**Diversity training, inclusive education and our inevitable lament**

**Introduction**

We set out in this paper from the premise that thinking with theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012), in order to relate to difference differently, is key to apprehending ongoing conditions of marginalisation that persist in schools. Aligned with policy developments since the 1970s promoting equality of opportunity (e.g., *The Equality Act 2010* in the UK), promoting inclusion and diversity have gained popularity in fields as varied as education and business, for the supposed representativeness these initiatives bring to comprehensive societies, and of course for the untapped human, social and economic return on investment they promise. To attain these ideals, governments and for-profit organisations alike defer to diversity training, to create awareness among their workforces about different ways of being, and to address so-called unconscious bias, often considered the source of negative attitudes towards people of other races or abilities (Noon, 2017). Programs of initial and in-service professional development, designed to increase the capacity of teachers and school leaders to respond to diverse student groups, have been created to buttress this endeavour (Naraian, 2021; Slee, 2018). Yet, core to the argument we advance in this paper is that the frames of reference that are recurrently incited for reconciling educational exclusion in legislation, policy and practice, namely human rights, individualised specialist support, and positive attitudes towards students with disabilities and mental health concerns, adversely impede progress. Reliant on essentialist orientations of thought, which assume immutability, inherency, and context-free characterisations (Feely, 2016), these positions favour knowledge of otherness over being and relating to difference, thus perpetuating notions of normalcy and deficit. Subsequently, efforts made do little to redress conditions of marginalisation, and more importantly, the roles and responsibilities of teachers and school leaders in this pursuit.

The paper proceeds across four sections, each addressing relevant conceptual~practical applications. In the first, we expand the discussion by exploring the persistent failings of educational research, policy and practice to create inclusive possibilities. This is because of the ways objectives for inclusion are framed, as normative universality, rather than collective responsibility, for equitable participation. In the second section, attention is drawn to the ways attitudinal research contributes to our concern by its after-the-fact orientation (Shotter, 2017). This section proffers alternative approaches to this end drawing on critical psychology (Corcoran, 2014). These ideas are expanded in the third section, with a discussion of how disability and inclusion in education are generally conceived, contributing to ongoing marginalisation. In this section we offer critical disability perspectives as a way of more explicitly orientating programs of initial teacher and professional development towards sustainable inclusive practices. The paper then concludes with an incitement to affirmative ethics (Braidotti, 2019), and an accompanying provocation that any policies and practices seeking prevention to exclusion will forever remain ones of retention unless difference is done differently.

**Rights, right?**

A socio-political appetite for redressing exclusion from education based on markers of difference reverberates internationally. Disability and mental health are afforded particular attention to this end, with the United Nations, for instance, rather optimistically seeking to ‘Imagine the world in 2030, fully inclusive of persons with disabilities!’ (2020, par. 1) as part of its Sustainable Development Goals, which reach across interconnected domains of life, including education, environmental action, and employment. In Australia from where we write, and in similarly well-resourced countries of the global north, students with disabilities and mental health concerns are notionally permitted to enrol into their local neighbourhood schools, supported by specific legislation, which is underpinned by incitements to international human rights conventions. Efforts to bring about systemic reform in the service of inclusive practice accompany these initiatives, such as programs of study drawing awareness to disability complexities in initial teacher education and ongoing professional development. These are laudable developments. Notwithstanding, an inevitable lament comes to those working in or seeking to benefit from the advances of inclusive education, be they researchers, teachers or school leadership, parents and/or students. In particular, questions are frequently asked as to how inclusive education policy consistently fails to make its mark on practice and leaves those, so desperate for its fulfilment, inherently disappointed. As Slee (2018) vehemently argues, it is as if inclusive education has become an empty, vacuous term, hampered by division and duplicity across theory, policy, and practice.

Returning to the premise from which we write this paper, the three touchstones upon which the field is framed - human rights, individualised specialist support, and positive practitioner attitudes - are at odds with a sustainable inclusive orientation. It is these, we contend, that permit educational exclusion to go on by privileging an existing state of affairs, maintained by individualism and determinism, over more affirmative forms of ethics. To this end, by merely accepting these concepts at face value, rather than slowing down to pause for thought, we risk perpetuating rehabilitative ableism, an orientation aligned with a long-standing belief that inclusion is a charitable act for students with disabilities and mental health issues (Corcoran et al., 2019). Let us explain by taking each touchstone in turn, commencing with a discussion of human rights and education-based legislation.

As previously shadowed, the human rights framework, commencing with the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), underlies an intent to develop systems of education that are inclusive for all learners. Governments internationally have strived to develop procedures consistent with a human rights understanding of equality, through the development of antidiscrimination legislation aimed at supporting marginalised groups in particular. Protecting the rights of students with disabilities to enrol and receive reasonable adjustments to study in any educational provider in Australia, for instance, is legislated by the *Disability Standards for Education* (2005). Again, although these provisions make a welcome start, they trade in what Söder (2009) calls negative rights-based responses, for the ways they work from a pejorative frame of reference rather than entitling equitable access. From this authority the assertion comes that it is unlawful not to make reasonable adjustments for students identified through a narrow set of parameters to be disabled, but this is so only on the basis that programs of study are not modified unduly in order to cause hardship to the education provider. The needs of the person with disability are thereby pitted against those of the educator, based on concepts open to interpretation, thereby privileging one’s interests over the other (Grue, 2019; Whitburn, 2015).

To us, two matters of concern emerge from the human rights argument for inclusive education. First, assumed in human rights are notions of universalism, which promote an individualist ethic of achievement. That is to say, human rights are advanced as a goal that everyone can achieve, based on the merit of their efforts. Assumed here is that reasonable adjustments need only concern individual students with ‘special needs’, so that this right can be realised. Yet, equal opportunity in education is seldom accessible to everyone, with or without the application of program adjustments (Zembylas, 2021). Second, and relatedly, human rights instruments specifically targeting disability and inclusive education draw from ambiguous definitions of both concepts that concentrate on the pejorative, giving rise to varied interpretations and applications (Byrne, 2013; Grue, 2019). After expanding a discussion of the other pillar of related scholarship that we find at odds with an inclusive orientation, i.e., research involving attitudes, we return to these concerns in the third section of this paper when introducing critical disability studies as an approach for disrupting ways that disability is generally read.

**How to change attitudes**

Repetition can be useful for certain things. Take for example a sportsperson or student. Their dedication to task can bring about actual benefits in performance. Though we are not all Olympians or professional football players, many readers will have studied at some point in their lives – they may be still – and as such, possibly understand what concerted and repeated effort produces. Yet, this section draws to attention a different kind of repetition we consider to be unhelpful, even deleterious, to advances in education practice. The repetition we speak of is to do with how attitudes are oriented to in educational research. For over one hundred years researchers have been interested in understanding attitudes, particularly as these are applied to matters of disability and inclusion (Antonak & Livneh, 1988). Awareness training activities are often dedicated to changing ‘negative’ individual attitudes (Pitman, 2021). Despite the ongoing publication of numerous books and articles on topic and proliferation of professional development sessions for every variety of educator, we still, lamentably, seek answers regarding attitude change. In response to this perennial problem, below we set out another way of orienting to attitudes. Before addressing the matter of attitudes, we must say more about the prospects of orientation.

It is ironic that in order to change attitudes, we first go about trying to know them. Any historical account of psychological research tells us how attitudes have been theorised and measured into existence (Danziger, 1997). Accordingly, these accounts entail both ontological (i.e., how things exist) and epistemological (i.e., how we know things exist) matters. British social psychologist John Shotter recognised the irony in psychology’s traditional ways of knowing/being. Shotter (2017) felt that the majority of psychological research was oriented to capturing things. That is, in trying to know about things like attitudes, certain standardised methods were employed to explain their existence after-the-fact. Think for a moment about attitude research and its commonly utilised instruments like surveys or questionnaires. These tools provide measurements uncomplicatedly taken from the individual as your waiter might take an order were you eating tonight at a restaurant. Assuming an after-the-fact orientation allows us to produce particular kinds of knowledge based on certain views of the world. For instance, this might invoke a world where statistics can reliably inform us about the significance of a set of measurements, confirming their correlation. Our interest here is not intended to set up a new kind of binary in opposition to after-the-fact orientations yet we are compelled to ask: what if our image of the world wasn’t so definite? What if capturing and concretising the world was only one orientation to knowing/being?

Shotter (2008), amongst many others (Barad, 2007; Bennet, 2011; Ingold, 2011), assists us to adopt a different orientation. In his own words, ‘it is in the fluid back and forth flow of living, interdependent activity – activity that is always inseparably intertwined, as in an ecology, in with all the other activities occurring in its surroundings – that a certain, special kind of understanding becomes available to us’ (p. vi). In recognising that we, as researchers, students, practitioners, etc., exist in a ceaseless ‘flow of living’, we are enabled to recognise an unfinalisability to knowing/being. Instead of trying to capture life, concretising what in our present example are often inadequately referred to as ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ attitudes after-the-fact, we instead might employ before-the-fact orientations where it is possible to remain connected to a living, emergent and entangled world. How might before-the-fact approaches engage attitudes? Table 1 provides direction for our discussion.

Insert Table 1 here

The question - How to change attitudes – speaks not only to relative content (i.e., what a person thinks disability is) but just as importantly to changing how this thing called ‘attitudes’ can be understood. Let us begin with the suggestion that attitudes reflect an individual’s thought on a subject. The difficulty with this proposition is that we cannot access attitudes in any direct way. What those interested in knowing another’s attitudes must do is employ a tool by which access is said to be made possible. Of course, here we are referring to commonly used methods such as surveys and questionnaires. But what needs to be accepted, ontologically and epistemologically, for us to trust their results? For lengthier discussion on topic, previous research has tackled specific questionnaires, like self-report measures, to examine the matter (see for e.g., Corcoran, 2016a). In the limited space we have available here, we initially can raise concern with surveys as precise instruments. The nub of the issue has to do with the employment of scaled measurement and the production of aggregated response. If Tim were to respond to a survey question with ‘Strongly Disagree’, what guarantees are there that Ben’s ‘Disagree’ response is distinctly different? If attitudes cannot be simply accepted as accurate reflections of thought, either at an individual level or collectively, how else might we address them? Another approach to surveys would be to work with their results diffractively (Barad, 2007). Instead of essentialising language and the thought in which ‘internal’ cognitive activity is said to occur, a diffractive engagement ‘means to study the practices of knowing as they are enacted in the materiality of the world, in a state of interdependence with other parts of the world’ (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017, p. 10). This leads us to say something about finding and making.

We are not comfortable with the suggestion that attitudes already exist in the world and are simply waiting to be recorded or found. As Bozalek and Zembylas recognise, our practices of knowing occur within ever-changing material and relational conditions. Backing up to the example mentioned above, we can legitimately ask if or how Tim and Ben take away the same understanding of a survey question? Not sure about you but to us the prompt ‘I often drink too much quality beer’ is fraught with complexity. Tim’s and Ben’s material-discursive-relational experience are going to influence how they each respond. What if the survey was undertaken a month earlier? A year later? Does it matter if the survey was completed alone online or in front of either of their partners or the researcher? Our point being that knowing/being is always a collaborative effort, a constantly changing commotion involving things – people, cities, climates, computers, dogs, and so on. Attitudes, as particular kinds of things, are being made anew with every moment. Ultimately, they are ungraspable, as well as unfinalisable, because they are alive in the world.

One of the more insidious aspects of attitude research is the blame attributed to individuals or groups on the grounds of their possessing ‘negative’ or unhelpful attitudes. Unsurprisingly, in the world of education, teachers are often front and centre when blame is being doled out. A persistent contention asserts if only the components (i.e., affective, cognitive, and behavioural) of possessed attitudes could be altered, practices like inclusive education might stand a better chance at being successful (Krischler & Pit-ten Cate, 2019). Yet today, even with the constructivist-informed recognition that ‘individual behaviour and attitudes are influenced not only by individual psychological conditions but also embedded in social and political contexts’ (Ewert, Loer & Thomann, 2021), school policy and climate being two possible candidates, doubts remain with regards achieving success with inclusive education implementation. Put simply, the question we are driving at asks whether so-called negative attitudes and their supposed impact on inclusive education are all of the problem needing to be solved?

Following the argument already presented, the problem statement – that inclusive education would have a better chance at success if unhelpful attitudes changed - generally accepts that outputs from surveys and questionnaires can inform possible solutions. Attitude components are found and presumably, having detected these, we can strike a plan to go about fixing them as a mechanic would do when servicing your car’s engine. Awareness training anyone? However, ‘(t)he trouble with blame’, as Sharon Lamb (1996, p. 12) noted, ‘is this all or nothingness, this black and whiteness. People are drawn to extremes’. The problem, at best, becomes bifurcated i.e., attitudes are possessed by agentic individuals and policies are somehow backgrounded as context. The trouble with blame also encourages our human tendency to look back to someone to attribute cause. If we were to move beyond after-the-fact, problem focussed, anthropocentric fault bearing to include before-the-fact recognition of all things in commotion, might that help to dissolve the vexatious conundrum that is inclusive education implementation? We believe so. Here’s how.

Staying beholden to after-the-fact orientations implore us to ‘tell it like it is’. In this kind of world, things like attitudes are more or less fixed and capturable. That is why we need to do more of the same kind of research, to find the same kind of answer, to solve the same ongoing problem. Some thirty years ago, social psychologist Ken Gergen (1992, p. 27) pondered: ‘Rather than “telling it like it is” the challenge for the postmodern psychologist is to “tell it as it may become”’. Firstly, we think it is reasonable to extend Gergen’s suggestion to all researchers as we recognise, for a psychologist, he was unlike most of his contemporaries. Above we have already motioned to how our orientation to engaging with the living world could ‘tell it as it may become’. Instead of attempting to fix or capture things, we accept the ungraspable and unfinalisable prospect of knowing/being. When it comes to attitudes, this means thinking prospectively with theory (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). In the next section we introduce theory that potentially services this ambition. To conclude this section, let us for now summarise what introducing a before-the-fact orientation offers our engagement of attitudes.

Attitudes are a worthy topic for examination – we are certainly not suggesting otherwise. Our concern here has been to express frustration at the way in teachers who ‘possess’ negative attitudes, for example, have been targeted in research concerning inclusive education. We suggest that attitudes are unique kinds of psychosocial things which are not possessed by individuals nor materially situated inside their brains like a cancerous tumour. Instead, we consider attitudes exist, like so much other psychosocial matter, in, around and through the world we share. No doubt, attitudes exert actual influence, but we want to position that in a prospective manner by recognising how it is we orient to the living world. Attitudes do not only exist in the review mirror in after-the-fact accounts. In fact, we believe it is more ethical to engage attitudes as materially emerging in our relationships with students, colleagues, parents, classrooms and politics. As existing matter, societies should recognise how attitudes arise and sustain through the actions of human and non-human beings. Accordingly, we can look to politicians failing to represent the interests of disabled people as much as we can draw attention to buildings that fail to provide access to all.

Why do we keep struggling to change ways of knowing/being that do damage to people? You might anticipate here we are referencing ableism and the many ways ‘telling it like it is’ treats people living with disability defectively. We are, and now turn to canvass how disability can be theoretically mobilised differently to prospectively anticipate more affirmative ways of knowing/being. As we end this section, the concern we conclude with draws your attention to how psychology contributes to our ways of speaking being into existence. Is the way in which attitudes are currently understood solving the problem that is educational exclusion? Stop reading now if you believe that is so.

**Knowing disability**

In 2011, the World Health Organisation (WHO) estimated an international population of more than 1 billion disabled people (WHO and The World Bank, 2011), projecting disability onto the world stage as the condition upon which the largest growing minority group is measured (Grue, 2019). In a world of nearly 8 billion people, on the surface this seems like a lot of students who may have been traditionally segregated from education, whose inclusion is now to be made possible by virtue of a shift in political resolve. It may also seem that switching from policies of segregation to inclusion signals a break in repetition, for bringing equality to the lives of disabled people and their families. Leaving aside that this idea assumes a natural connection between policy intent and implementation (Ball, 2006), by expanding the idea of repetition, in this section we further what we have aforesaid by thinking with theory for its generative potential to reorientate the way we conceive of disability, human rights, and specialist support, with a view to disrupting educational practices that exclude children and young people with disabilities from equitable education. The discerning reader may have come to recognise we would urge all practitioners to question the WHO’s 1 billion measure, and the implementation of political intent, on a number of levels. Let us start with disability, and the ways by which it is understood and measured.

When thinking of disability, what impression springs to mind? Though it might seem a simple undertaking, continual discursive and material variations have perhaps surprisingly ensured that disability is not an easy concept to pin down or capture. Nor should it be, when placed into different national contexts within the global north and south, with variable resources, levels of scientific advancement, policy drivers, and cultural responses to disability – all giving the 1 billion persons figure a run for its money. Leaving aside the moral position emerging from biblical texts, which held that the presence of an impairment is evidence of one’s moral failings (Stiker, 2019), today disability tends to rest on a dualism between what is commonly referred to as the medical and social models. Put briefly, with the advancement of medical knowledge emerged disability, a term that defines a limiting condition that cannot be eradicated. Via the medical model then, disability is understood and oriented to as a problem to be solved through ongoing scientific and rehabilitative measures. Reducing the impact of an impairing condition is not in itself an issue (Shakespeare, 2013). Yet, eerily, we do not have to reach too far into the past to uncover the extent to which people with disabilities have been subject to eugenic procedures (Baker, 2002) and in some cases, still are (Thomas & Rothman, 2016). In schooling specialist support is triggered for individual students on the basis of a diagnosis that meets particular benchmarks of limitation. It is undeniable that practices of this kind are a legacy of repeated adherence to the medical model of disability (Byrne, 2013).

The social model sits in stark contrast to its medical forebearer, and for the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation who developed the model in 1970s England, what disables people (intended as a verb rather than a noun) are the material conditions that prevent them from full inclusion. From steps into classrooms, to out-of-reach elevator buttons, and inaccessible buses, disability, then, is made by inaccessible aspects of the environment, rather than naturally occurring. For the optimism and activism the social model of disability has driven around the world to colossal benefit (Goodley, 2013), its repeated incitement today by educators and advocates alike is redolent, to us, of the reverence to attitude-based research discussed above. An adherence to the social model - or the medical model for that matter - is an acceptance that an impairment is real or proven after-the-fact, and any subsequent limitations are attributable to either medical advancement or the material environment. Put differently, both models admit an inevitability not only that barriers will exist, but that they may be insurmountable. Like a survey of negative attitudes, a diagnosis proclaims to ‘tell it like it is’. Essentialising disability emerges here as a problematic outcome of either model, as we may well ask – how significant might the installation of ramps and elevators to buildings be to supporting students with intellectual impairments to study alongside their peers? Or again, how might a student from a remote village in the global south diagnosed blind be afforded access to the written word?

Many refer to international accords such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD; 2006) to steer them towards a workable definition of disability. The CRPD is, after all, a global resource designed to bolster the rights of people living with disabilities. Yet, it inescapably emerges from within these conceptual traditions, blending both the medical and social positions of disability together, and persisting a raft of unresolved concerns in so doing. While Standard 8 of the CRPD is dedicated to building disability awareness, including fostering positive attitudes towards people with disabilities, further assumptions in its orientation is the continued entrenchment of an individualist response to disability that draws towards special needs as a comparative standard to a barrier-free life.

The ongoing adherence to a comparative standard has been taken up by commentators who observe that international human rights instruments reference implicit norms to which people with disabilities are anticipated to reach. As Grue (2019, p. 10) recognises, ‘the CRPD adopts a compromise position in its causal explanation of the exclusion of disabled people as the result of interaction between impairments and barriers’. To this end, barriers are implicitly synonymised with individuals’ impairments, and impairments with barriers, persisting a circular challenge to definition that fails to move beyond centring deficits upon disabled individuals. In schooling contexts, reasonable adjustments are intended to address barriers to learning. Yet within this frame of reference, as Byrne (2013) and Grue (2019) point out, inclusion in education is ambiguously defined in Human Rights instruments as equality of opportunity, leading to what Grue refers to as inclusive marginalisation, wherein rights may be legally assured but not politically enacted. Awareness training, too, aligned with an agenda for equality, centres understanding on individual variations rather than collective responsibility (Noon, 2018), and ableism is consequently permitted to go on while standards of normativity remain unchecked. How might we turn this corner?

In recognising that education cannot be made inclusive solely by labelling all students against a benchmark of normative development (medical model), nor tinkering with the material conditions of schools away from context (social model), it seems appropriate to break with repetition and draw on additional theoretical threads by which to embed understanding and doing disability. To this end we present an alternative approach in use in contemporary disability scholarship, called critical disability studies (or critical disability theory). Described as a transdisciplinary advancement to understanding disability (Goodley, 2013) critical disability studies builds on what has come before to interrogate the so-called ‘natural order’ of things. That is to say, orientating to a critical perspective is to recognise that after-the-fact representations do little to apprehend the continuation of marginalising conditions and that neither disability, nor inclusive education, carry brute, immutable definitions. Instead, and importantly to our argument, what becomes important is the affirmative potential of disability as an interrelated category of human variance, rather than an individualistic problem to be resolved (Feely, 2016; Goodley, 2013). The productive potential of this orientation is in acknowledging that our way of being (student or teacher) is in co-existence with other people, environments, animals and machines. By decentring humanness in this way, is to make a political and ethical effort to enact inclusive education by rejecting an essentialist and normative definitions of disability and inclusion, and to instead deliberately favour interconnection to minimise ableism (Naraian, 2021).

An old adage exists in education that theory is as relevant only to those who occupy the ivory towers in universities and not to practitioners in schools - a charge that is also levelled at critical disability studies. While we do not the space to contend with this here (for a fuller account of this critique, read Goodley, 2013; Feely, 2016), we argue emphatically that theory of this kind provides us the tools to think with in order to disrupt prevailing conditions of schooling that permit educational exclusions to stubbornly persist. Commencing with a before-the-fact orientation to disability and inclusive education in teacher training and professional development engages what Naraian (2021, p. 6) calls ontological inseparability, where ‘teachers cannot be prepared for inclusion in schools by teacher educators as though they all come into being separately from each other. They/we are collectively and compulsorily entangled in the production of inclusion and constituted alongside each other’. Recognising our relational responsibility to this end, and drawing attention to the affirmative potential of interconnection, is the first step at surfacing normative assumptions embedded in practice.

**Conclusion**

We started this paper with a provocation that educational policies and practices seeking prevention to exclusion will forever remain ones of retention unless difference is done differently. Rather than perpetuating after-the-fact orientations to human rights, attitudes and fixed models of disability, doing difference differently means getting ahead of the curve. In Gergen’s words, telling it as it may become. We can do this in any number of ways. One way is to focus on scale. When capturing what it is we want to know, after-the-fact orientations look to fix the scale of interpretation usually on the individual or population. Regarding disability and/or mental health, this has often meant zeroing in and assessing an individual’s being in comparison to normative standards. If we jump to population-level understanding, as we have laid out in our discussion, this remains an ableist undertaking which regularly sets conditions for exclusion. The universalism of human rights is bound to exclude those who do not occupy after-the-fact categorisations of disability because recognition lags, it is not capable of getting ahead of the curve (i.e., telling it as it may become).

Previously we have invited those with interest in inclusive education to embrace paradox (Corcoran et al., 2019). What we have argued is that paradox is a necessary condition of relationality. If education systems are going to attempt to orient toward what is (be)coming, our traditional after-the-fact compulsion to settling upon binary understanding needs to be addressed. At scale, this means we are able to engage the continuum that straddles individual to population ways of knowing/being. This is inevitably going to invite paradox but our being able to exist in such space need not be nihilistic. Before anything else, what is needed is an acceptance that all aspects of living are related. Stop and ponder that for a moment. Where would exclusion be acceptable in our world if all aspects of living are connected? Accepting that paradox is a necessary condition of relationality allows us to recognise the prospect that inclusion or human rights cannot be universally applied and achieved. Simultaneously and just as significantly, we must also recognise our compulsion to exclusion need not be the habitual response to breaches of normative standard. In orienting before-the-fact, educational institutions need to commit, first and foremost, to anticipating hope (Corcoran, 2016b), not deficit. This invocation invites a final word on affirmative ethics.

In societies working to get beyond oppressive, singular ways of knowing/being, effort is made to think outside ableist conceptions of living. If commitment to thinking about difference differently has been made before-the-fact, the blame game recedes in the after-the-fact review mirror, supplanted by more affirmative ways of being and becoming. Well intentioned activities like awareness training will always, from such orientation, include more than what is already known. What does this mean?

The function of the virtual is to actualise the real issues, which means precisely the effort to interrupt the acquiescent application of established norms and values, to deterritorialise them by introducing alternative ethical flows. The virtual is the laboratory of the new. To accomplish this ethics, we need to assemble and enact together a qualitative leap, by understanding how it engenders the conditions of our bondage. Such a leap engages with, but also breaks productively with the present. The virtual or affirmative force is thus also the motor of political change (Braidotti, 2019, p. 172).

Like the blame game, let us break away from the lament that affects the present, particularly for students vulnerable to educational exclusion. Instead, leaping together, we orient to before-the-fact prospective ways of knowing/being, yet to be realised and collectively affirmed.

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