

The Hunt for Disability: The New Eugenics and the Normalization of School Children¹

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This paper is an attempt to reconsider issues of sameness, difference, equality, and democracy in present public school systems. It focuses on the question of (dis)ability and the implications of rethinking (dis)ability as an ontological issue before its inscription as an educational one concerning the politics of inclusion. The everyday dividing, sorting, and classifying practices of schooling are reconsidered through an analysis of old and new discourses of eugenics as “quality control” of national populations. The paper suggests that in the transmutation of old to new eugenic discourses, disability becomes reinscribed as an outlaw ontology reinvesting eugenic discourse in a new language that maintains an ableist normativity. The paper concludes by considering the very difficult question of trying to imagine alternatives to sending the posse out in schools.

Thoughtful students . . . of the *psychology of adolescence* will refuse to believe that the American public intends to have its children sorted before their teens into clerks, watchmakers, lithographers, telegraph operators, masons, teamsters, farm laborers, and so forth, and treated differently in their schools according to the prophecies of their appropriate life careers. Who are to make these prophecies?

Charles Eliot (1905, pp. 330–331; original emphasis)

There has been, I think, a noticeable increase in the identification of students with disabilities and we’re really trying to understand why that is.

Director of Department of Educational Services,
Fairfield School District² (2000)

Charles Eliot’s “Fundamental Assumptions in the Report of the Committee of Ten” was published 1 year after G. Stanley Hall’s two volume work on adolescence and had as its implicit target child-study enthusiasts of the new psychology. Part of Eliot’s concern was to protect the place of classical curricula content, such as Latin and Greek, in public schools rather than have curricula revolve around judgments of “child nature.” All children, in

his view, should be exposed to the subject matter that prepared the way for university entrance, of which there was more than one kind.³ In debunking the child-study orientations to curricula, Eliot turned to the available discourse of democracy to sanction what others have described as his patrician preferences (Kliebard, 1986). In Eliot's logic, if all public school children are exposed equally to "high culture" in one of four forms, then it seemingly is not the school that makes a judgment about appropriate life careers. Rather, it is the child's effort in interacting with the subject matter that shapes their future. Under this line of reasoning the issue of different life careers could be cast back onto students themselves and the singularity of certain kinds of cultural knowledge left unchallenged as the pinnacle of educatedness.

In 2000, the director of the Department of Educational Services in Fairfield school district (a pseudonym) does not have the luxury of masking or encoding schooling's sorting function. Students are labeled, and special and different services are provided. Children are treated differently in their schools, and educators and allied professionals do make the decisions or prophecies. What separates the positions available to Eliot and the director of educational services is not, however, any clear shift from right to left, or from a desire for homogeneity to a celebration of difference, but a reworked discourse of democracy—for Eliot democracy meant equality-in-sameness, the same access to the same curriculum tracks for all public school children who cannot buy their way out of the system. For the director, it is an unspoken vision of democracy as equality-in-difference—children are different from each other, and therefore a variety of special services are required to educate a variety of children, ironically, in line with the same statewide standards.

This paper is an attempt to reconsider issues of sameness, difference, equality, and democracy in present public school systems. I focus in particular on the question of (dis)ability and the implications of rethinking (dis)ability as an ontological issue before its inscription as an educational one concerning the politics of inclusion. I am especially interested in this analysis in what symbolically links the positions available to Eliot and the director rather than what separates them. That is, I am concerned to understand and rethink the everyday dividing, sorting, and classifying practices of schooling through an analysis of old and new discourses of eugenics as "quality control" of national populations.

The paper has three sections. First, I examine the vexed question of what the term eugenics refers to. Rather than seeing eugenics as a movement that rose in popularity in the late 19th century and fell after the revelations of the Holocaust's horror, I suggest that eugenics was a complicated and heterogeneous series of discourses that have transmogrified into a variety of assumptions and practices, including educational ones in the

present. The second section of the paper examines some of those assumptions and practices, especially the debates that have arisen around the classificatory systems for identifying disability, both outside and within schooling. In the often well-intended hunt for disability,⁴ I will suggest that disability becomes reinscribed as an “outlaw ontology,” (Wrigley, 1996) reinvesting eugenic discourse in a new language that maintains an “ableist normativity” (Campbell, 2000).⁵ Third, I will consider where such an analysis leaves institutions of formal education, including universities, and the very difficult question of trying to imagine alternatives to sending the posse out⁶ in schools.

EUGENICS OLD . . . HISTORIOGRAPHICAL DEBATES

Eugenics is a problematic, contentious, and emotive term. To some extent there is disagreement in the historical literature as to how to define or recognize something as eugenicist. It is only to some extent because there are certain things that do seem generally agreed on in regard to eugenics, primarily that it refers at the broadest level to a belief in the necessity of “racial” or “national” improvement through the control of populational reproduction. This is understood within the historical and sociological literature on eugenics as a code for promoting through scientific, medical, psychological, educational, and welfare discourses of the late 19th century a belief in a hierarchy of human races/nations and characteristics, with the pinnacle of racial/national evolution at that time being the presumed qualities of Anglo-Saxon or Teutonic groups primarily of northern and western Europe and North America. There is general agreement as to the timing of the term’s emergence, coined in 1883 by Francis Galton, and also a common recognition of certain practices as eugenic, most notably those associated with the Holocaust and the earlier sterilization campaigns that targeted “physical and mental defectives,” often broadly conceived to include any minority group thought to be contributing to “national degeneration.”⁷

Within this general understanding of eugenics as *constructing* and privileging certain kinds of whiteness over certain kinds of color, certain kinds of masculinity over certain kinds of femininity, certain kinds of ability over certain kinds of “corporeally anomalous” body-minds, and tolerating only narrow versions of heteronormativity and religious devotion, eugenics becomes somewhat swamped. It is difficult to find any discourse circulating in the late 19th century that did *not* draw on such binaries or that did not argue for some kind of racial/national improvement. What, then, was unique to eugenics? Much debate has arisen around this question as to which programs, theories, or moments can be identified as “truly” eugenicist or not. The debate has emerged in the context of trying to sort out the extent of the legacy of eugenics, that is, how “it” has effected “ideas in action and

action in ideas” in the present (Garton, 2000). The recent historical and sociological literature has pointed to the previous silence on such legacies due to a naïve belief that after the Holocaust eugenics simply went away (Kaplan, 2000). Such literature also sometimes engages in a forecasting of what may result with continued silence, particularly under the advent of new genetic technologies (Campbell, 2000).

The debates arise, then, within an atmosphere that is critical and suspicious of such silence around the effects of eugenics and eugenics as an effect. Despite agreement as to the most easily recognizable aspects of practice, such as sterilization, disagreement can be found in how to approach the study of eugenics in historical perspective. For example, one historian may describe a certain practice as part of eugenic philosophy or see it as a family member, whereas another will label the same practice as a separate philosophical position altogether.

Such debate over labeling and attribution has emerged especially within historical accounts of eugenics in Australia, continental Europe and Scandinavia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Some histories of eugenics within these contexts, for instance, have portrayed it as a late 19th century form of scientific racism that eventually gave fascism and Hitler the discursive grounds for propaganda and structured the WWII genocide of persons practicing Judaism, persons defined as having physical or mental disabilities, and persons defined as practicing homosexuality—none of whom Nazi policy saw fully as persons. In Ludmerer’s (1972), Pickens’s (1968), and Searle’s (1971) accounts, for example, eugenics is portrayed as a movement, with its end being attributed to a late 1940s horror at the Holocaust that resulted in a loss of popularity for what had been initially perceived in many quarters as a respectable scientific theory and populist platform.

Other historians contest the portrayal of eugenics as a discrete movement and argue instead that eugenics needs to be understood as a series of discourses (Gould, 1981). Some claim that eugenics in the strict sense was a variety of forms of hereditarianism (Garton, 2000), whereas others claim that eugenics had intersecting hereditarian and environmentalist elements (Lowe, 2000). What is more agreed on in the scholarship that contests eugenics as a discrete movement is that there was a combination of elements and points of view that inhered in the late 19th century emergence of eugenics as a term and in the formation of eugenic societies and associations. Such histories suggest that a variety of philosophical positions contributed to eugenics’s key message—a belief in the necessity of racial or national improvement via quality control of populational reproduction—and that these philosophical orientations have mutated into a variety of practices, programs, and policies that have lasted beyond the demise of formal eugenic associations. Michael Roe argues, for instance, that there

has been a new surge of interest in genetic technologies and that this interest is fed by dangerously unexamined assumptions that bear vestiges of old-style eugenics. The promotion of genetic technologies, for example, contains an unexamined implicit and explicit belief that such developments “are for humanity’s benefit, even its perfection—physical, psychological, and behavioral. That was the prospect which lured earlier eugenicists, and of course the enchantment remains” (Roe, 2000, p. 6). Writing the history of eugenics in light of the advent of new genetic technologies means to Roe that eugenics does not end in 1945 with the death of Hitler.

Gisela Kaplan further reorients how one would write the history of eugenics by putting it into global perspective. She argues that the speed with which ideas travel now means that more so than ever before close scrutiny and vigilance is merited in asking what it is that is being globalized. Kaplan suggests that new versions of eugenics are part of globalization and that this is not surprising given that eugenics was one of the first *globalized* and *globalizing* discourses. She rewrites where eugenics begins, seeing the most significant aspect in the emergence of modern racism, the modern slave trade, transatlantic commerce, and colonialism as being laid by the fall of Constantinople in the 15th century. This incited a search for new trade routes to the East and opened up the voyages that resulted in the invasion of the Americas and the establishment of slave “trading posts” on the West African coast. It was the experience of slavery in particular that lent eugenics the fears and desires it was to eventually attempt to regulate through social policy centuries later after the drawn-out abolition of slavery post-Civil War in the United States. That is, the idea of mixed blood that the early eugenicists were so concerned about was a direct expression of one of slavery’s consequences.⁸

In satirical mode, Kaplan suggests that the spread of eugenic ideas, even in modified or less official forms, was a “requirement,” for European scholars and bureaucrats had to identify new themes and justify European social and political practice outside Europe, whereas in the United States the “problem” to which eugenics became applied was not only but especially the end of slavery. Kaplan argues further that if the idea of “surprise” that the Holocaust could take place in “civilized” Europe was expressed, it indicates an underestimation of the effect of more than a century of debates foregrounding explicit attitudes on issues of race as something inclusive of but far more than just “color.” That these debates happened in the center of “civilized” Europe required, however, that the practice of eugenics was perceived not as barbaric but as rational, not as criminal but as courageous and progressive. Kaplan asks “How else could eugenics become palatable?” arguing that there are parallels today that make eugenic reasonings “palatable” and seemingly progressive, couched as they are in languages of “proactive racism” and “quality citizenship.”

Finally, in his paper “Writing Eugenics: A History of Classifying Practices” Stephen Garton has problematized the slide into using the term eugenics as a catchall and as if its meaning has already been settled. Garton’s answer to the question “What do we take as the key signifier of eugenics?” is a long and complicated one. Eugenics, he argues, might refer to a fundamental belief in hereditary deficiency as the basis for many social problems, and arising from this eugenicists might be seen as those committed to policies preventing the breeding of the unfit and promoting that of the “racially fit.” It might also refer to support for sterilization programs. But Garton argues that there were many who accepted a hereditary basis to “social inefficiency” and who were more cautious about sterilization, preferring permanent segregation as a means of preventing the propagation of the racially unfit. Many of those, he suggests, were also open to explanations that invoked appeal to the environment as causal of social problems as well. Thus, in Garton’s view, if “both camps” (hereditarian and environmental) are to be accepted, it opens eugenics to the prospect that it was far from a singular ideology or set of policies and practices and that it was imbricated in wider class, race, religion, gender, and ability constructions and worked sometimes in contradictory ways with diverse strands of thought to shape social policies (Garton, 2000, p. 11).

In addition, he cautions against using eugenics to refer simply to any form of populational management or intervention. For example, the pronatalism of the early 20th century cannot be conflated with eugenics. Pronatalist stances are fundamentally concerned with an increase in the quantity of population (e.g., populate or perish policies), whereas for eugenics quantity is a positive danger if it increases “tainted stock.” What Garton sees as uniquely eugenic in terms of populational management is that a concern for the *quality* of population is the key issue.

In Garton’s view, then, the orientation to eugenics as a complicated series of hereditarian discourses intersecting with other discourses brings to light how the most favored plans of the early eugenicists both failed and succeeded in terms of their own agenda and influence. The failure that Garton speaks of in regard to eugenics is that the campaign for particular policies that the early eugenicists actively promulgated were not taken up everywhere that they were campaigned for and did not last long when they did. Although this is a controversial position on failure insofar as one might argue that *any* uptake and *any* form of policy implementation, such as sterilization centers, represented eugenics’s “success,” Garton’s point is about seeing the *disagreement* that scientists and policy makers had regarding such recommendations for policy and their underlying rationales. In short, eugenic arguments that linked social problems to heredity and solutions to the control of reproduction were not monolithically supported. Even where such arguments reached the level of policy formation they were sometimes

vetoed, such as in the United Kingdom in the 1930s, and where such policies were implemented the number of people confined and segregated always fell far short of what their promoters requested.

What this lack of unanimity suggests to Garton is that at a “practical” level, the most stringent aspect of eugenics platforms and its most favored programs were not necessarily so widespread that there was no contestation arising and were not long-lasting in historical terms, even where they were implemented. This has led Garton to conclude that a eugenics program for racial/national improvement, defined as measures for population control targeted at heredity “defects,” was on the one hand unsuccessful in spreading the actuality of its most revered recommendations yet highly influential at a different level—the way in which professionals, scientists, educators, and politicians thought about human life and their right to control that of others. What seemed to differ across time was not the belief in that right but the strategies for implementing it. Garton suggests that this has left a difficult legacy for historians, namely to disentangle how eugenics was both far less and far more influential than accounts of it as a discrete movement that rose and fell might suggest.

FROM NAMING THE PROBLEM TO THE PROBLEM OF NAMING: REWORKED IMAGINARIES

At one level, the historiographical debate summarized above may seem pointless. Whether a practice, judged intention, or policy is called social Darwinistic, eugenic, scientific racism, or population theory it seems that the abiding commonality was what Michel Foucault (1989) has called in a different context “superiority effects.” The “top” of the chain of being was inscribed similarly across such nomenclatures and only some were positioned as having the right to modify others. The debates over whether eugenics refers to this or to that phenomenon, period, or program may seem pedantic on that ground, but it is not. Nor are the historiographical debates about trying to minimize the atrocities commonly associated with eugenics. Rather, the nuances that Garton and others have pointed to help explain how on the one hand we might recognize that there has been change without difference in regard to “superiority effects” across the 20th century—on the surface, a similar image of the ideal citizen still seems to circulate. On the other hand, it helps to explain how some practices have not been sustainable and why others emerge in their place. That is, one can perhaps identify vestiges of the old eugenics as “quality control directed at hereditary deficiency” in new moments because of the multiple positions spawned around the “problem” of populational governance and the variety of discourses that merge, separate, and transmogrify in responding to new events.

As Lucinda Aberdeen (2000) has noted, though, this does not mean that all of a sudden the late 20th century has developed better scholarship to understand eugenics, the past, and its effects. Aberdeen studied how at first phenotypical features, then blood type, then genetic mapping were all strategies used across the 20th century to “pin” race down and create an “index” by which peoples could be confirmed as belonging to certain racial categories. New strategies were developed when the old ones failed to deliver the accuracy desired, such as when serological studies of the 1920s and 1930s came to the conclusion that indigenous peoples of Australia by blood type were closer to the “western European type” than the English. Such blood studies quickly fell out of favor as a scientific tool. Elazar Barkan (1992) has also demonstrated how concepts of race changed in Britain and the United States between the world wars, reflected in the development of new technical tools for identification in those contexts. Thus, in discussing how racial imaginaries have overridden evidence to the contrary and been reworked around new strategies for identification, Aberdeen (2000, p. 102) concludes that “it is not that we are better scholars than the serologists of the 1920s and 1930s but rather that the racialised imaginary in which they worked has been contested and so we can begin to imagine the world otherwise.”

THE IMPACT OF THE OLD EUGENICS ON EDUCATION

Imagining the world otherwise because racial/national imaginaries have been contested is what has opened eugenics and its impact on education to critique. It is also what enables an arbitrary distinction between old and new eugenics. In respect of old and new eugenic discourses in education, the work of Roy Lowe is particularly instructive. Lowe (1997) argues that eugenics discourse has had a massive impact on education and that this has been downplayed by the linkage of eugenics with sterilization policy. He contends that from the outset eugenicists had direct things to say to schools and that this aspect of eugenic thought has proved to be more pervasive and more enduring than the more spectacular arguments around sterilization. Lowe suggests that the impact on schools can be traced even through those historical periods in which one might think social conditions were most inimical to the expression of eugenicist ideas, that is, in the aftermath of the horror of the Holocaust. In England, for instance, eugenicists were called on to give evidence to the Royal Commission on Population in 1949, arguing that “the different branches of the human race were unequally equipped with the inborn characters that produce and sustain highly organised civilizations.” Despite having to make the expression of ideas more circumspect in the aftermath of the Holocaust, associations such as the Eugenics Society also continued to function. The society found a new focus

after WWII, genetics, and in particular the study of “defective” chromosomes. Further, public pronouncements were made that gave renewed vitality to old ideas about sterilization, couched in new welfare reasonings about underprivilege. In the United States in the 1950s, Julian Huxley and Frederick Osborne both argued for the use of contraception to limit the fertility of minority groups, particularly African Americans, while in England, Francis Quick advocated a licensing scheme that might limit the number of children borne by “genetically unfavorable” parents. Other post-WWII approaches tried to preserve the “best” genes; during the 1970s the Repository for Germinal Choice was established in California to collect and store sperm from Nobel Prize winners.

Thus, Lowe argues that these examples plus the many more that he documents provide considerable evidence of the survival and even popularity of eugenic ideas in the closing decades of the 20th century. His historical documentation indicates an arbitrary distinction between old and new eugenic discourses within a variety of institutions. He suggests that in education, specifically, there was no privileged immunity to these wider mutations and recombobulated discourses. Lowe identifies five areas of educational policy and practice that were deeply influenced by eugenic ideas for much of the 20th century:

1. Testing—The “problem” of national degeneration central to eugenics led directly to the search for the means to test the population so as to ascertain its “ability levels.”
2. Differential Treatment—The explicit and implicit suggestion that at the heart of any understanding of mankind or womankind lay differences and contrasts between races led to the belief that individuals from different ethnic backgrounds had differing educational potential and should be treated differently.
3. Quality of Home Life and Mothering—The concern for national degeneration led to a questioning of both hereditary influences *and* environment. The quality of home life became a focus and separate schooling tracks for girls and boys were established to have girls become more efficient mothers.
4. Transmission of Opinions Through Children’s Books and School Texts—To the extent that school books were and remain racialized they have reflected in part the influence of eugenic thinking. (Steven Selden’s (1999) analysis of American textbooks makes the same point.)
5. The Planning of Educational Buildings—Although more oblique, the planning of education buildings was influenced in part by eugenic thinking insofar as there was support for and implementation of the

view that the “future leaders of society” should receive their education both at school and university in institutions whose architecture was a constant reminder of a Greco-Roman and Gothic racial and intellectual heritage of which they considered themselves a part.

Other historians have documented less well-known aspects of eugenics’s direct effect on education. Grant Rodwell has indicated how less well-publicized recommendations for “medical interventions” emerged even in contexts where sterilization may not have been officially sanctioned. Rodwell (2000) demonstrates how the kindergarten movement in Australia became a site for addressing the threat that “precocious masturbators” four- and five-year-olds seemed to represent to national morality. In eugenic terms, precocious masturbators in the kindergarten had to be saved from a tragic future and the country from racial suicide. Accordingly, at a conference on sex hygiene in 1916 at the University of Sydney, Zoë Benjamin, a lecturer at the Sydney Kindergarten Training College, proposed circumcision for boys and clitoridectomy for girls who were identified as precocious masturbators in the kindergarten.

Rodwell and Lowe elaborate how specific sites within education have been indebted to eugenic thinking. Others such as Garton see the most significant effect of eugenics in the uptake of widespread classifying practices that have permeated educational and other institutions. Garton argues that although old-style eugenics might not have achieved a hegemonic status in the full Gramscian sense because it never secured the consent of the dominated and it never secured the full allegiance of the broad middle class, it did become a key moment and a key approach in the development of what Foucault (1979) has called “dividing practices.” These practices of categorization and classification assumed a divisibility to being and became important to social government between the world wars and well after. Eugenics might not have been the only impetus for dividing practices, but it was in Garton’s (2000, p. 16) view “a central and very significant impetus to the development of a raft of tests, categories and administrative arrangements—IQ tests, psychological tests, personality tests, clinics, visiting medical services, observation wards and the like that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to deal with the crisis of problem populations.”

The “problem populations” were produced through such classifying practices, new ones being created all the time—“the feeble-minded, the degenerate, the numerous gradations of ‘mixed race’ peoples, the juvenile delinquent, the sexually delinquent girl, the moral imbecile, the psychopath, the sex psychopath, the transsexual, the homosexual, the pervert, the neuropath and so on” (Garton, 2000, p. 16). These were not just new words—they were ways of enforcing others into the subjectivities assumed

associated with the words. Garton argues further that each of these new subjectivities had its own unique mix of what was considered heredity, social, racial, psychological, and familial factors in their origins.

It is important to note that in listing such factors of origins (e.g., the heredity, social, racial, psychological, and familial) Garton could just as easily be talking about how children's behavior is analyzed in public schooling today. The production of and hunt for different forms of disability, unreadiness, at-risk-icity, and the explanations for developmental delay that circulate at the turn of the 21st century often pay homage to similar lists of factors. Garton argues of the emergence of eugenics at the turn of the 20th century: "Rather than constructing an amorphous category called 'the unfit' classifying practices, like eugenics, helped to produce myriad social problems, each requiring specific analysis and remedy. What are significant are not the successes and failures of eugenics, but the proliferation of problem populations it helped produce." The creation of "problem populations" to be analyzed and remedied is not unique to the early 20th century. To that end, I focus below on the intersection of new eugenics discourse with/as the hunt for disabilities and the present classifying practices of schooling.

EUGENICS NEW: (DIS)ABILITY AND EDUCATION

One particularly instructive site in which racial/national imaginaries have been reworked is in regard to notions of (dis)ability. Fiona Campbell (2000) makes a claim for understanding 20th century discourse on *disability* as that which has shifted from the old eugenics to the new. Campbell argues that the pre-1945 old eugenics is characterized as a negative type, often controlled by government bureaucracies and initiated by way of transparent and coercive practices. Crucial to the negative eugenics of the Holocaust's Nazi Aktion T4 program (1939–41), for instance, where approximately 275,000 people assigned disability labels were murdered, were two particular assumptions: an understanding of the (real) citizen as informed by a contributory or performance ethic and a logic of the strategy of euthanasia as primarily economic, where "euthanasia was defended as a means of cost cutting, or ridding society, of 'useless eaters.'" In contrast to the old eugenics, yet not in the form of complete rupture, Campbell (2000, p. 308) argues that the "eugenic imperative in late modernity" has been transmogrified into a variety of "positive eugenic"⁹ practices "which seek to eliminate the birthing of bodies marked as 'disabled' or, in the event of their/our post-natal 'existence' to engage in 'perfecting' technologies that morph ableism and enshrine a particular understanding of ableist normativity and (real) human subjectivity." Put another way, Campbell is arguing that if "bodies marked as 'disabled'" are born at all, "slipping through the net," so to speak, then the activity of the posse switches to trying to "perfect" that "defective"

body-mind to make it more “normal,” leaving the reference point unquestioned and inscribing as a genuine effect a human subjectivity that defers to this order of things.

In regard to the body-mind marked as “disabled,” Campbell further suggests that eugenicist practices are presently more covert and insidious and that what they have in common is that at root they concern ontological matters, “largely unexamined and unspoken preconceptions about who should and should not inherit the world.” In the new eugenics

the State plays a less direct and de-centered role in the governing of “disability.” Under the mantle of political liberalism boldly proclaiming rampant individualism and freedom of choice, the individual acts as her own overseer, wherein techniques of self-production are not imposed but actively sought. Such technologies of responsabilisation ensure the shaping of conduct (relations of self to self and to others), is mobilised in a desired direction.

Although Campbell’s implicit reference here seems to be to adults as their own overseers, in public school systems where (some) students are compelled by law to attend and are subjected to the processes that comprise the institution, the overseeing is initially performed by others. Campbell’s further argument that under the guise of “laissez-faire eugenics,” the onus is on personal decision making within an overarching framework of “risk assessment” and “positive eugenics” seems, then, to pertain particularly to the adult-directed activities of schooling where risk assessment is now considered a “normal” practice and teachers, special educators, psychological and medical experts, and parents are drawn into assessing children’s behavior to make decisions about any potential “problem”: “Disability talk is often conducted in terms of a ‘problem,’ a conundrum, or if you like, a headache that simply won’t go away” (Campbell, 2000, p. 309).

The conundrum, Campbell suggests, is not a deep fear of the unknown or an apprehensiveness toward the foreign or strange but rather a deep-seated despise of unevenness, asymmetry, or imbalance that places bodies-minds labeled as disabled at the edge of the abyss, pushing the limits of human subjectivity, and creating an outlaw ontology. An outlaw ontology refers to a way of being or existing that is thought outside the normal and as such to need chasing down, like the unacceptable rogue outlaws of old Western films. Quoting Judith Butler, Campbell points out how it is not enough to say that human subjects are constructed, for the construction of a human is a differential operation that produces the more and the less human, the inhuman, the humanly unthinkable: “These excluded sites come to bound the ‘human’ as its constitutive outside, and to haunt those boundaries.” Thus Campbell argues that in the new eugenics, ontological

matters “are inextricably bound up with the politics of inclusion” (Campbell, 2000, p. 309).

Christine Crowe (2000) argues for caution, however, in interpreting the shift from eugenics to genetics discourse. The terms of her caution reinforce Campbell’s conclusions, though, by illustrating how “quality control” issues and technologies of responsabilization are still at the heart of “disability wars,” including those within schools. Crowe sees eugenics as a discrete movement and argues that the terms of genetics discourse, especially those proposals that seek out “defects” by prenatal screening turning motherhood into decisions about what kinds of “bodies” to give birth to, are somewhat different from old-style eugenics. Although both eugenics and genetics are concerned with quality control, the manner of the interventions available are now suggestive of new formulations of “the problem.” In particular, prenatal screening is a formulation of risk and responsibility that relates to a different kind of “governmentality” (Foucault, 1991) relative to the past:

Genetics is also oriented towards the quality of offspring, but, unlike the dominant eugenic discourse, conceptualises the relationship between risk and responsibility in significantly different ways. Whilst the eugenics movement may be conceptualized in terms of an attempt at state control of reproductive practices, focused on the prevention of reproduction by the negation of fertility, reproductive technologies are operationalised by appeals to individual responsibility for the health of future offspring. The site of intervention in this case is not the prevention of fertility, but the management of fertility, of conception, such that ‘viable’ embryos of choice, will be implanted in a woman’s body. In other words, one of the significant differences between eugenics and genetic practices . . . is that whereas eugenics aimed at the prevention of fertility of the ‘unfit,’ genetic practices are oriented toward not the prevention of fertility, but the management of conception. (Crowe, 2000, p. 176)

Although Crowe’s focus is reproductive technologies, one can see a similar shift in debates around inclusive schooling and mainstreaming. Rather than telling a child they simply cannot attend a “regular” school, the point of prohibition is relocated—the child perceived as “having” disabilities of a certain kind can now be problematized, marginalized, and “managed” within the mainstream institution (Slee, 1997)—the alterity is brought back to the center to reinforce it. As Campbell notes, the new eugenics, if not effective in preventing certain kinds of conceptions, turns its attention to “perfecting technologies” that are at base indebted to a perhaps well-intended but nonetheless controlling logic of ableism that hopes to turn everyone into the one kind of being at least at some level. The debates over whether

mainstreaming is inclusion or assimilation (Slee, 1997), whether it genuinely meets the needs of students categorized as disabled more than before (Erevelles, 2000), can thus be understood differently as debates that question in one way or another whether the hunt for disability is really about preventing the “detractors” from limiting the “progress” of “the normal.” The use of perfecting technologies, whether it be within mainstreamed classrooms or separate ones, are an instance of what Troy Duster (1990) has called the “backdoor” to eugenics discourse in the present.

The new eugenics might be provocatively understood, then, as a modified form of the “quality control” issue that attracted the old eugenicists to lifetime careers of attempting to prove the inferiority of others (Aberdeen, 2000). Although not always overtly or directly focused on fertility and reproductive processes, the new eugenics is concerned with perfecting technologies to secure quality citizenship through the homogenization of racial/national populations at some level.

It might be argued, however, that all forms of schooling teleologically seek to govern, discipline, and engineer students’ being toward some named ideal. There is no authentic, natural, or romantic state to be returned to in the rearing of humans and in caring for each other. The question then becomes whether one agrees with the ideal(s) so named as the goals of education. New eugenic discourses disallow within their own premises a questioning of those ideals, however. They incite the engineering of students par excellence in the name of seemingly generic terms like citizen, democracy, economic healthiness, and unity. They are linked across sites and frequently establish some people as pollutants or detractors. Even where such classifications are thought to be for the benefit of the recipient, they cannot be disarticulated from populational governance strategies that concern image management, especially at a racial/national level. For Campbell, the modifications in discourse that mark the new eugenics have taken three forms: the practices of prenatal screening, disability dispersal policies, and the compulsion towards perfecting and morphing technologies of normalization. It is the latter two strategies in particular, disability dispersal policies and perfecting technologies, that pertain more directly to schooling and that announce the importance of studying the wider implications of the hunt for disability in public education.

DISPERSAL, PROLIFERATION, AND SWARMING: THE HUNT FOR DISABILITY

Across the last few decades of the 20th century and into the 21st, there has been a proliferation of categories of educational disability used to mark students as outside norms of child development or as at-risk of school failure. This proliferation has not emerged out of some sinister mean-

mindedness but out of the very pragmatic realization that failure at school and the failure of schools have direct consequences for how much one can earn, the quality of life, the garnisheeing of respect from others, or all three, linked as these are. In fact, in their survey of literature on postschooling opportunities for students labeled via special education, titled "School-to-Work Transition for Youth with Disabilities: A Review of Outcomes and Practices," Phelps and Hanley-Maxwell (1997, p. 218) conclude that the

Studies reported herein reveal the abysmal record of achievement for youth with disabilities. The dropout rate for youth with disabilities exceed those of nondisabled students by nearly a factor of two. The lack of a high school diploma for nearly half of the students with emotional or behavioral difficulties is particularly problematic. For all students with disabilities who do complete school, access to employment and postsecondary education still falls substantially below the levels attained by their nondisabled peers. In general, when students with disabilities do find employment, their earnings tend to be only slightly above the minimum wage in entry-level jobs, and they are faced with limited prospects for promotion and personal growth.

In public schools systems, the labels are usually what qualify a child for special educational services. ADD (attention deficit disorder), ADHD (attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder), BD and SBD (behavior disorder and severe behavior disorder), CD (cognitively delayed), ED (emotionally disturbed), LD (learning disability), and OD (oppositionally defiant) are such categories. The proliferation of acronyms is a phenomenon in itself; one could choose almost any letter of the alphabet, add a "D" to it and find a category defining a school-aged child as a problem or as having a particular problem that is to be recorded in school files. Although Phelps and Hanley-Maxwell's paper is not explicitly devoted to problematizing labeling, they further conclude that

The evidence suggesting that special education placement and other pull-out or specialized interventions have substantial effects on learning is, at best, limited. . . . these well-intentioned efforts to create responsive educational tracks have had substantial deleterious effects on learning and achievement for many students. Combined with the evidence that inclusive programs and practices appear to have small to moderate beneficial effects on both academic and social outcomes for children with disabilities . . . the key consideration for educators and researchers becomes determining which educational practices serve all students' learning. (Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell, 1997, p. 219)

The proliferation of the Ds, the new disability nomenclatures, are not just new ways of speaking about children and adults, teaching and learning,

and citizenship and development. They represent what curriculum historian Barry Franklin (1994) has argued is a shift from the moralization of disability to the medicalization of disability during the 20th century. Learning disability, for example, is a newer, medicalizing term that has in effect acted to replace and modify the late-19th century term feeble-mindedness. Feeble-minded children were initially those deemed unable to make appropriate moral choices because of a perceived lack of mental control over volition or will (Longmore & Umansky, 2001; Mitchell & Snyder, in press). The terminology of learning disability shifts the frame of reference for “detecting deficit” from theological/moral considerations, however, to secular notions of skill, retention, perception, or literacy, especially under pressure from the latest rhetoric of “competition in a global economy.” LD was formally rendered an educational category in 1969. In July of that year the Education Subcommittee of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor held hearings on the Children with Learning Disabilities Act. Introduced as an amendment to Title VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the legislation provided federal support for research on the causes and treatments of learning disabilities. Learning disability was thereby bestowed with official recognition, becoming what was called a “state designated handicapping condition.” There is much dispute over the details of the genesis of the category and its definition (Sleeter, 1987). What is more certain is that the availability of a category called learning disability as a “state designated handicapping condition” saw a consistent growth in the number of children classified as LD since its inception in educational policy. One million children were labeled LD within a year of its inception (Kidder-Ashley, Deni, & Anderton, 2000).

In addition, there have been more recently noticeable increases in the use of such categories. In the public school district of Fairfield presently, for instance, the topics of learning disability and special education more generally are receiving much attention. On May 19, 2000, a local newspaper focused its educational segment on special education. In an article entitled “Heading Toward a Crisis? District Grapples with Rising Special Education Costs” reporter Gia Weier noted how the number of students in the district who require special education had risen substantially in recent years, from 3,153 in 1994 to 4,142 as of Dec 1, 1999. Children designated LD represent the largest group, at 1,755. Part of the increase has been attributed by local school principals to changes in the identification process. Although in the past a child had to be identified as 2 years behind his or her peers, the definition has now changed so that it is 1 year behind. In addition, principals have argued that schools assess students more often, which allows teachers and administrators to assign disability labels at an earlier age than in the past, contributing to the increase. Some principals believed that the increase was circular—once a district is known for providing good services,

it draws parents who relocate specifically for those services, increasing the total number of labeled students. The director of the district's Department of Educational Services, quoted in the opening to this paper, seemed less certain of the mechanisms at play in the increase, however.

The uncertainty as to the mechanisms at play in recent identification increases and the attention paid to special education is not unique to Fairfield, nor is it a trend exclusive to the United States. The question of why a certain kind of educational labeling has become increasingly popular is one that policy analysts, sociologists, and historians have been asking in other nations, including Australia, Canada, England, France, and New Zealand (Albrecht, 1981; Birkenbach, 1993; Slee, 1997; Tomlinson, 1984). Henri-Jaques Stiker, in his *A History of Disability* (1999), for instance, asks what incites the fever for classification and what he calls "the passion for sameness."

Isn't the first question, the one that misfortune itself causes us to forget, this one: why is disability called "dis-ability"? Why are those who are born or who become different [sic] referred to by all these various names? Why so many categories? Why even such dramatics in the face of what happens . . . so often, and which can happen to any of us? . . . where does this huge exercise in naming come from, that labeling that circumscribes one kind of reality . . . and makes us feel it all the more and be afraid of it? (p. 5)

It seems that in education there has been what Foucault (1979) in a different context has referred to as a *swarming* effect. In this case it is around the hunt for and diagnosis of disability as a negative ontology that schools actively seek to name, and, as the following section discusses, remedy with the best of intentions.

PERFECTING TECHNOLOGIES: MORPHING ALBEISM

Several strategies have accompanied the dispersal, proliferation, and swarming around educational disability. These include federal-level policy moralizations, local mainstreaming strategies, reinforcement of public schooling's segregation function, medicalization of students, and cultural conflation and homogenization techniques.

One spin-off from, or perhaps more accurately antecedent, to the swarming around disability identification has been policy proposals and reform. The identification of and hunt for disability has been tied, for instance, to a discourse that privileges international comparison of test scores as signs of quality citizenship and economic prosperity. Feverish problematizations of teachers, teaching, public schools, and students occurred when it was announced through the publication of results from TIMSS, *The Third International Mathematics and Science Survey*, that Japanese and German students

had outperformed American ones on some of the standardized exams. The problematizations were reminiscent of those embodied in earlier publications that had catastrophe mentalities, including *A Nation At Risk* and the *National Education Goals 2000*, which stipulated the criteria via which children ought to be judged as “ready to learn,” thereby producing the category of the deficient, the delayed, the unready, and the broken who were posited as jeopardizing “the nation,” its reputation, and its economic future, as well as their own personal one.

Besides the federal-level moralizations that have accompanied the naming of “the detractors” in international comparisons, there have been reformulations of local special educational policies in approximately the last 10 years, a trend known as mainstreaming or inclusive schooling. Mainstreaming generally involves placing students who are perceived as having primarily “mild to moderate” disabilities in regular or mainstream classrooms, rather than having the students sent to separate or special schools for the entirety of their educational program. It is not clear whether the reforms have eventuated from purely economic concerns for downsizing and merging facilities, from trends in educational research, from parental activism, or a combination of these (Skrtic, 1995). In the midst of the swarm to figure out why mainstreaming has eventuated and why now, however, the very basis of public schooling’s existence is glossed over. Because public schools have historically not been populated by children labeled as severely “intellectually” disabled, the attention of public school policy has been turned to children who are perceived as “educable” but outside norms for child development—students once referred to as “high grade defectives” (Tomlinson, 1984). What lends public schooling its distinctiveness as an institution historically and still now is that it is not and has never been a place for every child.

That is, local mainstreaming policies highlight the previous segregation function of public schooling amid the availability of other institutions.¹⁰ The educational policies of more bureaucratically centralized Western nations, as well as individual states within the United States, have been primarily concerned in the recent past with what is now referred to as mild intellectual or physical disability, and it is on these categories that debates over labeling and special services have most focused. The very existence of schooling as something that is separate from persons who seemingly cannot agentively enter into such debates, such as those classified as “having” Rett syndrome, is taken for granted as the backdrop to formal public education.¹¹ Whatever is *perceived* as severe intellectual disability, especially, has historically been placed in the “too hard” basket and to such an extent that scholars such as Kliewer and Biklen (2001) have had to argue overtly for new lenses for seeing the “educability” and “literacy” of students labeled as “severely mentally retarded,” reminding the reader of the ethics involved:

“The person perceived as defective and the person perceived as competent are both social constructions. People in whom resides the power to define the capacities of other human beings are making moral decisions. On what basis should such decision making proceed?” (Kliewer & Biklen, 2001, p. 11). Like recent Hollywood films that make fun of the Amish under the presumption that the Amish are not likely to be in the audience and to protest their representation as other lobby or interest groups might if they were the targets of comic relief, the belief that agency, resistance, and contestation has to come from the spoken words or actions of an individual or group guarantees that schools are now only places for certain “kinds” of children.

The form of socialization for persons labeled as severely intellectually disabled, for example, has been considered medical rather than educational and brings to light what is often most submerged about public schooling—that is, its segregation function. A mind-body dichotomy seemingly gives the school the purview to somehow work on the intellectual progress of “the majority.” This in turn is seen as distinct from “purely” medical kinds of socialization or care associated with perceptions of severe intellectual disabilities. In some locales the distinctions are defended, with parents wanting separate specialized medical services for their children. On other occasions, parents argue for inclusion of their children within public school classrooms because they do not want them segregated from the rest of the school-going population. One outcome of these debates has been that the distinctiveness between medicine and education has been drawn into question and not just for children labeled as “having” severe intellectual disabilities. The current medicalization programs for many public school students labeled as behavior disordered or hyperactive undermines the solidity of the distinction between medicine and education as discrete practices for securing social order. In the absence of corporal punishment that might leave a mark on the skin, an array of internally corporal medicalizations have emerged whose marks are more difficult to photograph and therefore to contest.

In addition to federal-level policy pronouncements, mainstreaming, segregation, and medicalization, a further kind of well-intended perfecting technology has been engaged that acts to conflate certain kinds of racial, ethnic, and linguistic heritages with educational disablement. In England and parts of the United States, there is an overrepresentation of children from cultural minorities and working classes in perceived categories of mild disablement relative to population percentages. On the basis of social structures and trends that appear to extend beyond individual nations the innateness of classifications such as learning disability and emotionally disturbed has been drawn into question. In the United States, for example, many studies across the 1980s noted the overrepresentation of working class children, minority children, or both, in LD classifications (Argulewicz, 1983;

Brosnan, 1983; Carrier, 1986; Sleeter, 1987; Tucker, 1980; Wright & Santa Cruz, 1983), while in England Sally Tomlinson's (1984) study of "educational subnormality" categories similarly documented the overrepresentation of children of immigrants from the Caribbean.

In light of such overrepresentations, a finite number of explanations for this conflation have been proffered, ranging from genetic determinism to historically and sociologically critical accounts of the effects of establishing singular standards. The former seem more well-known. Recent arguments, such as the genetic determinism espoused in *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*, have reinvented biophysiology as the cause of the overrepresentation. Although such arguments have been debunked many times over, sometimes the critiques still play on the same field as that which is being critiqued, submitting themselves on the same grounds for argument as that which Herrnstein and Murray used (e.g., appealing to further test scores) to disprove Herrnstein and Murray's interpretation of test scores. Such critiques are useful, but they do not destabilize the very faith in the phenomenon of testing on which genetic deterministic arguments regarding intelligence are predicated in the first place.

Therefore, in consonance with other critical approaches to genetically based arguments, another form of "explanation" for the overrepresentation of "certain kinds" of children in "certain categories" of disablement have emerged. In England, Gary Thomas and Georgina Glenny (2000) have argued that emotional and behavioral difficulties are "bogus needs in a false category," especially because there is within special education little critical examination of what is being proposed as a "need": "There are taken-for-granted assumptions of 'help' in the 'meeting need' mantra of contemporary special education protocols, and these 'needs' have been silently transmuted with the assistance of the constructs of academic and professional psychology from the *school's* needs for order, calm, routine and predictability to the *child's* needs for stability, nurture, security, one-to-one help or whatever" (Thomas & Glenny, 2000, p. 286). The authors argue further that in the unspoken assumptions behind special education procedures there is no acknowledgment of the maneuver that has occurred, no recognition of the frailty of the idea "emotional need," and "no willingness to entertain the possibility that emotional needs may be a fiction constructed to escape the school's insecurities about failing to keep order" (Thomas & Glenny, 2000, p. 286). They conclude that in the context of education in England

In the use of the term "EBD" there is an indolent espousal of a term that too conveniently packages together difficult, troublesome children [sic] with [the concept of] emotional disturbance. In its use is an insidious blurring of motives and knowledges which imputes problems

to children that in reality are rarely theirs. In the dispositional attributions that are therein made, unnecessarily complex judgements about putative need take the place of simple judgements about what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour for a particular institution. Use of the term “EBD” enables the substitution of the former for the latter—of the complex for the straightforward—and this in turn perpetuates a mindset about behaviour which distracts attention from what the school can do to make itself a more humane place. (Thomas & Glenny, 2000, p. 294)

Where minority children, children from working class families, or both, are overrepresented in categories such as LD and EBD, the question arises as to whether such categories are purely a biomedical phenomenon or are rather what Thomas and Glenny (2000, p. 286) describe as “the almost explicit conflation of administrative need with quasi-medical category.” This suggests the cogency of considering special education policy as something articulated to broader and enduring social relationships than simply those made manifest in the micropolitics of particular school districts and of interrogating disability as something beyond what is considered “in” a child or “had” by a child.

Kathleen McSorley has already developed this line of argument in the United States, questioning the cultural biases inherent in perfecting technologies for helping students develop “appropriate skills and values.” She notes, for instance, that although the dominant perspective on the placement of students into special programs is to view it as a caring decision and act, the paradigm of deficit and pathology in traditional special education discourse tacitly reinforces “white privilege” and thus reinforces

normative references that value, among other things, order and compliance to “white” rules and dominant codes of power. The perception that readiness for mainstreaming and inclusion is dependent on the learning of appropriate social skills and values is very prevalent among special and regular educators. However, white educators that I have met fail to acknowledge that these skills are based on a white frame of reference, and fail to question the consequences of this form of gatekeeping. (McSorley, 2000, pp. 30–31)

Like Thomas and Glenny in England, McSorley argues that the cultural bias appears not just in who is slotted into a category or labeled as having special or extra needs, but earlier, in the very formulation and definition of skills, needs, and readiness themselves.

Others have pointed to how, even where seemingly stable definitions of an educational disability appear, this is no guarantee of any further kind of coherence in the actions pursued. That is, the formulation and definition

of skills, needs, and readiness, even if appearing as consistent across espoused educational policies does not open onto the use of consistent and agreed on strategies. Thus, the cultural conflation and homogenization techniques that help support the hunt for disability have to be understood for the “wobble room” they provide in terms of actual implementation. For example, Kidder-Ashley, Deni, and Anderton (2000) have analyzed the lack of agreement historically and in the present over what LD is and whether it is neurophysiologically based or not. In their paper “Learning Disabilities Eligibility in the 1990s: An Analysis of State Practices,” Kidder-Ashley et al. surveyed the criteria for identifying and labeling a student as “having” a learning disability across 40 states. They concluded that “Despite the improved agreement regarding the category label [now SLD], there continues to be notable variability from state to state in how SLD eligibility is determined. Although there is nearly unanimous agreement across states that SLD is manifested in a discrepancy between the individual’s actual academic achievement and potential for achievement, the states differ dramatically in how this discrepancy is to be documented.” How “potential for achievement” is ever decided, prophesied, or determined is not discussed, but the authors take hypothetical samples of “actual achievement,” such as IQ scores, and apply different state definitions to each of the imagined cases. Even with the same “test scores,” being labeled LD as a student would depend on which state a child lived in. The argument for LD as universally, incontrovertibly, ahistorically, and aculturally “biomedical” rests on thin ice if it is such that one’s address determines the classification. The implementation of perfecting technologies around “diagnoses” of disability presently requires, then, the possibility for conflating other “differences,” such as address or perceived forms of cultural embodiment with “educational disability,” posed in the objectifying language of biomedicine, psychology, and welfare, and submerged as a homogenizing technique.

Tomlinson (1984) found a similar trend regarding such arbitrariness in her empirical study in England, concluding that ESN (educational subnormality, as it was called at that time) was a label resulting more likely from personality clashes between a teacher and a student and that there was no agreement about the one child who was examined, let alone in identifications across schools. The point for Tomlinson was thus that the determination of educational or academic disability was culturally biased and not necessarily biomedical or neurophysiological at base. As noted above, children of families who had emigrated from the Caribbean were markedly overrepresented in the labeling process initiated by white teachers, leading Tomlinson to conclude that what was being labeled was not simply a child but a culture.

The disagreements and debates that such studies document suggests that there may be additional and wider historico-cultural forces at play that act

to comport the definition of disability and ability in a particular way at a particular time and that underwrite the processes of identification that perpetuate belief in the perspicuity of the categories. Such studies have been important in raising awareness of the value systems that interpenetrate actions within schools and the consequences of disremembering them. But what such studies sometimes neglect to emphasize is how critiques of cultural bias in special education can inadvertently recirculate the forbidden relationship between disability and desire, that is, how disability, whether it is analyzed as “biomedical” or “socially constituted through relationships,” *must not be desired*, how it is used as nomenclature for a negative ontology and posed as a way of being that at all cost ought to be avoided. Where a critique of labeling or overrepresentation turns on the view that “normal” students are really being mislabeled and made closer on a scale to “genuinely” “disabled” students, then it does not undermine the presumption that “it’s better to be dead than disabled.” If, as Campbell (2000, p. 307) has argued, the construction/governing of disability and the compulsion toward an ableist normativity are in fact achieved by the continual reiteration of technologies as “salvific signifiers” holding out the promise of “able-bodiedness” then both the hunt to identify disability, and some versions of its critique, leave unproblematized this promise.

The above analysis has indicated, then, how the persistent figuring of disability as a negative ontology involves the constant rewriting of disability within educational practices of care/welfare and sometimes within the very debates that critique those practices. This rewriting is characteristic of new eugenics discourse, including disability dispersal policies and morphing and perfecting technologies, which appear interwoven through the everyday activities taken for granted as signs of democracy in schooling. In the proliferation and swarming around categories of educational disablement, and in the technologies of policy writing, mainstreaming, segregation, medicalization, and movements between cultural differentiation and homogenization discussed above, *disability* becomes understandable as *the politics of (dis)ability*. A preferred style or way of learning only becomes a learning disability, for example, in light of the impatience and structure of an institution that presents things in a limited number of ways with rigid expectations for what counts as a timely performance. Similarly, to allocate some children and not others as emotionally disturbed really raises the question of what counts as an emotion and what constitutes as a disturbance and to whom. If the degree of surveillance that is directed at children who are so labeled were to be turned on the adults in the school, then perhaps there would emerge many teachers, administrators, and psychologists whose observed behavior might be thought of as disturbing and emotional. And finally, if these forms of critique or subversion are left to play on a field where distance from “really” “disabled” persons is the key to

greater inclusion elsewhere,¹² then disability, whether understood as formed through social relations or as biomedical or “both,” ultimately remains within this logic “not optimal,” *not* to be desired, even if perceived as temporarily or occasionally “advantageous.”

Does this recognition of (dis)ability as discursively constituted, and of disability as a form of negative ontology within public schools, thus mean that no efforts at identification, diagnosis, and treatment of children who appear to be “falling behind” should be engaged with? Does this mean that there are no such things as “bad behavior” or “dyslexia?” The following section considers how the resort to service-provision models presumes what perhaps it should explain and examines some of the complexities inherent to disability-positive and disability-negative accounts of ontology.

“QUALITY CONTROL” AND SERVICE-PROVISION MODELS

LD, BD, ED, or EBD seem “easy” examples to draw ambiguity around in discussing the politics of (dis)ability. For example, how you move your body in the classroom may not be how I like to move mine; to call one series of movements a sign of behavior disorder and another self-control is surely imbued with culturally-loaded expectations for bodily expressions; and so on—one can imagine this line of argument continuing and take seriously the point that there is “wobble room” around the edges as to what constitutes a disorder, disturbance, or delay, and so on.

It may seem that there are “other conditions,” however, those that require the use of wheelchairs, blindness, or deafness, for instance, that seem more difficult to dispute in terms of labeling. This line of argument would suggest that at the very heart of humanity there are some biological or physiological “defects” that cannot be denied. The presumed obviousness of such “conditions” is therefore taken circularly as proof of disability’s universal fixity. The question that is then taken to arise under this logic is “Should there not be labeling and the provision of special educational services on the basis of such obvious conditions, which, within the context of schooling, constitute a disadvantage?”

The conflation between identification, labeling, and provision is important to note in the above kinds of questions that have been constructed around the provocative issue of (dis)ability and schooling. Important, too, is the presumed nature of that which constitutes the reference point for such “obvious” questions; labeling does not just lend its effects to the overtly labeled but elevates those who appear outside “the problem.” As Linda Ware (2000a) asks in problematizing the innateness of an ability-disability binary in educational work, “What have we done to ourselves by doing these things to them?” If left as an unquestioned technology directed incessantly at children entrapped in compulsory institutions, labeling can

itself leave unquestioned the nature of institutions or scenarios in which certain ways of existing are produced and made to “pop up” as though natural.

Moreover, the line of reasoning which sees some “conditions” as indisputably biomedical, negative, and “inside” the person, and others, such as LD or ED as more sociological, kind of fuzzy, and open to abuse, fails to recognize how such distinctions retain at base an empiricist and objectivist medical model that can obscure alternative ways of understanding the multiplicity of effects of labeling something or someone. Within the disability studies literature, for example, the term disability is highly contested and is not always seen as a simply negative or repressive term. Disability becomes instead disability-positive, the grounds for the formation of new transnational minority groups (Wrigley, 1996), a term that refers to something that can be productive of new alliances, experiences, and subjectivities, a term that can be locally liberating, or open to strategies of reclamation, humor, irony, inversion, subversion, and satire (Linton, 1998). Terms such as “crip culture,” “gimpy,” and “Deaf” have thus been reappropriated *and* disputed as to their use, just as the use of genetic technologies and genetic counseling has become a site for disagreement (Sandahl, 2001). In some of the literature (e.g., Davis, 1997), to presume that disability can only ever be “read” as disability-negative, as an outlawed ontology rather than a preferred one, is to reinvolve through a paternalizing sympathy or an impossible form of empathy the very problem being critiqued.

Under the weight of these kinds of debates, the invocation of service-provision models, which are often predicated on the presumption of disability-negative inscriptions of a “condition,” become both part of the problem and an avenue for refiguring subjectivity. The recognition that the way that things are can generate pain and suffering for students, which are experienced as disabilities, is central to the appearance of service models as sensitive and caring. The logic of provision presently seems to go hand in hand, though, with the logic of assimilation, homogenization, or both. It is steeped in old-world visions of democracy as a right to modify others for citizenship; if those perceived as suffering are to be alleviated, then “they” need to be identified, categorized, and rescued from themselves through condition-specific programs, while the rest of the group need to be protected from possible “contaminating” effects. In the process, new discrete groups of “problem populations” are made available for consumption, and the creativity, ingenuity, and uniqueness that have already emerged as responses to labeling *disability* as a negative ontological state remain submerged. Or as Campbell (2000) puts it,

It is not surprising, then, that people with “disabilities” become caught up in the vortex of a vertiginous dread of the tragic wishing to emu-

late and “normalise” their/our bodies in conformity with the virtues underpinning ableist normativity. Suffering, a perpetual desire for some kind of perfectibility, produces internalized ableism—an attitude of heart that engages in self-hatred, often rendering us incapable of re-seeing our selves simultaneously as the font of containment and creativity/ingenuity. (p. 309)

Given the complexities that seem inherent to acknowledging both the current structure of schooling, and its allied reference points of “being-able-to” as the incessant rite of passage between grades or stages, then, disability rights activists and scholars in the disability studies field rarely argue against the provision of services or the development of new technologies *in cases where such things can be disarticulated from presumptions of a negative ontology*. As Campbell (2000) notes, though, there is a fine line between “the provision of services” that minimize pain and suffering and being judged as having an outlaw ontology that is seen negatively for getting “special” treatment, only to find that the manner of the treatment is often premised on morphing the recipient into accepting uncritically the subjectivities of ableist normativity.

There is, therefore, no agreement in the disability studies field on whether educational labeling and service-provision models in any form are unilaterally “good” or “bad.” Rather, the questions and criticisms raised revolve around deeper epistemological and ontological issues that preexist debates about services for all children. The questions raised take the complexity of things as their starting point. They assume that pain, suffering, and creativity are real, that privilege is palpable, and that “experiences” and so-called “conditions” or “deficiencies” are constituted *through* current social relations and institutional structures and are not objectively “existing in” persons. The questions, and the critique they imply, thus try to consider how the observation of such complexity became possible. Why are norms taken for granted as objective? What restricted image of “the ideal citizen” do norms for development embody? How might this devalue those excluded from such images? Toward what broader purposes are the construction of norms and deviations directed? And why, in the end, and at the beginning, do others need to be convinced that what I am dealing with is real, without seeing it as being “in” me or as me “having” it? As Kenneth Hultqvist (in press) notes in a different context, many present-day questions turn on a familiar quandary: How can issues of multiculturalism and pluralism be considered when operating within a framework of universal norms?

These questions are in a way questions about who or what can be included as fully human in discussions on the “politics of inclusion” in schools. They are questions about inclusion and “quality control” before the terms of debates over inclusive schooling are set. They are questions about differ-

ence, sameness, and equality that precede the arguments about who can have access to what number of teaching assistants or aides in a school setting and for how long.

This leads to a further series of questions that incite a consideration of the wider orientations underwriting the structure of service-provision models and rhetoric—for example, What power relations inhere the production of categories such as normal and abnormal? Are these relations worthy of perpetuation? And finally, whether intended or not, is labeling a way of morphing “disability” into the assumptions of an ableist normativity, with all its racial-cultural overtones, rather than questioning certain privileged ontologies and epistemologies to begin with?

It is easy to ask questions and propose no alternatives. It is also easy to be stultified as if caught between a rock and a hard place after reviewing multiple debates that have opened in regard to (dis)ability and education. On the one hand, the pragmatic realization discussed earlier that “without” certain “skills” the “ease” with which one can engage in everyday activities can be compromised, with the experience of suffering and pain produced and exacerbated, overriding any concomitant recognition of ingenuity and creativity, compels something to be done to make schools more humane and wider-visioned places.¹³ On the other, how can such Utopias come to fruition without reinvoking the very hierarchies that help perpetuate a belief in disability as a negative ontology and a “conundrum”? How could any “alternative” avoid recirculating the salvific and redemptive efforts being problematized and not recognize that any “desire to want to shift social relations, is a kind of nostalgic romance: a conflicted, possibly ruinous place to start?” (Meiners, 1999, p. 350). The final section of this paper is therefore an admittedly raw attempt to rethink how I am part of the problem rather than its solution and to make an effort at understanding why it is so difficult to imagine genuine alternatives that would not end up being just a better camouflaged posse.

THE QUESTION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION¹⁴ AND ALTERNATIVES: A HEADACHE THAT WON'T GO AWAY?

One present reality in the United States is that categories of disability are part of policy language, and public schools are compelled to engage in identification and counting if they wish to receive funding. Beyond that bureaucratic imperative, however, to label or not to label a child is currently a provocative and unsettled question in public schools and families, even in school districts that have followed federal and state mandates and guidelines for special education provision (Edgerton, 1986). In the case of the Fairfield School District's Department of Public Instruction, the use of educational labeling is described as making free and public education (FAPE)

available to all children. Hence being classified as LD, for example, opens up access to extra assistance in activities, such as reading, or gives more time to complete an examination. In the disability rights movement this is considered recognition and recompense for the way that institutions are structured. That is, if schools are built on the assumption of a model student, then special services are indeed required for children who are pushed outside of that model for such students to interact in and benefit from the institution. It is considered romantic, naïve, and dangerous not to recognize that the school deck is already stacked and therefore under this view special provisions for interacting within that stacked system should be provided.

Disability studies literature sometimes contests the liberal lines of reasoning that are often encapsulated in policy documents, however, by suggesting that the persistent identification/labeling of disability as “in” someone leaves undisturbed the notion of normalcy by failing to challenge professionals’ beliefs in “a legitimate social order” (Brantlinger, 1997; Danforth & Rhodes, 1997; Skrtic, 1995; Tomlinson, 1984). Further, such practices are seen as reducing the totality of someone’s humanity to a so-called “trait” (ability/disability), leaving in place an essentializing lens for viewing personhood in the singular (Heshusius, 1995), while at the same time negating or submerging how those very practices are implicated in the construction and experience of “problems” that they seek to address (Allan, 1996; Ware, 2000b). Danforth and Rhodes (1997) explain the inherent contradiction in much inclusive schooling literature that attempts to honor the reality of “difficulties at school” and at the same time fails to contest the grounds on which reality is constructed.

As the national proponents of inclusion have created the foremost progressive edge of disability advocacy, their writings have contributed to the common assumption that specific conditions . . . or deficiency exist “in” identified students. Assertions that certain students “have” handicaps or are “with” disabilities have been stated in the midst of arguments trying to convince educators to accept such students into general education settings. . . . By failing to question and contest the disability construct as universally true and real, inclusion advocates have unintentionally worked against their own integrationist and civil rights purposes, supporting the devaluation and stigmatization of students “with disabilities” while decrying the same (1997, p. 357).

Such disability studies literature on special education therefore takes its cue from the diversity of interpretations that are now available. The analyses are generally predicated on an historical understanding of shifts in defining normalcy and disability that have moved the locus of reality for those definitions from morality to medicine to culture (Longmore & Uman-

sky, 2001; Stiker, 1999). They are also predicated on an anthropological understanding that not every group of humans believes in the existence of such things as a discrete “mind” or “body” to which inscriptions of disability-as-objective and “universal” have been tied in the North (Gabel, Vyas, Patel, & Patel, 2001; Ingstad & Reynolds Whyte, 1995). In drawing on these historico-anthropological understandings, and the sociological and critical legal scholarship discussed previously, such disability studies analyses reframe the pressure put on parents to consent, or not consent, to the labeling of a child and quite possibly their medicalization, pressures that analyses such as those by Joy-Ruth Mickelson (2000) have documented. It is the difficulties associated with institutional structures, present practices, and the pressures that they bring to bear especially on parents and other educators who are confronted with making decisions about children’s welfare that the final section of this paper addresses.

THE END OF FORMAL EDUCATION AS WE (DO NOT) KNOW IT?

to complete any study of educational deficiency in special schools, it becomes essential . . . to make a comparative survey of children presumably normal. Only by comparison with “normals” can we state what characteristics differentiate the backward or deficient.

Cyril Burt (quoted in Lowe, 2000, p. 213)

What is a parent to do? What is a parent to do when they are a public schoolteacher and a parent? On the one hand, it seems obvious that parents do not want their children to suffer and are interested in and want “good things” for their children from schooling. Parents do not want their children to be disadvantaged just because of judgments, interactions, or resources (un)available in an institution that their children are forced to attend. On the other hand, it is presently difficult to determine what constitutes the greater form of suffering. Some parents have been forthright, for example, about the anguish that schooling provokes in making decisions about their children.¹⁵ Mickelson (2000) has documented the diversity of parental experiences and orientations to having sons labeled behavior disordered and how the orientations of the same parent shifted over time. Further, one does not have to travel far in most school districts to gain a sense of the complexities of labeling and the politics of inclusion/exclusion. Sometimes a child does not wish to be labeled for special services to save face among peers. At other times parents actively want a child to be labeled whom teachers do not perceive as having a disability at all because labeling provides access to services that parents could not obtain otherwise. On other occasions there is parental consent to labeling but not to the recommended medication. In still other instances, teachers wish to

have a child labeled, but parents refuse to consent to a description of their child as, for example, emotionally disturbed. Then suspicion arises as to whether that child whose parents “hold out” is the subject of retribution, oversurveillance, or in contrast being ignored or left out, with the charges flying back and forth.

Moreover, teachers can feel (and are) forced to confront, handle, or respond to situations perceived as violent, difficult, and dangerous in the immediacy of the school grounds, while other times parents are forced to educate teachers about the *positive* things their child brings to the room, redirecting vision and thereby attempting to undo the inscription of disability-as-conundrum, problem, or extra work. These are not minute events in the lives of any of those involved in schooling and the determination of disability, nor are they easily, if ever, resolved. The positions taken up sway between the poles that Danforth and Rhodes (1997) note, moving from the assumption that disability is objectively “in” a child to the view that what is labeled as and experienced as disability is socially constituted and produced *between* bodies-minds in human relationships. The intense personal feelings such tensions and interactions generate in public schools should not just be dismissed as bad form or “tsk-ed, tsk-ed” by those removed from such daily situations. How classifications came to be and continue to be such a focal point of what brings parents and other educational professionals together is not a natural or inevitable event, however.

Classifying and dividing practices are, though, difficult to address because they are caught in the loop that enables them—the very loop that Cyril Burt articulated in 1920; it is only possible to develop a differentiating typology based on an a priori species-typical functioning baseline. This baseline asserts the “essential” normative body-mind. The species-typical benchmark body-mind in turn produces the figuring of disease and disability (Campbell, 2000). These figurings, though well-intended, evidence the new “eugenics of normalcy” (Fox Keller, 1992) and the effort to normalize schoolchildren toward an ableist normativity that fails to question its privilege and results in the kinds of anguish that parents, teachers, and children often experience and express. As Campbell (2000) has already noted, the illusion of choice in the present, whether to label or not, whether to submit to more perfecting technologies or not, is used to mask the eugenic specter and when combined with the juridogenic authority of law, expressions and decisions about (dis)ability become much more than simply someone’s opinion, much more than “she said, he said” at the local school. They have real effects and real consequences for real children’s human subjectivity and for those adult subjectivities that assert who or what a (better) human is.

It is, therefore, remarkably ironic that an Ox-bridge/Ivy League curricula argument of Charles Eliot at the turn of 20th century can now challenge in

a romantic and indirect way the practices of sorting, discipline, and punishment that all formal education engages in. Who are to make the prophecies and what kind of quality control toward proper citizenship are such prophecies engaged in? What are the whole range of effects that the hunt for disability produces and perpetuates?

I have found a common argument put forth within schools and in conversations with psychological or medical experts is that it is the examination results broadly conceived that determine prophecies and decisions, but this merely begs the question. Results refer back to further results that refer back to further results that prevents any questioning of the very institution of examinations as a source of objectification, discipline, and punishment. As noted above, IQ tests are in many states the baseline for determining LD (Kidder-Ashley, Deni, & Anderson, 2000). The results seem to tell of a gap between “actual” and “expected” achievement although where the standards for expected achievement comes from is often not articulable, especially in regard to the classroom observations that precede entrance into further rounds of formal testing, such as IQ. What constitutes a “third-grade reading level” as opposed to a “fourth-grade reading level,” for instance, can usually be defined by educational professionals at the elementary level but where such standards have emerged from is rarely part of professional wisdom. At most the standards for determining third-grade and fourth-grade reading levels are guesstimated to be from “the research” or “experience” or to be set by the publishers of the reader series being used, verified earlier somewhere in some survey of data that no one can name. Yet such implicit standards are incredibly powerful organizers of perception that make some students appear as problems and confer on others a star status.

This historical forgetting is not surprising, nor should teachers be blamed for conveying it. Schooling and the selective filtering toward tertiary study to which it is articulated fundamentally rely for existence on that which is seemingly impossible to question—the propensity to classify, divide, withhold, and promote on the basis of various forms of evaluation that mask their indebtedness to matters ontological. Argues Foucault (1979) on this point

the marks that once indicated status, privilege and affiliation were increasingly replaced—or at least supplemented—by a whole range of degrees of normality indicating membership of a homogenous social body [e.g., citizenship], but also playing a part in classification, hierarchization and the distribution of rank. In a sense, the power of normalization imposes homogeneity; but it individualizes by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fit specialities and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another. It is easy

to understand how the power of the norm functions within a system of formal equality, since within a homogeneity that is the rule, the norm introduces, as a useful imperative and as a result of measurement, all the shading of individual differences. (p. 184)

Perhaps a cynical way of understanding the hunt for disability, then, is that it has become so convenient in a system of “formal [theoretical] equality,” so proliferating, so amenable to swarming because institutions can make judgments about further categories such as race, class, sexuality, and gender by calling them “individual differences” or something else (“intelligence”) and refer for security’s sake to the exam results. Yet as Stephen Jay Gould argued 20 years ago, test results do not represent a solid anything. In foreshadowing the arguments to come in *The Mismeasure of Man*, Gould (1981, p. 24) argued that the abstraction of intelligence as a single entity, the presumption of “its” location within the brain, its quantification as one number for each individual, and the use of these numbers to rank people in a single series of worthiness invariably led to the assertion “that oppressed and disadvantaged groups—races, classes, and sexes—are innately inferior and deserve their status.” Gould’s historical excavation of reification (how the concept of intelligence became converted into an entity) and of ranking challenges such forms of justification and practices on which the hunt for disability is predicated.

If the previous reading of the hunt is to be labeled as cynical, though, then there is another way of looking at things. Gould’s historical analysis of intelligence as a reified concept opens to view how the new eugenics operates through examinations and observations in more insidious if unintentional ways. The analyses of exam results that point to which populational groups fail or succeed at what do not simply tell us of the existence of racism or sexism or classism or ableism. Exams are already the vectors of such -isms, sites for the recirculation of power, a form of discipline and punishment that assume ontologies can be segregated, graded, and differentially valued before any body-mind even enters the examination room. Rather than a direct confrontation in which the teacher, administrator, medical personnel, or researcher stands at the door and says, “No. You cannot go there because I said so,” there is an indirect mechanism at work—the difficult interpersonal confrontation that gate keeping makes inevitable is supposedly bypassed by the authorizing function of the examination.

The examination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgment. It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes its possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them. That is why, in all the mechanisms of discipline, the examination is highly ritualized. . . . At the heart of

the procedures of discipline, it manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected. (Foucault, 1979, pp. 184–185)

This authorizing function is of course prevalent throughout formal education. Teachers/professors in all institutional tiers use tests, grade papers, give permission, establish or participate in gate-keeping structures by conferring credentials, and so on. It is not as if any educator is immune from the filtering implications of these activities and can claim a pure or non-contradictory position on the matter. Is formal education therefore doomed to nonexistence under the weight of critiques such as Campbell's? Should schools just admit openly at the point of enrolment that only some of the children will be "suited" to what goes on in them? The vanishing point toward which such questions are headed appear mired in a binary of alternatives, one based on disappearance (i.e., "Just get rid of the whole system!"), the other on greater transparency (i.e., "Just admit from the outset that the current system is an irresolvable and ongoing problem that maintains ontological hierarchies.").

The difficulty of imagining society without schools as they currently are with their baby-sitting and sorting functions or of drawing Utopian pictures of how they might be without presumptions of an ableist normativity is the difficulty of having been normalized as a schoolchild, of having a subjectivity colonized by a concern to "be able to" do something, of having been constantly examined to "prove" that one can get the point, make the point, or draw the picture of "the alternative." The fact that I cannot answer my own wish for an alternative, that I cannot draw that picture, that I "fail" to conceptualize within my "perceptual processes" a solid vision of "something better" after laying out a range of problems and debates, may tell me something after all—the "inability" in an apparently satisfying way of proposing something "better" is itself an entrapment in the very limits of discourse on ability and betterness that is being rethought.

But this seemingly stultifying embeddedness in the very thing being critiqued is nothing new to note. In the 1930s and long before Foucault, Carter G. Woodson's Afrocentric critique *The Mis-education of the Negro* so incisively noted that you do not need to slam the door in someone's face if you get him [sic] to slam it in his own. Forty years later in *Discipline and Punish* we can see the rewording, where Foucault described at length the shift from overt torture to "the gentle way in punishment," the production of "docile bodies," and the ramifications of panopticon-style surveillance, where technologies of self-monitoring are internalized under the presumption that someone is always watching and recording anyway.

This watching is not always innocuous or positive. It is not akin to making sure that your child doesn't drown while playing near water. In

schools and universities this is a systematized watching and form of classification that tells people who they are and ought to be based on a narrow range of cultural values. There is no form of observation outside power relations, no assertion of knowledge without power effects, and no exercise of power without knowledge effects. The mutually constitutive dynamics of power-knowledge and their subjectivity and internalization effects inhere in the well-intended evaluation efforts and classificatory practices of major social institutions, including schools and universities, *and* in the very efforts to rethink and reshape them.

Thus, if my alternative was to assert that it is normal for there to be a “range” of human body-minds, this assertion does not do away with the concept of normativity but reinvokes it in different form. As an alternative slotted into the current format of schooling, it would come dangerously close to a Spencian social Darwinism of “leave as you find”—the top of the tree would remain undisturbed and the real difficulties of actually getting around, through, and by in schools for many of the people forced to attend them could be glossed over as “fate.” Similarly, if another alternative was to argue that disability is a reality, a fact of life, of every life, and ought not be taken as a negative ontology that must be made to disappear paradoxically by hunting it down to assimilate it, then this too does not break the circle of normalization that allows whatever is thought of as an ability to fly by uncontested. Whatever an institution seems not set up to “handle” and throws back onto the recipient as a disability would remain unquestioned.

In both alternatives, the perfecting technologies that sought to morph the “patient” into an image of the norm through a passion for sameness could be resecured through an ironic commitment to an undefined “democracy.” Or as Roe puts it, the “enchantment” for corporeal perfection would continue, obscured in this case by the nomenclature of “free and public education” and “the provision of services.” In the effort toward democratic education in the form of inclusive schooling, nationwide institutions simply have not, will not, do not want to, or know how to give up the act of classifying, sorting, and hierarchizing human beings, reduced in the end to ability levels or test scores. The theories of child development that undergird the postulation of abilities by age or stage remain wedded to the structures of schooling.¹⁶ The challenge as I see it then is not how to tinker with the school, the university, examinations, or substituted portfolios but whether it is even possible to imagine the world otherwise. Is the situation such that, as Derrida argues, there is no philosophy, but everything is normative?¹⁷ If so, then, is it simply a matter of which norms you happen to agree with? Or is there a genuine possibility for not requiring such things as examinations in negative ways as indicators of “social order?” And if social order is merely a euphemism for what might more accurately be called the colonization of privilege, then it becomes clear how I am part of

the problem rather than the solution, for the very employment of someone within a school or university is dependent on the assertion of (dis)abilities that such institutions both produce and govern.

Is the big picture so desperate, though? Can nothing at all be done without merely camouflaging the posse in more intricate form? If, as Foucault (1979) further asserts, disciplinary practices organize analytical space, then the question that those who organize education are left with, after the diversionary function of the examination and the normalizing function of schooling is exposed, is whether it is ever OK to think of some humans as normal and some humans as not, some humans as positively able and some as disabled in a negative way. Reversals are again instructive. If those who set the minimum wage, for example, were compelled to live on it for the rest of their lives, no escape possible, then what might that wage be? In a similar vein, if the answer to the above question is yes, that it is OK to assert some humans as normal and some as not, some as on target and some as delayed, some as able to organize their “perceptual processes” and some not, then what orientation to human life might result if those who answered yes were forced to bear the repressive brunt of policies asserting negative ontologies? Although disability-positive such as that argued for by persons who self-identify as Deaf Culturalists is one thing,¹⁸ disability-negative, the construction of disability as a headache that won’t go away and that is the object of the hunt within the specific site of schooling, is quite another. What would happen if before inflicting them on others thought less human, less valuable, less educable, less everything that matters within a school, the whole range of effects of educational policies regarding disability had to hit home through *everyone’s* sense of self as an outlawed ontology? Perhaps if the negative othering effects were applied to forms of corporeality that were initially thought of as positive, clear, stable, and nonproblematic, there would be time and space for reconsidering a wider range of the implications of the new eugenics, ableist normativity, and disciplining technologies before sending the posse out in schools.

In a final series of reversals, then, it seems important to consider just what skills are actually thought necessary or as “needs” that define who the educationally problematic are and what “quality citizenship” is. In a reversal of a medical logic that tests for disease by a presence of something, the “disease” of the schoolchild who is labeled as disabled in one form or another is identified by an absence—the thing, the knowledge-as-commodity, skill-as-commodity, or self-control-as-commodity that is supposed to be carried inside as one might carry lunch in a backpack is considered missing or not timely enough. In the end this means that the appropriate speed or action is considered absent as well and that in a submerged eugenic reasoning that this “defect” is presumed to infect and create problems for more “normal” others in the vicinity if left undiagnosed or addressed. But

let's pretend that public schooling is not concerned purely with literacy, math, and that nebulous thing called academic achievement and that its arbitrary focus is in fact physical education. Let's extend the reversal and imagine that PE is *the* thing, the knowledge-performance that matters to how I judge you, who you can be, and what you can have. How fast *can* you run, move, slide, or roll? If I beat you, does that make you a problem? Or is the problem the notion of beating, of winning and losing, of faster and slower, of normal and abnormal in the face of rhetoric claiming respect for human diversity?

I thank Lisa Hoon for comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

Notes

1 I have drawn this title from a subtitle in Fiona Campbell's (2000) paper on disability and eugenics that plays on the analogy of the hunt and the posse. Although Campbell's paper lies within the realm of critical legal theory and does not reflect on education, it has been an important source of inspiration in thinking through the issues I discuss here. Her work appears in a volume on the history and sociology of eugenics in Australia. Campbell's chapter is almost entirely about eugenic discourse in the US, however.

2 Fairfield is a pseudonym.

3 Eliot, via the Committee of Ten of which he was a member, suggested that there were four routes or four kinds of subject matter that could lead to meeting university entrance requirements. I see this "opening out" as an accommodation to prevent the complete eradication of the classical content such as Latin and Greek, the presence of which had been seriously questioned by other educators. The upshot was that classical content was still given a place on the curriculum by the Committee of Ten. Eliot was also one of the executive committee members of the first international symposium on eugenics, making his characterization by Kliebard (1986) as patrician seem an understatement.

4 The shift between "(dis)ability" and "disability" or with emphasis, "*disability*," in this sentence (and throughout the paper) is significant and deliberate. The latter two terms refer to perceptions of unable to as a negative, outlaw, or problem ontology. The former term highlights the obvious binary and the inherent relationality—there is rarely an assertion of what counts as *disabled* or unable to without a simultaneous assertion of what *able to* means and why. I use the terms disability, *disability*, or disabilities, therefore, when referring to psycho-medical frameworks that assume certain things as "defects." These terms are thus used when I am summarizing dominant educational literature or processes that presume the objectivity of a pathologizing model. I use (dis)ability when overtly pointing to and emphasizing the politics of ability.

5 By ableist normativity Campbell is not in my view referring to a static or simplistic structural binary between the "have's" of ability and the "have-nots" of disability. The terms ableism and ableist normativity, if at all commensurate, are not indebted in her chapter to sovereign notions of power but rather to circulatory notions of Foucaultian power-as-effects. This means that the term ableist normativity refers to how discourses, including technologies, programs, prescriptions, policies, lines of reasoning, and everyday activities constitute as normal certain ways of appearing, of accomplishing something, and of being seen as fully human. The normativity that this whole process constitutes is not permanent or static—new technologies can, for instance, destabilize what was previously thought of as natural. But at any given moment or in a specific scenario what is instantiated is a particular view of ability as *the* view of how

a human should look or appear or perform—hence ableist normativity is an effect of the discourses that are brought to bear on reasonings about ontology and through activities of caring.

6 Sending the posse out in schools is a reference to both Wrigley (1996) and Campbell's (2000) use of the metaphor of hunting, posses, and tracking down activities in the "diagnosis" and "remedy" of disabilities. Wrigley argues that sometimes it appears that disabilities are assumed purely medical artifacts to be weeded out, found out about, or "hunted" in order to make the persons assigned the label "disabled" back into a "normal" person. Campbell extends the metaphor, referring to the techniques for identification and the obsession with technologies for "rectification" as aspects of a posse employed to engage in the hunt of so-called "corporeally anomalous" persons. In both cases the authors are not arguing that those involved in such activities are literal hunters of human flesh or are members of eugenics societies etc. Rather, they note the complexities and the complicities involved in discourses that constitute (dis)ability and the politics entailed in the well-intended activities of caring. In this paper, I will not be focusing on the topic of teachers who are labeled as "having" disabilities but rather the posse in relation to children who have little choice but to go to school and be subjected to its practices. For an account of student teachers' reflections on the "having" of disabilities, see Gabel (2001).

7 See Henri-Jaques Stiker's *A History of Disability*, though, for an account of practices that preceded the emergence of the term but might also be understood as eugenic.

8 Kaplan explains the extent of eugenic campaigning's "success" by highlighting the cultural context in which eugenics emerged and took hold. Racism, imperialism, and eugenics are not necessarily the same in her view, indicating how the preexisting imperialism of European nations and the preexisting slavery and racism of Canada and the United States differentially underwrote the local reception of eugenics in such places. Overall, however, she argues that eugenic associations emerged within the most economically influential and industrializing western European countries and gained footholds in those countries that had colonized other parts of the world, spreading rapidly to other places that had direct experiences of slavery or reservation systems at home, such as New Zealand and Australia. It became a globalizing discourse in that it attempted to redefine how everyone was to see themselves as part of a hierarchical world system that eugenic discourse now proffered as "scientific." Not surprisingly, then, in Kaplan's view the campaigns for sterilization were translated into surgery in a variety of contexts including many US states (Pernick, 1996), Scandinavia (Broberg & Roll-Hansen, 1996), and Australia (McGregor, 2000).

9 The terminology that is now deployed in the historical and sociological critiques of eugenics attempts to capture the complexities of 20th century shifts: "negative" or "hard" genetics and "positive" or "soft" eugenics, as well as old and new eugenics. The use of quotation marks in some of the couplets is key in that such descriptors suggest the difficulty of studying eugenic programs in the past and indicate further the political site that the interpretation of their effects on the present have become. Negative or hard genetics refers to events such as the Holocaust and sterilization programs. Positive or soft eugenics are seen as having the same values that lie at back of negative or hard genetics but to some extent masking them through modified strategies. This has become controversial because it has problematized methods such as Maria Montessori's, which were previously seen as child-centered and now seen as eugenicist because the pedagogical methods were directed toward controlling racial/national improvement by problematizing some humans as "lower races" while leaving untouched the false sense of superiority attributed to others. To that end, the difference between negative and positive or hard and soft eugenics has been made in terms of the methods promulgated rather than as a distinction in philosophical orientation—both are about "quality control."

10 Public schools were preceded in North America, for instance, by the equivalent of asylums, private schools, and orphanages. The fact that in the later 1800s and throughout the 1900s not all children were forced, or allowed, to go to a public school indicates how the availability of other institutions limited public education's domain. Public schools were never

designed for every child, especially those designated “insane” or “feebleminded,” and they are still not attended by every child.

11 Ingunn Moser and John Law (2001) argue that what needs to be rethought are terms such as agency, voice, and resistance: to talk of giving “voices” is to take the risk of limiting articulation to that which is verbal, textual, or linguistic. But this, at least in the context of disability . . . is to prejudice the result. Indeed it is to take the risk that “voices” that happen to be non-verbal are simply not recognised, or disqualified. Which is yet another reason why we prefer to talk of articulation.

12 Douglas Baynton (2001) has documented this line of argument historically in the United States, for example, in campaigns for the right to vote by white women and by men and women of specific racial minorities. The right to vote was predicated in part on distancing one’s “group” from inscriptions of disability as a negative ontology.

13 Begging of further historicization is any conflation between “quality control” discourse in the old eugenics and “quality of life” discourse in newer espoused goals of schooling.

14 Although intrinsically related, I am not discussing here the forms of pedagogy in special or “exceptional” education that target concepts of giftedness and talent.

15 It is stating the obvious to note that most parents are not employed as public school teachers and therefore interact with teachers as though they are a distinct and sometimes foreign group.

16 For an historicization of how the idea of stages of child development became wedded to the structures of public schooling, see Baker (2001).

17 Francois Ewald: Is there a philosophy of Jacques Derrida?

Jacques Derrida: No.

FE: Therefore there is no message?

JD: No message.

FE: Is there anything normative?

JD: Of course there is, there is nothing but.

For full text of interview see G. Biesta and D. Egea-Kuehne (2001), pp. 55–76. This quote is from p. 71.

18 There is actually no agreement in Deaf literature as to whether deafness is a disability or whether there is a discrete “Deaf Culture.” I use the term disability-positive here, then, to refer to the idea that what has historically been called a *disability* in mainstream literature and medicine (i.e., deafness) is now being listened to as a positive state of being. For an account of the social movement called Deaf Awareness and the politics of deafness as an epistemological rather than auditory question see Owen Wrigley (1996). For further analysis of (de)constructions of deafness as a linguistic, not disability, minority see Brenda Brueggeman (1999) and Harlan Lane (1997).

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