theory, and poststructuralism, my intention in this paper is to explore some narrative fragments of my experiences teaching 'Leonard' and the ways we both accepted and resisted each other. Butler's question: "What does it mean to require what breaks you?", will be central to investigating our mutual dependency on each other in ways that emphasize the tensions between my 'authority' as a teacher and his 'resistance' as a student. The first part of this paper will apply the work of critical disability studies scholars such

as Erevelles (2011, 2013), Titchkosky (2008) and Gabel et al. (2013), as a way to contextualize and orient my relation to Leonard within an educational landscape that reads Leonard as a problem that needed fixing (presumably by me as the teacher). The second part of this paper will seek to 'crip' the image of the teacher 'fixing' the 'problem' child and demonstrate the ways this story is perpetually, always and already, disrupted and failing. In applying the work of McRuer (2006), among others, the intent in this section is to explore how resistance in both its passive and active forms is necessary in both the (re)forming and breaking of the distinct yet linked subject positions that Leonard and I inhabit. The final section of this paper will turn to the work of Mitchell et al. (2014) and their conceptualization of cripistemologies as desiring failure as resistance to success, alongside a retelling of my persistence in the face of Leonard's resistance. Ultimately the intention of this paper is to make a contribution to critical disability studies and crip theory by exploring both the limits and potential of the intertwining 'matrix of relations' Butler (2015) offers as hopeful possibility.

The Problem of Reading Leonard as a Problem

As has been well documented by several critical disability scholars, the education system works in tandem with government, medical and rehabilitative institutions to categorize and label as problems individuals who do not fit the norm (Erevelles, 2011, 2013, Titchkosky, 2008, Gabel et al., 2013; Van Hove et al., 2012). Before I met Leonard, I read about him in a (very thick) file that arrived at the school before he did. By the time Leonard was five years old, he had already been marked with four labels which included: Autism, Mild Intellectual Disability (MID), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Anxiety. By the time I met Leonard, he had already been labeled and formed as a problem by his interactions with numerous 'experts' who participate in the mechanism of sustaining and perpetuating 'normative' standards. By the time Leonard was five, he was already deemed a threat

to those standards and as a result found himself in a system whose "main thrust... becomes the shifting of students around on the educational chessboard" (Erevelles, p. 2158, 2011). It was decided that the space Leonard would occupy on the chessboard would be one of segregation from his school and community. Leonard would be bussed to another school about thirty minutes away. I met Leonard when he was in Grade 1 as he was placed in the Primary MID class I would be teaching that year. Already formed as a problem, (as were the other eleven boys that comprised our class that year), as a teacher and employed member of this system, I have been trained to read children as varying degrees from 'normal'. I have been trained, too, to apply the necessary techniques to ensure 'problems' are reformed as 'normal' as quickly as possible.

As Leonard's teacher I am complicit in the mechanisms of his labeling as well as his movement around the educational 'chessboard'. By the time I meet Leonard, I have already been a teacher for ten years. I have not only read countless 'expert' reports, I have also written countless reports of my own that have ostensibly been in the 'service' of children who are distinct from Leonard, yet share with him the process of being labeled as a problem. In other words, I am not an innocent bystander nor the heroine of the story that is unfolding in this paper. I am deeply implicated and tainted by over a decade of conversations, readings, writings and participation in an education system that insists on normative standards; all in the name of what is in everyone's best interests. 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). Echoing a similar sentiment Friere writes: "Reading the world always precedes reading the word, and reading the word implies continually reading the world" (p. 10, 1983). Significant in what both Titchkosky (2008) and Friere (1983) point 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). This insight points to how each of us is implicated in creating the conditions for how reading and being read is tangibly encountered and experienced. It also points to the blurriness amidst which the 'independent' (?) subject is deeply embedded in both the active and passive forces that comprise our social world (Butler, 2015).

While we occupy different subject positions, Leonard read as the problem and I as the reader/solver of the problem, it should be evident by now, that Leonard is not the problem. It is how I am reading Leonard that is creating the problem even before I meet him. Yet, the problem of reading Leonard as a problem, does not merely reside in my own narrow lens. In the work of Gabel et al. (2013) and Van Hove et al. (2012), their narrative inquiries into the lives of the intellectually disabled, reveal systemic isolation and repeated dehumanizing experiences with 'support services' in education, medicine and law that indicate the widespread and pervasive discounting of people labelled as intellectually disabled. This discounting and erasure of people with intellectual disabilities from the mainstream is paradoxically achieved through mechanisms of excessive surveillance and the accumulation of verifiable evidence to substantiate their exclusion (Gabel et al., 2013; Van Hove et al.; 2012, Erevelles, 2013). In her work, Erevelles (2013) points to the link between the material effects of a capitalist regime on the production and reproduction of a framework that reifies the productive, able seemingly independent subject by creating the conditions where cognitive ability becomes a commodity that can be traded. The social world we live in seems determined to tell an exclusionary story that rationalizes and justifies the very framework that does the excluding. Yet somehow through creating the conditions where excluded individuals are made simultaneously hyper-visible and invisible (Erevelles, 2011), the social mechanisms at play in framing the problem,

relinquish their responsibility. The source of the 'problem' or the 'solution' lies within the individual not the social.

What is Leonard's recourse in a social world that has marked him with four labels by the age of five and already decided that he needs to be segregated from other children his own age? What is my recourse as Leonard's teacher steeped and complicit in educational and social systems and relationships that encourage me to implement a repertoire of solutions (they are all documented in the reports that outline his diagnoses) before Leonard and I have even exchanged our first hellos?

According to Butler:

Our acts are not self-generated, but conditioned... What can I do with the conditions that form me? What do they constrain me to do? What can I do to transform them? Being acted upon is not fully continuous with acting, and in this way the forces that act upon us are not finally responsible for what we do. In a certain way and paradoxically, our responsibility is heightened once we have been subjected to the violence of others (p. 16, 2004).

In many respects the passage from Butler quoted here foreshadows and echoes her more recently published work "Senses of the Subject". What Butler (2004, 2015) points to here and what she delves into more deeply in her recent work, is both the necessarily inseparable and necessarily distinct character of the passive and active forces in our lives. Where does the conditioning of the social end (?) and where does the responsibility for my own (?) choices begin? How do Leonard and I find a way to tell each other a different story other than the one that says, he finds his way to 'normal' with my 'help'? "What does it mean to require what breaks you?" (Butler, p. 9, 2015).

Butler states: "We are at once acted upon and acting, and our 'responsibility' lies in the juncture between the two" (2004, p. 16). There is a space between (small? big? Does the size of the space matter?) the choices we/I make and what seems to have been chosen for us/you/me. It might be possible still to (re)form the world differently than it has been already formed. It might be possible to tell another story and it seems that Butler here, is inciting you and I and us to tell another story. Crip theory is one approach that seems intent upon inhabiting the juncture of what

might be otherwise. Crip theory, according to McRuer (2006), intends to actively engage in the unmaking and undoing of the normative subject that is in the never ending process of forming and reforming itself. The significance of McRuer's (2006) contribution, perhaps exemplifies what Butler (2004) means in the possibility that inhabits "our responsibility... in the juncture". Perhaps this is also why scholars such as Erevelles, known for applying Marxist materialism to critical disability studies (2011), and Mitchell et al. (2014), known for their cultural and poststructural approach, have also sought to follow McRuer's lead and 'come out crip' in their own insightful and distinctive ways. To come out 'crip' can be seen as a method of actively resisting the enclosures that the ground of 'normal' seeks to for itself (Mitchell et al. 2014; Erevelles, 2011; McRuer, 2006). In this way the work of poststructural theorists like Butler (2015) and crip theorists like McRuer (2006), remind us of the hopeful possibility that remains despite and because of the constraints of relationships to and with each other.

By considering the ways both Leonard and I are embedded in a social world that insists on excluding disability, thus far this paper has attempted to 'crip' a reading of Leonard as a problem by following the lead of Butler as well as the work of other scholars in critical disability studies. The intent has been to explore the seemingly inescapable tension that would seek to delineate the social from the individual as well as the passive from the active. In asking what it means to hold on to an individual sense of responsibility for the possibility of what might be otherwise, the next section of this paper seeks to explore how crip and poststructuralist theory can contribute to a re-imagining of how Leonard and I might learn from each other both despite and as a result of the constraints of the current educational system.

The Dilemma of Holding On and Letting Go: Reading Leonard's Resistance

One of the ways Butler seeks to engage with the "struggle of the form of sovereign individualism" is in her contemplation of touch/touching in the simultaneous frame/framing of our sense of relationality to and with each other (2015, p. 9). She states: "we are acted upon and acting at the same instant and these two dimensions of touch are neither oppositional or the same" (Butler, 2015, p.55). In other words, as a teacher teaching, I am also being taught. My students leave their impressions upon me and these impressions are part of the forming and reforming of who "I" am (Butler, 2015). I cannot speak for Leonard but, I can tell you that Leonard was one of the many children that worked to impress upon me. While I was Leonard's teacher for two years, I heard many of Leonard's stories. He would tell me about his family who he loved (most of the time), his pets who he loved (all of the time) and his favourite foods (broccoli soup, asparagus, salad). You might be wondering at this point how any of these quite ordinary stories touched me? Mainly because, Leonard figured out pretty early on, that I too loved stories and if he was looking for a way to avoid working on the goals in his Individual Education Plan (IEP), all he had to do was say: "Ms. Karmiris can I tell you something?" I would knowingly follow Leonard through the rabbit hole and listen to one story after another.

I recognize in admitting my complicity in his avoidance of the work he did not want to do, I am also admitting my failure in adhering to the guidelines, routines and management techniques I had been trained to implement. In Leonard's storytelling moments, he actively resisted what he should have been doing and I, at least some of the time, passively accepted this mode of resistance. Listening to Leonard's stories about what he liked, about what upset him, about his wishes, hopes and dreams, made Leonard more than just the 'problem' the file (very thick) I read about him wanted to insist he was. It is rather striking actually that none of the things that seemed

to matter a lot to Leonard, were present in the numerous reports that represented evidence about who the file thought Leonard was and what the file thought he needed. What I find more remarkable still, is considering all the numerous negative interactions he had already had at school (at least according to the reports I read and his mother's own account of events), there was absolutely no reason for him to make any gesture at all towards a world that had explicitly rejected him and segregated him from his peers. However, while Leonard was my student, Leonard was always ready to tell one more story about who he was and what mattered to him.

Five years old. Leonard. Leonard of the thick file. Still, Leonard inhabits a world that has rejected him and part of his refusal of this rejection are the stories he tells about himself to others. On one hand, his resistance here can be read as an active refusal to fit into the boxes the field of education insists he belongs in. However, his resistance here seems haunted as well by the passive acceptance of what it means to act 'normal'. Erevelles (2011, 2013) offers a critique of 'inclusive' education largely due to its insistence and privileging of the 'norm'. Erevelles (2013) also makes room in her argument to be inspired by Butler when she indicates, her weariness with a school system whose conditions of inclusion are based on the performance of 'normal', where 'normal' is seen as preparation for participation in the capitalist economy. Her weariness with the false claims of the inclusionary rhetoric of schools is also expressed through a different angle by Mitchell et al. (2014) who consider the limits of inclusion from a socio-cultural and post-structural perspective. They state: "Inclusionism, in other words, covers over an unethical promotion of the successes of the few based upon normative standards of achievement for the inadequacies of the many" (Mitchell et al., 2014, p. 301). While offering distinct perspectives, the insights from both Erevelles (2011, 2013) and Mitchell et al. (2014), lead me to wonder about the extent to which the types of stories Leonard chooses to share with me (foods, family, pets) have more to do with what

he hopes I might accept as 'normal', than it does about revealing what he is actually thinking and feeling. To what extent has Leonard already learned to 'perform normal' as part of being in the world? Where do all the social conditions that constrain Leonard's being in the world end and where does Leonard's actively choosing who he is begin?

I am unsure where the line might be, if one exists at all, between the social forces that have been looking to form and reform Leonard since infancy and his own sense of himself as a subject capable of his own decision making. I am unsure where the line might reside for Leonard, because I am also unsure where it might reside for my own subjectivity too. In initially representing Leonard as an active agent both avoiding his learning tasks while finding ways to relate to me through his storytelling, I represented myself as passively accepting his refusal. Yet, part of Leonard's active resistance in his role as a storyteller, is his simultaneous acceptance of finding his way toward inclusion and belonging by the types of stories he chooses to tell me. In this way my passive acceptance of Leonard's avoidance of his work, can also be read as my active participation in perpetuating the performance of 'normal'. To a certain extent, by listening to Leonard's performance of 'normal', I am doing what Erevelles refers to as adhering to "liberal theories of justice that privilege humanist discourses in their analyses [and] limit the emancipatory possibilities for citizens with severe/cognitive disabilities" (2013 p. 160). Even in the break from the regiment of striving toward the goals in his IEP, Leonard and I slip into a reification of normal. Even as I am touched by Leonard's stories, 'normal' makes and breaks Leonard and I and us.

The humanist Subject of the Enlightenment casts a shadow that looms over the break that Leonard and I think we are enacting. McRuer (2006), concerns himself with this very dilemma when he offers his critique of the ways in which identity claims of marginalized groups run the

risk of being ensnared in the grasp of perpetuating the privileging of 'normal'. One of his key contributions that seems particularly relevant in 'cripping' the reading of Leonard's and my own attempt to enact resistance, is his critique of the newly (re)formed flexible neoliberal subject. According to McRuer (2006), the current global economic context that depends on flowing commodities also depends on and values the flexibility of the subject. He states: "individuals who are indeed 'flexible and innovative' make it through moments of subjective crisis. They manage crisis... they adapt and perform as if the crisis had never happened" (McRuer, 2006, p. 17). Just like the neoliberal subject McRuer describes, I too have been trained to value flexibility. Yet, the flexibility I show Leonard is double edged. On the one hand listening to his stories seems more like privileging normal and erasing disability. Yet on the other hand, I cannot help but to be touched by the stories he shares, for the ways they insist that Leonard is more than a 'problem' to be solved by paperwork in a file.

'Normal,' though narrowly conceived, perpetuates ableism through permeating representations of resistance as grounds from which desiring distinct identities become yet another return to 'normal' (McRuer, 2006). Both simultaneously narrow and everywhere, the breaking from the hold of its dominating force seems both necessary and impossible. In an attempt to let go of what it means to adhere to the dominating force of normal, I have thus far in this paper represented myself and Leonard as both inhabiting forces of passivity and activity. I have also attempted to apply a 'crip' reading of a version of Leonard's resistance to 'normal' as well as 'crip' reading of my own representation of myself as a 'flexible' neoliberal subject. It seems that resisting 'normal' in an effort to imagine and enact another way of being in the world has thus far resulted in a resounding failure and an admission of my own limits. I feel trapped inside an ableism that refuses its own limits. An ableism that insists on an active engagement with the

world in order to remake it and reform it in an unceasing attempt to control and dominate. The next section of this paper further elaborates on my failure as Leonard's teacher to genuinely consider what might have been in his best interests as I insisted on pursuing a course of instruction that was ostensibly in his best interest. By considering the way that Mitchell et al. (2014) employ a 'crip' notion of failure against a 'normative' notion of success (Halberstam, 2011), I explore my own failure with Leonard as demonstrative of what happens when academic success in school remains a taken for granted goal to strive for. In the following section, I also continue to consider the interplay of the active and passive forces as they are related to the limits of resistance to resist the 'norm'. The intention here is to pursue a 'crip' reading of both success and failure in an effort to explore what might be possible as Leonard and I both fail and succeed together.

Success as Failure/ Failure as Resistance

A marker of achieving success in the Kindergarten curriculum is being able to identify the letters of the alphabet and their representative sounds. One of the constraints that is taken for granted in elementary school (at least taken for granted by me for most of my career), is the requirement to teach children to strive towards curriculum as a marker of their own development towards independence. While I was Leonard's teacher, it seemed a fundamental starting point for developing a love of reading and writing. I tell Leonard the same thing I have said to many other children over the course of my teaching career in elementary schools. "Leonard" I say, "The alphabet is made up of a big stick, a small stick, a big curve and a small curve. If you can draw a straight line and a curved line, you can make all the letters of the alphabet and you can learn to write your own name all by yourself!" Leonard was unconvinced by my claim and resisted

anything to do with learning the alphabet. There were times when he gripped the pencil so tightly that he would pierce several pages of his notebook at once. There were other times when his pencil sat so limply in his hand that it would repeatedly and continuously drop out of his hand as he smiled. He would break off the lead or pull the lead out from his pencil completely. When it came to learning the alphabet, he did not want to use magnets, he did not want to use playdough, he did not want to use picture cards or computer games. Leonard did not want anything to do with the alphabet.

Unfortunately for Leonard, he is in Grade 1 and the consensus of the all the adults, and the set curriculum standards is that Leonard needs to learn the alphabet. So every day I confront Leonard with the alphabet. I show him the sticks and curves I have made out of cardstock by using the template an occupational therapist passed on to me. Following the Handwriting Without Tears™ instructions, I show him that there are two steps to making an uppercase "L". I ask him if he wants to take a turn to use the sticks and curves to make an "L" or any other letter of his choosing. Initially Leonard refuses. We both persist for several months resisting each other. Yet, I break through. I wear him down. He begins to make letters and draw some of the letters. It almost feels like a moment to celebrate the success of all the techniques and strategies I have applied to ensure Leonard's placement on the path of achievement. Until one lovely spring day, Leonard insists on writing his name all by himself. He refuses to look at his alphabet placemat. He refuses to look at his name card. He refuses my help. He refuses the help of his classmates. He gets angry with himself because he cannot remember all the letters. He gets so angry that he rips apart his book, pushes over his desk and starts kicking the classmate sitting beside him. The Educational Assistant takes Leonard out of the room. At this point Leonard is crying and banging on the glass door: "I'm sorry Ms. Karmiris! Please let me in!"

All I wanted to say to Leonard in that moment was that it was I, who was the one that was sorry. If I have not made it clear by now, though I hope that I have, I will explicitly say that I failed Leonard as well as the very many students who shared with Leonard the distinction of being labeled by the education system. While I was Leonard's teacher, I genuinely believed that implementing the 'best practices' that I was trained to believe were the 'best', was actually in Leonard's best interests. I believed that the IEP I had written for him would help him get as close to normal as he could and I believed that this was a good thing. While it wasn't my hands that ripped the book, or pushed the desk, I feel partly responsible for Leonard's actions. In my adherence to curriculum norms of developing literacy independence, I discounted Leonard and I discounted the possibility that what he needed most, was to discover his way of being in the world with others, as mattering as much if not more than what others (like me) thought he should be. As a teacher I fail Leonard and my students the moment I enact a "disavowal" of our "interdependent" social condition (Butler, 2015, p. 8) while, embodying and enacting a rhetoric of success that perpetuates both ableism and the myth of the independent subject. Similarly, I engage in the elementary school version of an adherence to composition which McRuer (2006), contends is so deeply implicated in maintaining the hegemony of the neoliberal managed subject. For this reason, he incites educators towards a practice of decomposition as a method of resisting the hegemony of composition classes (McRuer, 2006). Though wordless, Leonard's actions communicate a profound moment of decomposition that disrupt what is supposed to be the smooth march to 'success' that recipe books outlining best practices assure will be the outcome of developing independent readers and writers (McRuer, 2006). Leonard's decomposition (slam, bang, crash), touches me. Through that decomposing moment, he teaches me to question the seemingly necessary taken for granted myth of success as a doing of 'all by myself'. Even as he

shouts "Please let me in!", 'I' am decomposed as I find a way live with the failure of an 'I' who can never be fully an 'I' and a 'we' who can never fully be 'we' (Butler, 2015; McRuer, 2006; Halberstam 2011).

As Mitchell et al. (2014) poignantly articulate an argument for with cripistemologies, the striving for success that school demands is a perpetuation of normal that discounts the tensions amidst the interdependent social space of the classroom. If the fully composed independent 'I' remains the marker of normative success, perhaps as Halberstam (2011) and Mitchell et al. (2014) suggest, it is time to reconsider if it is worth it? Success, even as it fails, matters more to itself than you, or me or us. Success under these constraints is already failure for the innumerable number of children who fall outside of 'normal' due to class, race, gender, sexual orientation, citizenship status, ability (Erevelles, 2011, 2013; Gabel et al. 2013; Mitchell et al., 2014; Titchkosky 2008). Due to the evidently resounding failure embedded in the striving for success, Mitchell et al. (2014) encourage teachers and educators to embrace failure as a form of resistance; as a refusal of the limits of success. According to Mitchell et al., cripistemologies would help:

crip/queer bodies shift from liabilities to be secreted away into active vectors of insight from which one may engage in classroom models of collective understanding. Through such developments, crip/queer subjectivities become a way of knowing the world; embodiments akin to other forms of discredited knowing such as femininity, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and so on (yet, importantly, containing all of these differences at the intersection of what makes bodies crip/queer). (2014, p. 308)

Under the model proposed here by Mitchell et al. (2014) of failure as resistance, relationships with each other, with every other, are placed as the central curricular concern for students and teachers. Perhaps by focusing on you, me and us, Mitchell et al. (2014) provide us with the possibility to find another way; a 'crip' way of learning from and with each other that works to de-centre the normative subject that privileges an independence that seemingly remains (un)touched and (un)touching of the world. Perhaps in failing to adhere to the normative conception of the

independent subject, Leonard and I are left with (de)composing the tensions that make and break us. Mitchell, Snyder and Ware's curricular cripistemologies lives in the juncture/break/rupture that Butler (2004, 2015) considers a hopeful place to situate ourselves as we loose and find ourselves in the midst of exploring our relationships to, with, and for one another. It also seems to be in keeping with McRuer's call to "to speak back to straight composition in all its guises" (2006, p.157). Leonard's (de)composing ways touch/teach me that narrow conceptions of what it might mean to be an 'I' in the world break 'I', 'you' and 'us' in ways that must be acknowledged and confronted rather than pushed aside in favour of another recipe book promising success predicated on perpetuating the hegemony of 'normal'.

Concluding Thoughts

An accessible society according to the best, critically disabled perspectives, is not simply one with ramps and Braille signs on 'public' buildings, but one in which our ways of relating to, and depending on each other have been reconfigured (McRuer, 2006, p. 94).

McRuer words suggest a hope that I share with critical disability scholars. In their advocacy for cripistemologies, Mitchell et al. (2014) offer their own possibility of what reconfiguring our relationships to each other might look like in our public schools. While every approach has its limits, Mitchell et al. offer hope in failure. One of the intentions of this paper has been to demonstrate the ways the discourse of 'normal' persists in its project of domination by exploring the limits and possibilities of resistance in both its passive and active forms. Though I remain hopeful, at times when considering my own ableism in relation to children like Leonard, I hope that I have also conveyed my sense of hopelessness. I have felt and do feel hopeless to the degree that the injustices of ableism, racism, classism, etc., feel necessarily inescapable. The injustices of the world we inhabit has caused and continues to cause immeasurable pain and suffering that cannot be forgotten, erased or easily

swept away. The "matrix of relations" that Butler (2015, p. 9) contemplates quite deeply, often feels more like Patricia Hill Collins' (2009) "matrix of domination". "Domination encompasses structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power... These domains constitute specific sites where oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nation mutually construct on another" (Hill-Collins, 2009, p. 218). In the midst of a social world so deeply complicit in injustice, how do we go about reconfiguring our relations as McRuer (2006) contends must happen and as Mitchell et al. (2014) hope to do?

Again we can ask and perhaps ask anew, "What does it mean to require what breaks you?" (Butler, 2015, p. 9). In her own astounding contemplation of the work of Merleau-Ponty, Butler (2015) contends that it is our relationship to the touch of the world through our material encounters, that animates the self. In Butler's convincing attempt to not only erode but overturn the notion of Enlightenment thinkers, the self is not valued for its action in remaking the world but rather, for inhabiting a world where "touch and touching are obscured by one another but not reducible to another" (2015, p. 46). What would it mean for Leonard, or for you, or for me, to live in a world with each other that both touches and is touched without having to overwhelm each other? What would it mean to touch and be touched without enveloping either the active or passive forces as they engage in intertwinement (Butler, 2015)? What would it mean for Leonard to go to school and explore who he is alongside other children, while knowing that who he is in any given moment is enough, rather than more or less of what he should be? In following Butler (2015), perhaps this is just a hopeless crip hope, but perhaps we could be just and be just each other in touching and being touched.

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