

**Title: Exploring experiences of ‘inclusive’ education in  
international schools from the perspective of parents who have  
children labeled with SEN/D**

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**Exploring experiences of 'inclusive' education in international schools from the  
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This thesis results entirely from my own work, not offered previously for any other degree or diploma.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis reports on a study that explored experiences of ‘inclusive’ education in international schools from the perspective of parents who have children labeled with SEN/D. I interviewed ten parents who had enrolled their child with an SEN/D label in an international school in Amman, Jordan.

I analyzed this data within a critical disability studies theoretical framework to highlight the relations to neoliberalism, neocolonialism, and ableism. This approach enabled an analysis of how parents revealed support for different ideas within disability studies. This analysis highlighted their contradictions and resistance to previous understandings of disability, inclusion, and SEN/D.

I analyzed the data in relation to literature from three distinct fields of scholarship: disability studies, international schooling, and school choice literature. By bringing together these three divergent fields, a novel and significant contribution to knowledge forms.

The purpose of bringing together these three fields, and completing this study using a critical disability studies theoretical framework, was to highlight the unique concerns of parents of children labeled with SEN/D within the international school market and the formative processes these parents experience in relation to their desire to school their children across ‘inclusive’ international schools.

The findings from the study indicate that while parents of SEN/D children do experience exclusion repeatedly across multiple international schools which market themselves as ‘inclusive,’ they largely accept this as part of the process and believe that exclusion was a necessary part of international schools being inclusive.

I also highlight how international schools can improve the experiences of international school parents of SEN/D children. Limitations of the present study and possibilities for future research, such as utilizing the voice of international school children with SEN/D labels to explore their experiences and understandings, are also discussed.

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## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

There has recently been tremendous growth in international schools marketing themselves as inclusive for children labeled with SEN/D (Special Educational Needs and/or Disability) (ISC Research and Next Frontier Inclusion 2020). These international schools are often located within the Global South and provide an education modeled or based on an 'international' curriculum. In the past twenty years, the number and variety of international schools have exponentially increased, with many operating outside of their country's national education policies (Brown and Lauder 2011). This increase has caused challenges in globally Southern countries, such as the national education programs potentially being seen as secondary compared to the 'international' schools (Tanu 2017).

The lack of national oversight in some countries and the nature of a curriculum that goes across national boundaries creates a potential lack of impact on international schools from national policies, which may mandate the inclusion of learners with SEN/D. Instead, the growth in international schools marketing themselves as inclusive is more likely due to the clients for whom international schools provide a service. The clients of international schools are often the employees of transnational companies working outside of their home countries yet desiring a similar type of education for their children (Morales 2015). Also, host country nationals may seek an 'international' education outside of their country's national system for a range of perceived benefits (Bailey 2015). The school choice process and schooling experiences for parents of children labeled with SEN/D are developed fields of research at a national level (Byrne 2013). However, there is a gap in the literature



concerning the considerations, experiences, and reflections of parents who have chosen international schooling for their children labeled with an SEN/D (Pletser 2019).

Parents of children labeled with an SEN/D who travel or live across multiple countries experience the globalized nature of disablism (Goodley 2013). This transnational discriminatory force results in the normalization of discriminatory practices against those with SEN/Ds and their families. It can vary in its forms, for example, socially-constructed or physical barriers to accessing shared spaces, acts of violence, or most relevantly for this project, exclusionary practices by international schools which may label themselves as inclusive schools. There are a range of understandings of inclusion, SEN/D, and internationalism potentially held by parents. However, within the context of an expanding globalized disablism, expanding international school market, and expanding acceptance of inclusion as an ideological practice within schooling, there is a need for research on how parents of SEN/D children understand these ideas within this context. This thesis seeks to construct such an understanding as an original contribution to knowledge.

Parental views could be influenced by models of disability such as the medical or social models and their personal experiences. Parents will be negotiating SEN/D labels daily as they intersect with globalized forces of disablism, and I do not want to presume inherent negativity or positivity attached to any label or idea.

A criticism I am open to is that I utilised terms like impairment, disability, and SEN/D. I did not do this uncritically (or due to my own preference), and I intentionally started my literature review by analyzing the practice of labelling as the erroneous act of using language to define a particular human experience based on incidence. This

sought to highlight the artificiality of labelling human experiences, and the inherent problems with all terms based on differentiation. However my participants most commonly used these terms, and they are frequent throughout the literature, so I utilised them merely as tools. Imperfect tools in which to understand contemporaneous and divergent understandings, and seek to highlight contradictions where resistance can emerge. In short, I have used them because they are problematic.

I chose an international school with a diverse range of students (from 44 countries) with a thirty-year history of accepting and supporting students with SEN/D labels to explore this field of research. This school has a good reputation for SEN/D practices locally and internationally, and within the past four years, it has received multiple awards for its SEN/D inclusion. The school has fifteen percent of the student population with a current SEN/D label and over forty staff members within the inclusion departments. I lead the departments at a strategic level and have spent five years helping them to grow. Despite personally believing there are numerous ways to improve, one area of strength is our reputation for including children with SEN/D labels. This reputation is known to potential clients who may be located worldwide and means the school attracts parents of SEN/D children from both the local country of Jordan and parents who work in transnational organizations located around the globe. The school's mission statement is to 'adopt the best of British and international practices,' which demonstrates the problematic relationship international schools have with the countries in which they reside. Namely, the neo-colonial idea that a supposedly 'international' curriculum-based predominantly on globally Northern principles and exported from globally Northern countries is

better than the education of globally Southern countries. One part of the school's practices overtly from globally Northern countries is the idea of inclusion.

International schools exist within a competitive marketplace governed by neoliberal principles such as competition and meritocracy, and the competitors for XXX school are international schools within and outside of Jordan (Brown and Lauder 2011). The school markets itself widely and with success as an 'inclusive' international school.

However, the degree to which international school parents are susceptible to this marketing is yet to be determined.

Parents of children labeled with SEN/D potentially face the violent reality of disablism every time they are required to choose an international school, when their children attend these schools, and when they transition within or between countries.

Therefore my first research question asks how SEN/D children's parents' experience inclusive education in international schooling, focussing on these three areas.

By exploring their experiences of inclusive education across international schools, how international schools can improve SEN/D children's parents' experiences can be highlighted to resist disablism and enhance their experiences in the future. Therefore my second research question asks how international schools can improve SEN/D children's parents' experiences of inclusive education.

## **Chapter 2 Literature Review**

This literature review begins with an attempt to chart understandings of SEN/D and inclusion so that the context of the SEN/D children's parents experiences can be analyzed as part of the first research question. This chart includes some of the major theoretical models within disability research, such as the medical model, the social model, and the social-relational model.

Then there is a review of literature relating to the resistance model of SEN/D as a potential way to resist accepting a singular model to understand SEN/D. This links to the second research question on how schools can improve parental experiences.

This review leads into a critical consideration of why disability and inclusion must be understood within the contexts of post-coloniality and a neoliberal ideology informed by globally Northern ideas. This is particularly necessary as both research questions focus on international schools where these contexts are important.

The research then requires a review of the literature relating to international schools and their transnational students to highlight how experiences of inclusive education within international schools are under-researched.

Finally, there is a section on school choice related to the literature on how parents choose, the unique decisions faced by parents of SEN/D children, and how choice relates to international schools. This is to highlight how the research questions constitute an original contribution within this under-researched field.

## **2.1 Disability models, Inclusion and the Global North**

### *2.1.1 Medical model of disability and inclusion*

Labeling some human experiences as specific SEN/Ds occurs due to essentialist notions of what constitutes a normal human being. Due to the high incidence of an able-bodied phenomenal experience within the population, this particular experience has come to represent a 'normal' experience, and any deviance from this is viewed as inferior and abnormal (Greenstein 2016). This process of delineating the normal has been attributed to industrialization and the rise of petit-bourgeois power.

Mass-production requirements entailed framing the heteronormative able-bodied worker as an average to be aspired to, whereas deviations from this productive proletarian worker were chastised as abnormal and deviant (Davis 1995).

In much of the Global North for the past forty years, this conception of abnormality has continued to be propagated in many ways. One way is by labeling people with SEN/D. However, labeling this subsection of society as abnormal opens up the potential for significant exclusion from the majority of society by those who typically experience what is determined as normality. This creates 'the repetition of exclusion' where the most vulnerable within society can also become the most marginalized and attempts to integrate and include these members are grounded somewhat paradoxically on initially labeling them as different (Allan 2008, 65). Foucault (1977, 184) accused this normalization process of being 'one of the great instruments of power at the end of the classical age.' The concept of normal, which reinforces aspirations of able-bodiedness, is coercive over those whose differences are labeled as deficient.

Within the last forty years, the educational field which aims to support those labeled as deficient has increasingly come to be defined by a medicalization of the SEN/D process, whereby medical doctors diagnose the low incident experiences as features which fall outside of normal distribution and are therefore abnormal deficiencies (Oliver 1996). They then typically prescribe a treatment for this conflation of pathological deviance with statistical infrequency. This medicalization gives scientific credence to the bourgeois hegemony that views able-bodied workers as desirable and normal (Greenstein 2016).

This pathologization of low-incident experiences as a form of medical disorder has resulted in a range of overtly exclusionary practices within schools, such as educating diagnosed learners in separate rooms for part of or all of their days, or within separate schools entirely (Slee 2013). This physical separation can be perceived as reinforcing the reification of high incidence experiences such as able-bodiedness as a better normality, which then needs to be preserved from the medicalized contagion of statistically-defined and medically diagnosed abnormality (Davis 1995). Constructing normalcy as a scientific necessity helps convince the SEN/D people and the non-SEN/D people that the 'normal' experience is inherently better; therefore, SEN/D people must be subjugated to exclusion and violence through forced academic and behavioral interventions in order to ape this socially approved normality (Greenstein 2016). This prevalence of interventions and treatments, based on medical diagnoses and labels, effectively relegates SEN/D people to a lesser status within education.

The medical model, which still underpins many common SEN/D and inclusion practices in schools, has been criticized by approaches such as the social

constructionist approach. This is because it positions disabilities as treatable medical disorders, thus putting medical professionals in a position of disciplinary power as the source of a prevention or cure (Oliver 1996). This medical treatment results in social stigma, hospital admittance, and segregation through asylums and SEN/D facilities (Caruso 2010). The medical model frames the impairment as an individual problem caused by psychological and physical factors within the person (Oliver 1996). This de-emphasises or dismisses the role of society in disabling people and results in a taxonomic system where disabilities require diagnosis, labeling, and treatment (Oliver 1996). Unfortunately, labeling difference as a form of deficiency and identifying people with SEN/D as needing correction covers up and supports the systemic violence and oppression inherent within the medical model. The discipline of SEN/D has arisen out of the failure of schools to provide for all students' learning needs, compartmentalizing the deficiencies within the education system by labeling the flaw not with the schooling system or its disciplinary power but as an individual deficiency within the SEN/D person (Skrtic 1995).

For example, there exists in many globally Northern over-developed countries competitive school league tables. This competition is based on academic attainment, which means the least desirable people for a school are those who can contribute least in standardized attainment testing (Westling 2019). Even when schools promote physical or social inclusion, many students labeled with SEN/D are at a disadvantage to their same-aged peers in standardized academic testing due to cognitive deficits. This disadvantage makes this subsection less desirable for prospective schools.

However, the flaw is not actually within the SEN/D person; it is, in reality, the society that promotes an artificial competition between schools which is flawed, as it necessitates the demonization of those who are unable to compete within this educational marketplace, which is increasingly defined by neoliberal influences such as competition, meritocracy, and heterogeneity (Wilton and Schuer 2006).

### *2.1.2 Social model of disability and inclusion*

To combat this medicalized understanding of SEN/D, Mike Oliver coined the term 'Social Model,' based on the social definition of disability promoted by the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) in their 1976 Fundamental Principles of Disability document (Oliver 2013). The model initially argued that individuals are not disabled by their impairments. Instead, it is through barriers in society that cause the experience of being disabled. The model contends that ideas concerning what constitutes an ideal natural body are social rather than biological and arose from the requirements of an external institution, namely the factories of the petit-bourgeois in the industrial era (Greenstein 2016).

The disciplinary power of the social institutions, which became the medical gaze which SEN/D people are subjugated to, is a way to colonize the individual experience of the SEN/D person until they have become so objectified that they agree that their experiences are both abnormal and deficient in comparison to other humans (Gillman, Swain, and Heyman 1997). The tyranny of these professional medical discourses results in SEN/D people being viewed solely as a collection of their impairments, and their actions come to be defined by these biological



deficiencies instead of as responses to a social world which is often hostile to their way of being and perceiving (Goodley 2001).

Based on a social constructionist ideology, this model is often juxtaposed to the medical model, although Oliver (2013) maintains that the social model was not intended to entirely replace the medical model and its focus on the individual.

However, the social model has in many ways managed this feat, strengthening a disabled persons' movement and challenging discrimination globally (Oliver 2013).

Oliver (2013, 1996) also argues that his use of the social model was not intended to be an all-encompassing framework to understand all aspects of SEN/D. Instead, it claimed to be intended as a practical tool for understanding how society disables people. This emphasis on the limitations of the social model may be a way to avoid critique, and central advocates like Shakespeare (2009) have called for the model to recognize how the theory of SEN/D as socially constructed needs to acknowledge the role of individual impairment and some of the benefits of a medicalized model, such as the increased awareness of differences and resources designed for those who experience difficulties with physical and social inclusion.

Oliver (1996, 34) compares positive aspects of the social model against negative aspects he defines of the medical model (such as 'professional dominance—individual and collective responsibility'). This approach has been criticized by Shakespeare (2009) for relying on an emotional reaction to promote the social model instead of critically demonstrating how the factors identified as being within the social model are better than those within the medical model.

Within the constructionist social model, disability refers to the effects of society whereas impairment refers to the individual deficit. However, within a postmodern version of the social model, the impairment is also socially constructed and produced via the specific culture (Anastasiou and Kauffman 2011). In both versions, social and economic structures propagate disability for SEN/D people by not adapting to non-normative bodies, resulting in the need for the oppressed group to respond politically (Oliver 1996). SEN/D moves away from being framed as a personal tragedy for the individual victim, and instead, the oppressed group becomes collective victims of a society which creates barriers to their full participation. In education, the social constructionist model has promoted 'inclusion' and 'inclusive education', often positioned as a belief in mainstream participation for children labeled from within the medical model as having an SEN/D (Messiou 2017). However as Messiou (2017, 147) makes clear, the term 'inclusion' is far more complex and used in a much larger variety of ways in research than its proponents typically recognize. Inclusive education is positioned by Oliver (2013) as being opposed to special education in schools, which remains a hegemonic barrier which the social model has yet to bring down. It is unclear whether Oliver (2013) is referring to the existence of SEN schools in UK policy or SEN/D provision within mainstream schools; however, he perceives inclusion (from a social constructionist perspective) to be opposed to special education and its standard practices. This perception could be due to the common usage of labeling as an SEN/D practice, legitimizing the exclusionary strategies utilized with those defined as different (Nes, Demo, and lanes 2018). This usage is instead of recognizing how ideation and labeling into categories of differences can reinforce a concept of normality as a biological

necessity when the categories are culturally defined by the society, which is why society must remove the barriers it has constructed.

However, the social constructionist model's promotion of inclusion can be perceived as being at the expense of effective instruction, and there is a fear that it may result in the end of special education if it is viewed as opposed (Anastasiou and Kauffman 2011). Inclusion within education is often presented as 'Inclusion for All' and is framed as an ideology that believes every child can be included within all of, or part of, the mainstream with their age-equivalent peers (Burch 2018, 109). Ironically, Slee (2013) argues this inclusive ideology has been co-opted by the SEN/D world, with many SEN/D books adapting to include a chapter on inclusion and SEN/D departments rebranding to call themselves inclusive.

Oliver (2013) maintains that SEN/D practices are inherently exclusionary, which raises the question of whether inclusion in schools and SEN/D in schools should be mutually exclusive. However, utilizing Messiou's (2017) review of inclusive literature, it can be argued that Oliver envisions the social model to lead to ideological inclusion, whereas SEN/D departments focussing on removing barriers to participation reflect a more practical approach to enacting inclusion in schools.

There is a significant and relevant difficulty with SEN/D practices adapting to fit an inclusive ideology from a disability model. This difficulty is in the area of children with intellectual difficulties, as the disability model grew from the personal experiences of physical disabilities which its central proponents experienced, such as Oliver who had a spinal cord injury and used a wheelchair. It can be maintained that intellectual difficulties are socially constructed, and the diagnosis is culturally adaptive as the category changed in the Global North from mental retardation to labels like working

memory deficits, autism, dyslexia, and global development delay (Anastasiou and Kauffman 2011). However, recognizing the socially constructed nature of the disability does little to support children who experience intellectual difficulty within the classroom compared to their peers. The vast body of literature arising from globally Northern countries concerning inclusive practices suggests including children with intellectual difficulties by removing socially constructed barriers is at least very complex (Felder 2018) and at most completely impossible (de Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert 2011). Therefore, while cultural discourses enforce the belief that able-bodies are better (McRuer 2006), practical classroom-based solutions will continue to be sought, which may lead to more SEN/D practices being dubiously perceived as inclusive.

There is likely a role for the categorization and practices within SEN/D, which aim to support and include children, even if this requires academic support situated outside of the classroom (Nes, Demo, and Ianes 2018). Despite growing from the social model of disability, the understanding of inclusion in schools has gone beyond it by commonly utilizing aspects of the medical model as it tries to include those with intellectual difficulties in mainstream schools. Therefore, to explore the experiences of 'inclusive' education, a model which accommodates both SEN/D practices commonly associated with the medical model and inclusive practices related to the social model needs to be explored.

### *2.1.3 Social-relational model of disability and inclusion*

One such model which attempts to bridge the divide between the medical and social models of disability is the social-relational model (Mackenzie, Cologon, and Fenech 2016). Similar to the social model, disability and impairment are held to be different categories; however, the disabling experiences of the individual are prioritized. There are three main ways to experience disability: the effects of impairment, barriers to doing, and barriers to being (Thomas 2014). The effects of impairment are the immediate difficulties of existing in a social world with an impairment (Thomas 2004); for example, a parent struggling with school as their child cannot articulate what they need. The barriers to doing involve societal barriers to participation (Thomas 2004); for example, a parent finding their child cannot access a curriculum as it is not modified for them. The barriers to being are the harmful effects of words or actions of others within society (Thomas 2004); for example, a parent finds their child distressed due to teachers viewing them as abnormal.

Its proponents argue that the model provides a deeper understanding of the adverse effects of living with an impairment and 'highlights the lived experience of disability' (Mackenzie, Cologon, and Fenech 2016, 5). Like the social model, it constructs an understanding that allows for the systematic dismantling of barriers to inclusion without diminishing the individual experience of the disability and impairment.

However, while offering another way to understand disability and impairment, it does little to alter the understanding of inclusion in schools which has grown out of the social model. Inclusion, based on a social model of disability, is often practiced as physically placing SEN/D people in a mainstream class and is adopted by schools as

a form of intervention to remediate impairments (Dalkilic and Vadeboncoeur 2016). It has become synonymous with special education instead of the more radical redefinition and reframing originally conceived (Graham 2016; Slee 2013; Oliver 2013). Inclusion has generally become focussed on where labeled children are placed, and mainstream options that are cheaper than more specialist approaches are often favored, even against the parents' wishes in some countries (Timberlake 2018; Danforth 2016). This focus often leads to experiences of physical, social, and psychological exclusion for the children labeled as different and therefore requiring inclusion (Bajwa-Patel and Devecchi 2014). Inclusion has become synonymous with this mainstream placement of children with labeled differences (Broomhead 2013). This is despite teacher reservation as to its efficacy, such as in a meta-analysis by de Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert (2011), which found from a review of 26 studies a significant neutral or negative bias of class teachers towards the inclusion of pupils labeled with special educational needs. This research is concerning; however, it did select 26 studies from 396 to review and acknowledged that none of the studies reported all the participants having a negative bias. Despite this, it does provide support for the idea that there is a lot of exclusion experienced by SEN/D children in schools that claim to be inclusive. This may be due to a focus on achievement which pushes teachers to focus on getting the majority of children (those without an SEN/D label) to achieve on standardized testing (Hedegaard-Soerensen and Grumloese 2018; Qvortrup and Qvortrup 2018; Vandekinderen et al. 2018). There are key documents promoting the inclusion of children with SEN/D labels, such as the Salamanca Statement, a UNESCO statement that advocated for all disabled children to attend the same schools as their non-disabled peers. However, key documents such as the

Salamanca Statement have not detailed how this inclusion should be conducted in schools (Reindal 2016). Also, there has been a focus on achieving normalcy and standardized attainment goals alongside neurotypical peers, assimilating into the mainstream rather than creating alternative pictures of success and participation (Danforth 2016). While the social-relational model offers an alternative model of disability, which overcomes some of the limitations of the social model, it does not provide an alternative to the exclusionary SEN/D practices being utilized as inclusive across many schools. Therefore the inclusive education based on the social, or the social-relational, model does little to reflect its radical social justice foundations (Timberlake 2018; Mitchell, Snyder, and Ware 2014; Slee 2013; Grimaldi 2012). People hold to different aspects of the medical, social, and social-relational models, sometimes holding views that are in contention. To explore understandings and experiences of inclusion in a way that can produce real change, a way of appreciating the different and contrary positions parents can hold needs to be defined. One such way to resist the monolithic understandings of SEN/D proposed by these models is the resistance model suggested by Gabel and Peters (2004).

## **2.2 Resistance model of Disability, Inclusion, and the Global South**

### *2.2.1 Resistance model of disability and inclusion*

An alternative model which recognizes the difficulties in the medical, social, and social-relational models is the resistance model tentatively suggested by Gabel and Peters (2004). This model focuses both on the theory of disability and the praxis required to operationalize the approach in schools. While it has not been utilized

widely and still does not address how SEN/D practices in school can become inclusive, it proposes hope for the emergence of new theories of disability outside of the hegemonic status which the medical and social models have come to hold in the Global North. This need for new disability models has been advocated for in the Global South, where the existing models do not fit with localized practices and beliefs concerning impairment, disability, and inclusion (Cutajar and Adjoe 2016).

The hope which the resistance model can represent comes from its aim not to create a model of disability. Instead, it aims to make the space for models of disability to emerge from the resistance between 'divergent ideas like discourse, the material body, sociopolitical systems and processes, power relations, cultural contexts of disability, impairment, and so on' (Gabel and Peters 2004, 586). The people who experience disablement, and their experiences of disability and impairment, are inherently diverse. There is difficulty finding one model that can both accommodate the 'eclecticism' of this experience while providing a singular mode for praxis, which the resistance model recognizes (Gabel and Peters 2004, 589). The solution to the void between theory and praxis, which recognizes the diversity and individuality of intellectual difficulties alongside physical difficulties, is to focus on political action and resistance. Therefore the model of disability, which Gabel and Peters (2004) argue may be grounded in structuralist, post-structuralist, post-modern, interpretive, historical materialist, or functionalist paradigms, becomes much less important than the product which emerges. This product is resistance, which may occur from two proponents of the social model holding to different paradigms, or from a proponent of the social model interacting with a proponent of the social-relational model. The vital aspect is the dialogue between people, located at different perspectives, as the



intersection between their viewpoints allows for resistance and action to occur. This belief is based on a resistance theory of inclusion within the political theorizing of Young (2000), who argued the plurality of voices coming together, and the resulting action, is how inclusion operates within a democracy.

The resistance model can help construct an understanding of SEN/D which resists viewing a binary distinction within SEN/D that separates normality from abnormality. Instead, it can help us focus on how all people are different and incomplete within a process of becoming, and people should resist being categorized or ranked based on a comparison between statistical incident rates of a characteristic which society defines as an adverse ontological condition.

The resistance theory may appear idealistic; however, it recognizes the inherent difficulties within the social and social-relational model, where proponents can hold to different paradigms and understandings yet still claim to be within the model. It also recognizes how proponents can view themselves as being within the social model while maintaining common medicalized practices like labeling and interventions.

The resistance model's attempt to hybridize an understanding of inclusion as democratic participation, with a view that understandings of disability need to emerge from the resistance between opinions, offers a promising alternative to the predominant disability models within the field. Most crucially, it can view inclusive education as the essential product of this resistance. The praxis of inclusion in schools becomes more important than the theory of disability, and this praxis needs to be highly localized around the site of resistance. Hence it provides a way of creating an experience for the person which resists the exclusionary tendencies of

other models, as it can focus on how the person perceives being included and enacting this within the school. Therefore to explore inclusion in international schools, this research will utilize the different models and their understandings of SEN/D and inclusion to examine the experiences of the parents of SEN/D children. This exploration will be conceived as an act of resistance against one way of understanding SEN/D and instead explore the resistance between the ideas people hold and the praxis this can generate.

However, it is worth noting again that the relationship between the disciplinary powers of education and medicine may result in a person choosing a subject position that reinforces the current social order rather than seeking to resist it (Foucault 1977). This subject position may support physical, social, or psychological exclusion, such as a parent's child wanting to leave a class for an intervention that is slower than the pace of learning within the class itself. Therefore exclusion and inclusion need to be understood at the level of the individual, within the context of their society, to foster potential resistance. This localization is essential in communities that feel disenfranchised by the present models of disability, such as in the Global South where most international schools are located (Tanu 2016). Meekosha (2008) argues globally Southern ways of understanding have been marginalized and ignored in the major theoretical models of disability arising from the Global North.

### *2.2.2 Post-colonial disability*

In her address to the fourth biennial conference on Disability Studies at Lancaster University, Meekosha (2008) highlighted how the unequal power relations between

the Global South and the Global North result in the production and sustainment of disability. This is partly due to Disability Studies itself and the models of disability it promotes, which emerge from the northern metropole and do not adequately represent local experiences of disability in the Global South (Jaffee 2016). Meekosha argues this constitutes 'scholarly colonialism' as research from the majority world of the Global South needs to reduce itself by making clear its geographical location to be recognized by Disability Studies generally (Meekosha 2008, 2). This part of the address does appear to have some merit, as pertained to by the lack of theories originating from the Global South discussed earlier, although whether theories from the Global North assume the Global South or simply ignore the divide in their theorizing due to an 'indiscriminate focus on the Global North' is not explored (Grech 2015, 6).

The need for theories of disability originating from the Global South is clear, as debates about the social model do likely 'remain irrelevant' for people struggling to survive, which questions the universality of disability models derived from the Global North (Meekosha 2008, 4). However, while Meekosha (2008) argues convincingly that the predominant models of disability from the Global North do not fit in the majority world due to their inability to address disability in relation to genocide, starvation, or war, she does little to bridge the divide between the Global South and the Global North, merely asking for 'solidarity' in her conclusion (Meekosha 2008, 15).

Despite traditionally being associated with a transnational elite, schools labeled as international that operate with a degree of autonomy outside of locally-derived curricular concepts are increasingly becoming a schooling option accessible to a

large number of globally Southern denizens (Tanu 2016). Their potential ability to deprive the Global South of its most productive future citizens, who are funneled into a transnational labor force, makes international school a serious issue within the Global South (Brown and Lauder 2011). The international school's ability to reinforce and promote certain understandings of disability within the Global South as being better than locally-derived understandings due to them coming from the Global North is also worrying. It can increase the dependency of the Global South on solutions exported from the Global North, such as inclusive education or SEN/D practices which originated in globally Northern schools and understandings of disability (Cutajar and Adjoe 2016).

While there is a need for disability studies in the Global South to utilize models more relevant to their circumstances, there is also a need for this divide created by 'the hegemonic Global North Disability Studies' to be addressed (Grech and Soldatic 2015, 2). One way to address this divide is to allow space in research from the Global South for understandings of SEN/D to emerge through the resistance between the various disability models, a space which this research aims to provide. However, there is also the need to understand how people from the Global North who may hold to globally Northern understandings of SEN/D relate to insights from the Global South, such as when parents of SEN/D children are living as expatriates in a globally Southern country.

Cutajar and Adjoe (2016) argue that the Global North exports the concepts which frame how countries perceive normality. This export can result in a one-way transfer of information, rendering academics in the Global South 'blind' to their promotion of globally Northern concepts, such as concepts from the medical and social models of

disability (Cutajar and Adjoe 2016, 3). A bias amongst researchers in the Global South towards knowledge produced in the Global North supports this inequality (Cutajar 2009). This supposition was based on a small sample of Maltese students, many from a Disability Studies course, who were biased towards believing research from the United Kingdom and the United States is of a higher quality than that from the Global South. However, while Cutajar and Adjoe (2016, 9) highlight the colonial roots of linguistic dependence on English and convincingly argue that 'scholars and activist located in the Global South find it difficult to move beyond this dependency on Western derived knowledge,' the only practical solution proffered is to encourage researchers to be more reflexive in recognizing their locality and positionality.

Tools adapted from the Global North will be less sensitive to contextual factors and will not be as appropriate for analyzing disability in globally Southern countries (Grech 2011). However, the lack of these required tools may result from neo-colonialism within the 'education system, curricula and policies which govern learning,' as Cutajar and Adjoe (2016, 10) maintain. This lack would support the need for a more interventionist postcolonial pedagogy, as supported by Chawla (2018); however, Cutajar and Adjoe (2016) are perhaps right to be skeptical that education can be both the problem and the solution.

Cutajar and Adjoe (2016) are too narrow in some of their assertions, and neo-colonialism affects far more than just education and requires a solution that goes beyond reflexivity in research or intervention in schools. However, they are right to highlight both the difficulties that disability models from the Global South will experience and the need for knowledge from the Global South to be produced based on epistemologies from outside of the Global North's perceptions of disabled people.

### *2.2.3 Inclusion within neoliberal ideology*

One of the most enduring products of the social model of disability is the propagation of inclusion as an educational ideology. Beginning within a context of rights-based social justice, terminology traditionally associated with this background has become increasingly repurposed to serve more neoliberal aims within educational discourses. For example, 'equality' and 'diversity' have come to foster exclusion by extending the existing inequality of capital (Timberlake 2018, 956). This fostering is due to schools using the terms for purposes such as advertising within increasingly competitive marketplaces (Anderson and Boyle 2019).

However, the transgressive and radical reforms to social spaces and classrooms required to move away from SEN/D practices are not taken on board, and SEN/D practice is predominantly relabeled in a neoliberal view of education as inclusive practice (Slee 2013; Oliver 2013). Despite promoting the right to educate all children together in countries that have begun to promote school-based inclusion, the inclusion promoted within neoliberal discourses is based on the significant exclusion of the less-able disabled (Qvortrup and Qvortrup 2018). This is due in part to failing to transform practices and social spaces to allow this to happen, for example, by adopting a 'distributional, cultural or associational understanding' of equality (Grimaldi 2012, 1133). This results in expressions like 'inclusion for all,' which relies upon positioning those labeled as having an SEN/D as 'other' and separate to the presumed normality of non-disabled peers (Burch 2018, 109).

These segregated settings for SEN/D children are akin to a colony, providing increased surveillance and disciplinary powers against those whose existence questions the normalcy of contemporary educational practices which internalize ableism (Liasidou 2014). Therefore, questioning the globalization of disability and SEN as categories of difference requires a critique beyond a school-based focus on the individual, questioning the broader understanding of inclusion and difference within the culture.

If inclusion was ever really for all, Messiou (2017) contends that it would not need to focus on a differentiated minority. Instead, it would require a culture that recognizes the inherent difference of every citizen. This may explain the continuing conflation of inclusive education and SEN/D practices within predominantly neoliberal education systems. Those individuals who experience and exhibit more pronounced differences are traditionally ascribed a medical SEN/D label for those differences, becoming an 'other' through the process of being labeled with an abnormality, while still being encouraged to include themselves within a mainstream of education that views those with an SEN/D label as inherently deficient to those without.

This inclusive ideology is one export from globally Northern countries which have increasingly adopted it within their neoliberal approaches towards the education of the minority labeled with an SEN/D (Liasidou and Symeou 2018). However, this exportation of inclusive education can be perceived as part of a wider 'global' disability marketplace (Albrecht and Bury 2001, 597). Albrecht and Bury's examination demonstrates that disabled people living in the Global South must purchase services and goods from the Global North, such as inclusive education, therapies, and medications. This results in further disablement, as many within the

Global South cannot afford to purchase the support they require, such as in Iraq where people who have lost limbs cannot afford prosthetic alternatives from the international providers (Albrecht and Bury 2001). Similarly, within the international school sector, many parents may be priced out of inclusive international schools which charge a premium for their services (Pletser 2019), or those who do purchase the commodified inclusive services may find their locally-derived concept of inclusion is different from the exported concept (Slee 2009). Therefore understanding how parents who purchase inclusive services, potentially from multiple schools across different countries, experience and understand inclusion is vitally important.

Inclusion is a nuanced and contested term used in various ways within educational research (Messiou 2017). For example, Messiou (2017) maintains that by using it to focus on the inclusion of those labeled with an SEN/D into a mainstream schooling option, there is the potential for the individual's experience to be ignored. Also, there are concerns with the subjective nature of labeling and diagnosing differences within SEN/D categories. For example, Florian and Graham (2014) detail how children in Scotland can be diagnosed differently depending on their postcode, particularly if they have a different race or class to the majority of children within their school setting. Robinson and Goodey (2018) detail how historically transient categories currently used to label individual SEN/Ds have become increasingly portrayed as natural and biological, despite their existence only reflecting the current anxieties which the dominant group holds towards divergences. This act of diagnosing differences as deficiencies facilitates a phobia towards inclusion by justifying a belief in SEN/D people as others, thereby creating an 'exclusionary iceberg' (Robinson and Goodey 2018, 432).



While inclusion is understood in many ways, it is difficult to deny how influential the ideology has become internationally, although Florian (2019) argues this growth has been within the context of simultaneous growth of a broader policy context of neoliberalism. This growth has led to an increase in competitive private international schools competing in the Global South with local education institutions for high potential students, in some ways depriving the local market of its most productive future citizens (Brown and Lauder 2011).

However, this neoliberal marketplace is defined by commitments to 'growth, employability and global competition' (Grimaldi 2012, 1133). These commitments can result in inclusion being utilized to raise the standardized test scores of labeled students within the competitive meritocracy of education (Anderson and Boyle 2019; Liasidou and Symeou 2018). This pursuit of standardized goals is in many ways opposed to the social justice roots of inclusion (Danforth 2016). However, it can be supported as participation in standardized testing would mean the results of SEN/D children matter, leading to a potential cascade effect perceived in places like New South Wales, which does not exclude SEN/D children's results when evaluating the performance of schools (Graham 2016). However, the schools within Graham's (2016) study did have the option of entirely alternative specialist education sites for SEN/D children deemed unteachable within the schools positioned as the mainstream. Therefore the children being included would not represent the entirety of the intellectual spectrum.

This inclusion does help account for why schools within globally Northern countries that adopt inclusion within national educational policies have widely adopted SEN/D practices as part of their inclusive pedagogies, such as push-in and pull-out support

models and labeling of additional needs, if these are believed to support test-taking (Nes, Demo, and Ianes 2018; Slee 2009).

An alternative to focussing on test-taking to promote inclusion could be recognizing the benefits which accommodating a full spectrum of human differences can bring to society. This recognition could be through promoting alternative goals to academic outcomes, such as immaterial contributions to the community like love and happiness in the case of some people diagnosed with SEN/D. There are also the economic benefits to schools that are rarely recognized, such as through the additional revenue which schools are allocated to provide for neurological diversity and differences in many globally Northern countries (Greenstein 2016). Finally, there is the symbiotic relationship between many people labeled with SEN/D who exist in a complex inter-dependency with paraprofessionals to achieve a normative level of functioning. The SEN/D paraprofessional receives an economic benefit through monetary remuneration in exchange for their time and labor in facilitating the SEN/D person's functioning. Therefore the SEN/D person is making a valued contribution to society through providing the employment opportunity. As many schools utilize paraprofessionals to provide for children, there is a clear interdependency between Inclusion, SEN/D, and education, which benefits the school beyond a neoliberal focus on comparing standardized attainment measures between schools. This interdependency is particularly true in international schools, where the use of paraprofessionals to support inclusion is widespread, and there are typically no requirements to publish attainment data (Tarry and Cox 2014).

However, it remains to be seen whether parents' experiences in international schooling are defined by globally Northern discourses on models of disability,

concepts of inclusion influenced by neoliberal policies, or more local understandings of inclusion.

## **2.3 International Schooling, Inclusion, and Transnationalism**

### *2.3.1 International schools and transnational students*

A school is an educational institution where children are under the gaze of disciplinary power to build them into acceptable citizens (Foucault 1977). In schools, the students are ranked based on their performance on small units of knowledge, which constitutes a normalizing judgment with those who pass or excel on the standardized testing deemed better when compared with those who perform lower. For those who repeatedly perform at a rate below the statistical average, there is increased scrutiny from educational professionals which may result in a judgment of the potential and value of the child from medical or psychological professionals. This judgment constitutes the delineation of SEN/D within the educational system and typically ignores social factors that lead to an increased identification rate, such as race or class (Riddell and Carmichael 2019). Despite schools being present in nearly every country, the educational experience and ideology the school promotes can vary widely depending on the institution, even within the same country (Wilson and Scarbrough 2018).

One type of school considered within the literature is international schools. The international school market has grown considerably over the last fifty years. In this time, the number of schools has grown from around 300 in the 1960s (Leach 1969) to over eight thousand in 2016, educating over 4 million children (Tanu 2016).

However, due to the contested definition of what constitutes an international school, this figure does not represent every school that claims to be international and the estimate may be significantly low. Tanu (2016) argues that a lot of the growth in international school statistics can be attributed to a growing number of middle and upper-class people across much of the world. She argues that these classes, particularly in globally Southern countries, desire an English and Western-style education which international schools provide. This argument is supported by the social and economic benefits provided to the trans-national elite, who traditionally utilized international schools to reinforce their class status while schooling in the Global South (Brown and Lauder 2011).

The definition of international schools is widely debated across the literature, which is charted by Bunnell (2014). Bunnell (2014) makes the distinction between two types of international schools. This distinction involves market-driven schools set up explicitly to serve the growing demand for a western-style education outside of the national education form. It also includes ideology-driven schools, which claim to further international cooperation or specific ideals like inclusion. Despite recognizing that most schools fall along a spectrum between these two positions, it can be argued that all international private schools are market-driven, as they exist within neoliberal market economics, which entails competition for students' fees to survive (Brown and Lauder 2011). Therefore a particular educational ideology, such as marketing itself as an inclusive school, may be one strategy that is utilized to attract parents of students.

International schools rely on a shared notion of international, where the concept of 'international' is positioned as privileged, eurocentric, and cosmopolitan (Tanu 2017).

The local setting, or host country, is merely a parochial background for the performance of this transnational internationalism which is often conflated with 'a dominant 'Western' culture of the school' (Tanu 2016, 431). This conflation has resulted in numerous incidents of methodological nationalism within the literature, which views the unit of analysis as the participants belonging to a particular ethnic or national community, constituting a locally-derived experience that can be juxtaposed to the supposedly expatriate experience. This juxtaposition results in frequent distinctions between international/national, home/away, expatriate/local, being utilized by field researchers as if they are self-evident. However, methodological nationalism within research reflects the nationalistic lens itself, reproducing expected dichotomies rather than distinctions that exist in reality (Beck and Sznajder 2006). Therefore the research in international schooling which utilizes nationally-derived distinctions reinforces the elite positioning of globally mobile families against a backdrop of host-country nationals, whether this is existent in reality or not. The separation between national and international is more difficult to maintain when clients from both sides are members of the global middle and upper classes. This difficulty has led influential researchers like Hayden (2011) to call for international schools to be viewed as transnational spaces where all families are considered both national and international.

Research requires a more complex view of international schools, one which views the cultural identities of students and parents from beyond simple binary oppositions. Therefore this research will hold the international school to be a transnational space, and its clients to all be members of a global transnational elite choosing to educate their children outside of the host countries' educational systems (Brown and Lauder

2011). Rather than being a specific bounded unit of study, international schooling is an entry point into the transnational experiences of migratory parents, their SEN/D children, and the international schools which they have attended. Therefore the participants of this research are situated within this transnational culture and the socio-economic hierarchy upon which it implies.

### *2.3.2 International experiences v.s local experiences*

In the late 1960s, international schools provided education predominantly to expatriate families rather than to children from the host nation (Leach 1969). However, now host-national students are estimated to make up to 80 percent of the overall number of students, with their experiences being under-researched in comparison to the expatriate experience (Bailey 2015; Brummitt and Keeling 2013). Despite the wide variance in backgrounds and experiences, the children of the expatriate clients are frequently referred to within the literature as a singular group under complimentary titles such as 'Third Culture Kids' (Morales 2015; Tannenbaum and Tseng 2015; Melles and Schwartz 2013). The experience of these families, characterized in some cases by frequent transitions between schools and countries (Morales 2015), is often studied against a background of the supposed monolithic experience of host country nationals (Bailey 2015). Despite the host countries being widely different, the motivations of host country nationals are very different, and many host country nationals are potentially transitioning between schools inside and outside of the country as frequently as their supposedly expatriate peers. The field is more complex than the constructed distinctions within the literature would imply, with

dichotomies like home/away and migrant/native becoming problematic when ascribing them to distinguish between two groups (Tanu 2016). For example, fitting a family which has lived in the host country for their entire lives (yet retains passports from a globally Northern country for political and economic reasons) within a clear distinction between expatriate/local is impossible without further definition.

A more relevant distinction which this research project will utilize is to recognize the international school as a transnational space which families transition into and out of frequently, and instead compare the experiences of those who transition into the international school from other schools within the host country, to those who transition into the international school from other schools outside of the host country. This distinction enables an exploration of understandings from those who have experienced multiple international schools within the same country to those who have experienced numerous international schools across different countries. This level of comparison would then move beyond the contested neo-colonial juxtaposition of supposedly international experiences from transnational expatriates born in the Global North with those local experiences of their host country contemporaries born in the Global South, which is so frequently defaulted to within research by researchers in international education (Tanu 2016).

### *2.3.3 International schooling and inclusive pedagogies*

As part of a small-scale case study examining inclusive practices within a European international school, Pletser (2019, 200) made the astute observation that due to 'little rigorous research carried out in international schools in the field of learning

support and with no theoretical frameworks identified, the literature review is limited.’ The conclusions from Pletser’s (2019) study were simply that her eleven participants did believe the school provided effective inclusion. However, despite interviewing three children, three parents, a teacher, and four members of school leadership, the data was not presented to allow for the participants’ voices to be heard from their different positions. It also did not explore how the participants understood or perceived inclusive practices. Pletser (2019, 209) suggests she recognizes this limitation by mentioning in the conclusion that ‘the on-campus special education unit and the additional funding required of parents did, though, challenge the inclusive nature of the school.’ However, as the data were not presented through the participants’ voices, it is impossible to ascertain whether they viewed these factors as barriers to inclusion.

Whether segregated SEN/D settings outside of the mainstream and additional funding requirements are commonplace is impossible to say currently, as is the potential parental view on these practices within international schools, due to a gap in the literature this research project will help fill.

Haldimann (2001) identified this two decades ago, noting how uncommon research relating to SEN/D populations is in international schools. He suggests the accreditation processes of international schools could increase the visibility of SEN/D in schools. However, a lack of studies about international school parents with SEN/D children means there is no answer yet as to whether accreditation processes do affect parental decisions when choosing international schools.

In another small-scale study within an international school, Gabor (2010) utilized quantitative data to demonstrate that a small sample of children with dyslexia could



be provided for using a specific reading program. This provision was despite the absence of policies related to inclusion, no strategic plan to become a more inclusive school, and a diverse student population due to a highly transient population. While the study aimed to demonstrate the efficacy of remedial techniques, it highlights how absent inclusion can be in terms of policies and practice within international schools and how the transient population of international schools may mean research conducted within national school settings does not apply. This transiency is also mentioned by Pletser (2019) who characterizes her case-study school as one with a low level of transiency and explains this may mean the research has limited generalisability to the majority of international schools.

Tarry and Cox (2014) highlight how difficult it is to ascertain whether international schools can provide an inclusive experience and support children with SEN/D.

Based on a study involving teaching assistants from international schools participating in a COBIS (Council of British International Schools) workshop, they argue that little is known in international schools about the number of children being supported by teaching assistants, how they are being supported, or the types of needs these children have due to a lack of research in the field.

A more recent, wider-ranging quantitative survey reported the voluntary self-reported information from 207 international schools across 69 countries (ISC Research and Next Frontier Inclusion 2020). This data indicated that 92.73% of the schools in the study reported being on 'the journey' towards being inclusive. This appears a large number, however the sample was generated from participants who had subscribed to be on the Next Frontier Inclusion register as a self-described inclusive international school. The finding that only 39.32% of international schools described

themselves as being 'well on our way,' and 25.73% rated themselves as only at the beginning of 'the journey towards inclusion' should perhaps be worrying in terms of the experience and choice which parents are faced with when selecting between self-described inclusive international schools.

The research report from ISC Research and Next Frontier Inclusion (2020) highlights the increasing number of children being labeled within different SEN/D categories in international schools, which suggests attaching labels to children is a common practice within these 'inclusive' international schools. Therefore it highlights how prevalent the conflation between SEN/D and inclusion is within international schooling, suggesting the distinction based on the medical and social models may be inapplicable.

As the research only sent a questionnaire to a school administrator, it does little to understand how these families experience inclusion within international schools. By only considering self-reported data from school professionals, there is no information on how the children were identified, how parents were informed, what impact this may have had on a family, and how they choose international schools when transitioning within or between countries.

## **2.4 School choice, Inclusion, and SEN/D**

### *2.4.1 Specialist v.s Mainstream*

Within the competitive marketplace of international school education, the neoliberal ideology which underpins the capitalist market has reconceptualized the subject to become fundamentally an individual who makes choices (Wilton and Schuer 2006).

This freedom allows parents to choose the private school which will educate their children. However, the school still has to provide admittance and continued enrollment of the child. An SEN/D label is a frequent barrier to school choice within other marketplaces characterized by neoliberal influences, such as state education in America or Europe (Jessen 2013; Bajwa-Patel and Devecchi 2014). This barrier can be experienced despite schools marketing themselves as inclusive (Lilley 2015a). While the experience of exclusion by inclusive schools is well documented in national contexts such as the USA (Jessen 2013; Cucchiara and Horvat 2014), the UK (Byrne 2013; Bajwa-Patel and Devecchi 2014), and Australia (Lilley 2014; Angus 2015), the impact of having an SEN/D label on the school choices and experiences of transnational parents in international schools is not yet explored.

Parental choice of school placement, if the needs of the child permit for the parents to be instrumental in the selection within a national educational context, in much of the Global North is framed as being between a mainstream schooling option and a specialist schooling option (Angus 2015; Lilley 2015; Jessen 2013; Reay and Ball 1998). Specialist schooling options are often presented as anachronistic, harkening to a medical model that promoted segregation, whereas the mainstream school option is presented as inclusive and intrinsically better because it aligns within a social understanding of disability (Byrne 2013). This presentation may be despite the widespread exclusionary practices such as pull-out support, segregated settings, and alternative examinations, which are practiced in the name of inclusion (Nes, Demo, and Ianes 2018). Also, the labeling of a school as inclusive may be far from the everyday experiences of those learners labeled as requiring inclusive support due to complex psychological, social, or even physical exclusion (Bajwa-Patel and

Devecchi 2014). This positioning of specialist schools as somehow inferior relates to a range of factors, likely including both the Salamanca Statement, which promoted the idea of bridging the divide between special and mainstream schools (Reindal 2016), and to the increased costs for the government when providing for children within specialized settings (Stangvik 2014). It may also be due to the increased importance attached to the social model's understanding of inclusion, which has sought to distance inclusion from SEN/D (Oliver 2013).

In a wide-ranging literature review of factors affecting parental decisions concerning secondary schooling options for SEN/D children in the globally Northern countries of the USA, Australia, and the UK, Byrne (2013) argues convincingly that parents predominantly make a choice on behalf of their children, and that they are commonly presented with a choice between a specialist school or mainstream school. However, this choice may be less important than it first appears. Bajwa-Patel and Devecchi (2014) conducted interviews with 380 families in the UK to identify how parents make school choices for SEN/D learners, and this critical study found no difference in positivity between those parents who felt they had no choice of settings and those who did. This result suggests that, when parents and children are consulted after the child has begun their new school, the ability to choose an educational setting was a negligible factor in their experience of the new school.

Furthermore, after a meta-analysis of nineteen studies, Byrne (2013) argues that many mainstream schools which label themselves as inclusive will only accept the ablest of the disabled who apply. These studies were from globally Northern countries characterized as having a market-based education which positions the parents as consumers, such as the USA, the UK, and Australia. However, the choice

may be significantly limited for parents of SEN/D children due to the constraints schools placed on admissions. These constraints may include required testing, advertising which promotes a narrow picture of achievement or counseling out the students by advising their parents to enroll them in a specialist school, even if this is contrary to the parents' wishes (Byrne 2013). By positioning SEN/D as a negative ontological characteristic and failing to adapt the environment to accommodate the diversity of potential learners, the schools reviewed in Byrne's studies promoted themselves as inclusive while practicing significant exclusion by weaponizing a medicalized understanding of SEN/D.

The educational systems of the Global North are damaging young people by practicing this exclusion before entry, and by failing to adapt to the environment and remove barriers to learning. The exclusion experienced becomes an act of violence against SEN/D people (Francis and Mills 2012). However, this damage is not inevitable. Graham (2016) is optimistic that the schools in New South Wales greatly improved their efforts to include SEN/D children after deciding to include their standardized exam results within league rankings. He argues that participation in standardized exams reduces the silo thinking surrounding specialist schools and instead makes SEN/D children matter within a neoliberally-influenced market for education. However, as specialist schools were still prevalent across New South Wales at the time, this inclusion may still only represent those few SEN/D children able to perform alongside neurotypical peers on standardized assessments.

In a review of the American education system, Westling (2019) ascertained that states who voted conservative were more likely to have fewer specialist schools than those who voted liberal. This finding could have resulted from conservative states

trying to reduce costs; however, the research indicated that the state's wealth did not influence the availability of specialist schools (Westling 2019). Therefore inclusion in terms of mainstream participation appears to be linked to the political ideology of the state. The political ideology and beliefs of the parents may then affect the school choice process and whether the parents view the mainstream school as being better or more inclusive than specialist options. This highlights the importance of parents and their understanding of inclusion for determining their children's school choices, which is why this research project focuses on the experiences of parents of SEN/D children.

To prevent the violence potentially perpetrated against SEN/D children by international schools during the admission process, there is a need to explore: how schools are currently informing prospective parents about their inclusivity; whether transnational parents have a choice between a mainstream or specialized option as part of the international school choice process; and how transnational parents experience the 'inclusion' offered by schools.

#### *2.4.2 How parents make the choice*

Parents feel obliged to choose the best school for their children when positioned as consumers through the increasing proliferation of choice policies governing school placement. However, this choice is 'far more complicated than policy-makers and researchers often predict' within national school systems, according to the argument put forward by Cucchiara and Horvat (2014, 486). They argue school choice is about performative identity construction, as it offers parents a chance to display their

values. This identity can be profoundly influenced by the intersecting concerns of race and class. They detail extensive research from the US, Europe, and Canada to support this claim before conducting their ethnographic study on a middle-class neighborhood in a US city. However, they do not consider the impact of a child having an SEN/D label on this consumer process of identity construction. Indeed, the diagnosis of an SEN/D can impact a parent's class status due to the financial burden, as well as increased anguish and fear of exclusion (Lilley 2015b). An SEN/D label represents an inherent limitation to the 'expression of parents' identity' (Cucchiara and Horvat 2014, 488) and is, therefore, a significant factor in how parents choose and experience schools.

In a three-year longitudinal study across three schools located in a similar geographical area of the UK, some parents responded to an SEN/D label by playing down their children's needs during admissions processes to improve their entry prospects (Bagley and Woods 1998). Conversely, the schools would also intentionally play down their ability to support SEN/D children and their current enrollment of SEN/D children to attract the ablest children. This playing down was due to the perceived benefit of able children in enhancing attainment scores on the UK's league table system, which compares state-funded schools. SEN/D parents needed to rely on word of mouth to find the schools most likely to accept their children and offer their children a positive experience (Bagley and Woods 1998). Similarly, Lilley's doctoral research with 22 Australian mothers making school choices for their SEN/D children demonstrated the need to utilize 'maternal talk' or 'grapevine knowledge' to select an appropriate school for their children (Lilley 2015a, 183). The personal recitation of accounts of social exclusion, attributed to individual

schools, was a significant factor in convincing other mothers to make certain choices. Also, there was the passing on of pragmatic information concerning the admissions procedure and what the school was perceived as offering in practice (Lilley 2015a). This passing highlighted the role personal networks can potentially employ in informing school choices and experiences for prospective parents. However, these parents were all driven by an imminent goal of social inclusion within a school rather than instrumental goals concerning academic outcomes or future job prospects. It remains to be seen whether transnational parents are as focussed on imminent over instrumental goals for their SEN/D children. The integral role of the grapevine knowledge in the process may be an impossibility for many transnational parents moving between countries. Therefore how they make choices without this feature is important to consider. Also, there may be a competitive advantage for parents transitioning between international schools within a country if they have access to a network of grapevine knowledge that other parents applying from outside of the country were unable to access.

Lilley's participants' imminent goal of transitioning school was the child's best interests (2015b). However, this may also be challenged by transnational parents who may be moving schools primarily due to work relocation (Hayden 2011).

Therefore, the reason for the parents transitioning their SEN/D children's school is an important consideration. This transition may be very different from typical transitions between schools within a home country.

The final source of information identified from Lilley's research (2014) as being used by parents of SEN/D children was the importance of advice from professionals. This information entailed a choice whether to engage or reject the advice, which came



from therapists, doctors, psychologists, and educational professionals. The participants often perceived this as conflicting. Similar findings have been reported in England, where the latest Code of Practice promotes both the role of the parent in choosing a school and the importance of external professionals in informing that choice process (Lehane 2017). This advice represents a form of counseling for the parents, and the number of participants reflects the extent of the parent's ability to mobilize social and economic capital on their child's behalf (Lilley 2015a). Whether this mobilization of capital improves parents' options at an international school level is still unclear.

A factor that affected parental choice between high schools in New York between 2008-2009 was the school's marketing (Jessen 2013). This involved branding which discouraged parents of SEN/D children from applying. Smaller schools would withhold information regarding their SEN/D provision to deter prospective applicants. Also, a common practice across schools was to have professionals like guidance counselors and admissions personnel who would restrict parental choices by counseling parents not to apply due to the poor experience their children will have and their low chance of entry, or by providing deliberately misleading information (Jessen 2013). The admissions staff function as gatekeepers for the school; however, by restricting access, they certify which people have the potential to consume the knowledge required to become full citizens. If education is viewed as a way to fit into society, the propensity of schools to filter admissions based on SEN/D is highly problematic, as it implies SEN/D people are second-class citizens (Greenstein 2016). However, this is within a national school system where there is an obligation for there to be schools in a geographical area that can provide for

SEN/D children, whereas there is no such condition within international schooling. Potentially international schools may have different criteria for determining who gains admission, and who can be offered an 'inclusive' experience. There is also the potential for marketing and branding to play a bigger role for transnational parents, who may be unable to visit the school or country until after enrollment, and are therefore more reliant than national participants on the information provided by the school.

Specialist staff and facilities are a big draw for parents in the UK; however, the chance to receive these academic benefits is often perceived as at the expense of social benefits within a more mainstream environment (Bajwa-Patel and Devecchi 2014). In a meta-analysis of nineteen research projects across England, the USA, and Australia (due to literature in other English-speaking countries being limited), Byrne (2013) identifies seven significant factors in the parent's decision-making process. These include the child's age; the type of SEN/D; the parent's socio-economic status; the child's previous experience of inclusion; the new school's commitment to SEN/D; beliefs about teacher's abilities; and the influence of other people such as professionals and family. Despite the analysis only utilizing research into choosing secondary schools, it does provide a wide range of factors, some of which may also underpin the decisions of transnational parents of SEN/D children and how they experience 'inclusive' education in international schools. As the international school experience is characterized by frequent transitions and movement between schools and countries (Morales 2015), the school choice process is even more significant for transnational parents' experiences of 'inclusive' schooling than parents who remain within a national school system.



## **Chapter 3 Theoretical Framework**

### **3.1 Critical Disability Studies**

#### *3.1.1 Key tenets of Critical Disability Studies*

The theoretical framework for this piece of research will broadly be in line with many of the tenets of Critical Disability Studies (CDS). One of the most authoritative and recent definitions by those who theorise this approach is by Goodley and Lawthom (2019), who argue in favor of six tenets so that the research does not simply reproduce materialist social model perspectives, nor conversely focus on the discussion at the expense of the 'material realities of disablism' (Goodley 2016, 192). A CDS approach allows this piece of research to not hold to a singular model of disability or inclusion, and instead seek to explore the experiences of people who live within these terms.

The first tenet of CDS according to Goodley and Lawthom (2019) is to acknowledge the importance of using materialism for understanding disablement. The material reality of impairment cannot be escaped by words, and therefore an acceptance of the material world as something beyond the participant is essential. This requires an ontology that accepts a material reality beyond the participant, which is why a Deleuzian ontology of becoming has been adopted (and will be explored later). This holds that the participant is constructed out of material forces, and while they are in a constant relation of being assembled and disassembled by these forces, their perspectives and experiences ultimately remain in a relationship with the material world.

The second tenet is that late capitalism has created principles of globalization which create a growing gap between rich and poor. This is highlighted in the wealth between the Global South and the Global North, and even between citizens of these respective territories. It was highlighted earlier how concepts of disability, and subsequently inclusion, arose from a capitalist understanding of education's relationship to employment derived from early bourgeois ideology. This was then highlighted as resulting in both a divide in wealth as well as a transnational elite who can utilize their superior forms of capital to navigate boundaries set up between countries and within countries. International schools serve this growing middle class, however by accepting families who have transitioned from between countries as well as within the country, they serve as a site to explore the effects of late capitalism within the Global South.

The third tenet, which intersects closely with the second, is to remain 'mindful of global, national, and local economic contexts and their impact on disabled people' (Goodley and Lawthom 2019, 234). A focus on international school parents may seem contrary to the aims of some globally Southern research, which typically focuses on the exploitation of its poorest denizens. However, their experiences of disability and inclusion within the Global South, including both within different countries and different schools, will be informative about how having a child labeled as different affects their experiences of the global, national and local economic contexts and as such will be both original and practical.

The fourth tenet is to accept cultural relativism while exploring the global nature of disability. That is why this research has adopted a case study approach to understanding the experiences of parents recruited from one school in Jordan so

that the responses will relate to their experiences within the culture of Jordan and the culture of transnational parents within international schools.

The fifth tenet is to recognize that the self is built in relation to others, which is why the participant's experiences are held as being constructed in relation to the researcher and the forces surrounding the interview (forces such as ideologies, materiality, capital which will be explained later). The ultimate goal of CDS is to 'save the self from its position as Other', therefore the self must always be understood in relation to others within CDS (Goodley 2013, 640). People are more than their impairments, and reductionist thinking which posits restoring the disabled self through rehabilitation to meet statistically-derived ableist norms, or segregating disability as 'Other' to avoid contaminating a supposed ableist majority, must be fought against by viewing impairment as an essential characteristic for humanity (Goodley, Lawthom, and Runswick-Cole 2014b). Resisting the oppressive othering process of disablement is an act of 'resistance for everyone' which must be engaged with every day, making CDS intrinsically political (Goodley 2013, 640). Therefore this piece of research should be viewed as a political act, as advancing a view of humanity that goes against a dominant capitalist heteronormative ideology, in favor of those who it seeks to oppress even if they do not perceive their oppression. This research is not 'an academic exercise without political commitment' (Goodley 2016, 192).

Finally, the most difficult tenet of CDS is to be critical of all forms of disability studies, including CDS. There is a need to avoid the danger of CDS becoming an uncritical orthodoxy that gets in the way of the daily realities of being viewed as different (Goodley 2013). This is why even though this research operates within all six of

these tenets, it still does not provide a full-scale acceptance of the CDS theoretical framework to which it is broadly aligned. If any of the participants' data stands outside a CDS theoretical framework, then it will be highlighted as such, as well as any limitations of CDS which are uncovered along the way. CDS is intended to develop theories 'that are in concert with contemporary lives, the complexities of alienation and rich hopes of resistance' (Goodley 2013, 641), which works well with the aims of this research.

### *3.1.2 Ableism*

Beyond these six tenets, CDS can be broken down for this framework into four main areas which intersect and play upon each other: ableism, neoliberalism, disability and impairment, and post-humanity. As noted previously, societal idealization of a normative idea for the Homosapien species has recently become synonymous with a productive worker model from capitalist ideology (Davis 1995). This has produced a dichotomy between the able-bodied and those who are not able (who are referred to in multiple ways, including as disabled, SEN, or even 'included' as this relies upon an idea of exclusion). This is essentially a post-structuralist idea which CDS adopts, that disability requires an idea of its opposite, namely ability. Subjects such as religious studies and sociology require an able person to base their normative values upon, which reifies the normative able-bodied template. This reification is ableism, and many CDS practitioners use the hyphen within dis/ability to highlight both the artificial nature of this dichotomy and how both ability and disability nurture each other (Goodley and Lawthom 2019). In essence, 'ableism provides just the right amount of

temperature and nutrients from which disablism can grow' (Goodley 2014, 78).

Disablism would be the social oppression of those labeled as having impairments and involves a consistent social construction designed to undermine their psychology and position in relation to the able-bodied (Goodley 2013). What is key is that while disablism is a daily reality of oppression experienced by many people globally, and is constructed in relation to its obverse (ableism), it remains a societal construction aiming to position certain humans as disabled beings who are lacking subjects, or objects, who require ableist rehabilitation. To destroy disablism, a concerted effort to abandon ableism is required, due to their mutual nature. This also intersects with other fields of difference, positioning CDS as inherently intersectional, as concerns such as pan-national identity, class, ethnicity, and gender 'converge around the problems of diversity as a consequence of attempts to maintain... ableist normativity' (Goodley 2013, 637). CDS maintains the problem is ableism itself - the view across subjects that there is a better, more 'normal' human experience.

### *-Neoliberalism*

The idea of ableism intersects with neoliberalism, which is the latest stage of capitalism's global hegemony. Neoliberalism provides a global ordering principle that nourishes ableism and therefore perpetuates disablism (Goodley 2014, 34).

Neoliberal capitalism is held to be the most recent form of promoting a productive citizen, one who thrives due to marketization being an organizing principle for social life (Soldatic and Chapman 2010). This reduction of the human into an autonomous, adaptable, independent worker favors those with capital who are free to control the market in the promotion of their interests. Recently, this neoliberal reality has



resulted in widespread austerity politics across the United Kingdom and European countries which reduce government obligations towards its most disadvantaged citizens (disproportionately affecting those with an SEN/D label through reduced funding), while promoting corporative labor which is viewed by some CDS scholars as nothing more than a slow death within the global capitalist machine (Goodley, Lawthom, and Runswick-Cole 2014b). Ultimately, neoliberal capitalism requires productive citizens and therefore 'feeds off the empty carcass of the ableist citizen' (Goodley and Lawthom 2019, 236). This is through promoting a psyche of individualism and self-determination where the obligation of those with significant capital to those who do not have significant capital is reduced. However those who experience disability often need others to function, such as a child who needs their parents throughout their life in order to physically or mentally access the outside world. The existence of disability and its requirement for this intercorporeality stands as a renunciation of the neoliberal capitalist principles which can be held as a reason why neoliberalism fosters ableism to the disadvantage of those subjected to disablism.

Fritsch, a leading proponent of CDS, holds that to explore disability (and its related concepts of SEN or inclusion) neoliberalism needs to be explored to enable 'an elsewhere and elsewhere of disability' outside the present biocapitalist future (2016, 11). Neoliberal processes position disabled people as having no future unless they can become rehabilitated through processes of biocapitalism, such as medication, therapies, or medical labeling. This argument that the disabled have no future does appear extreme, and Fritsch argues it based on one parental narrative where the parent said they desired the death of their disabled child due to her being better off in

heaven (2016, 15). Fritsch interpreted this as meaning the parent believed there was no future for this child without them dying. However it is only one narrative, and it stands out in her research more because it evokes the experiences of a parent as opposed to a disabled person. Indeed, much of CDS scholarship focuses on the experiences of the disabled person despite maintaining that their existence is bound up in a complex web with those who support them, and it can be claimed more research like this piece is required from a CDS perspective into the experiences of those who experience ableism and a neoliberal capitalist reality without being labeled as SEN/D themselves.

Fritsch also makes the claim, after an analysis of advertising and common presentations of disabled people within the media, that there is a common assumption that disabled children themselves would rather be able-bodied or dead (Fritsch 2015). This idea leads her to advocate for a shared responsibility to abandon ableism by challenging the undesirability of disability, an undesirability which inclusive practices may inadvertently perpetuate within schools. It is interesting to wonder whether any parents in this study seek to challenge the undesirability of disability, or whether they accept the dominant able-bodied reification CDS seeks to deconstruct within the neoliberal hegemonic social imagination. A highlight of this CDS scholarship is how Fritsch (2015), echoing ideas from Goodley (2013, 2014, 2016, 2018), believes a focus on intercorporeality is essential for CDS. A delimitation of the self is required where the self is viewed as bound up within a complex web of service animals, service providers, and assistive technology, alongside the typical web of social and physical connections which all humans experience. The body is formed through relationships and should be viewed entirely as relational. This results

in an 'intracorporeal, non-anthropocentric multiplicity' (Fritsch 2015, 43) which essentially challenges a fixed notion of an individual human being. Therefore, it would seem pertinent that more research is conducted within this web outside of the individual body prescribed by capitalism, and therefore the experiences of parents who are a key relationship in forming this body are vital for understanding and ultimately overcoming ableism.

### *3.1.3 Disability and Impairment*

Another main idea which CDS inherits from disability studies is the relationship between disability (as a social phenomenon) and impairment (as a physical and/or mental phenomenon), a distinction originally made by UPIAS in 1976 (Oliver 2013). An understanding of these ideas was used to critique the social model earlier, which was seen as focussing too much on politicizing the idea of disability and defining disablism, without theorizing the reality of impairment. This led to more relational forms of the social model like the resistance model which recognizes the presence of both.

However, where CDS slightly differs is how it presents impairment within this relationship. There is a more political view of impairment which views its very existence as a need to go beyond the binary positions of medical-social, ability-disability, normal-impairments, and instead question the 'grand narrative' of what it means to be human (Goodley and Roets 2008, 242). Impairment represents a rhizomatic uncertainty that requires new understandings of what it means to be human, making impairment an intrinsic part of the human experience instead of

being seen as a deficiency to normalcy. CDS positions impairment as a psycho-social political concept that destabilizes the truth about what it means to be human. This conception of impairment, which conceives it as a concept that is both the opposite of normalcy and a requirement for normalcy to exist, focuses on the space between impairment and normality and argues that this space is essentially rhizomatic or destabilizing, therefore the concept of impairment and normality are constantly in a state of flux (Goodley and Roets 2008). In other words, CDS argues that impairment is constantly being deconstructed and reconstructed in relation to society's ideas surrounding what it is to be a normal human. Therefore while impairment is the very real presence of substantial difficulties, it is also an essential question about what it means to be human.

This question means that the experience of being (ontology) and the way of knowing (epistemology) cannot be separated, as knowing becomes a material act that is performed in relation to powers that affect how the body or subject is itself assembled. Therefore impairment/disability is not about the biological or the social identities within a specific body; they are 'a material practice' of the body relating to that which affects its construction (Fritsch 2015, 52). This construction effectively goes beyond the heterotropic hegemonic imagination of the human within the dominant neoliberal capitalist ideology as the body (including the disabled body) is ultimately a multiplicity that can only be understood as being in multiple relationships with discursive and material forces. Disability is also a multiplicity, with many different ways of interacting and understanding beyond the simplistic binary construction which contains disability and impairment. Therefore impairment, as a concept utilized within CDS, is a call to look within the space between the concepts of impairment

and normalcy to go beyond our present understanding of impairment. This will enable a new expression that does not require a benchmark of normalcy to which SEN/D must be judged against to be understood. One such example which some CDS scholars have recently advocated for is the post-human beyond ontology and epistemology which will be explored in the next section (Goodley 2020, 2018; Goodley, Lawthom, and Runswick-Cole 2014a).

These complex views have borrowed overtly from Deleuze and Guattari (1988) in an attempt to create an asignifying rupture within disability studies which allows it to embrace a rhizomatic way of being and knowing: 'Write to the nth power, N-1, write with slogans: Form rhizomes and not roots, never plant! Don't sow, forage! Be neither a One nor a Many, but multiplicities' (27). Impairment and disability are terms that need to be understood as traveling across multiple sites of subject-construction, as each body constructs its relationship with them. Goodley and Roets (2008, 249) say 'impairment is a traveler' and that is what this research aims to encapsulate; the fluid and personal nature of the experiences and understandings which participants construct. This research does not accept one way of understanding, instead, it tries to embrace the multiplicity within a more moving nomadic epistemology which seeks to understand these concepts as essentially rhizomatic, as having multiple meanings in relation to different subject constructions, embodiments, and professional codings which can influence how a parent relates to inclusive education.

Yet there is essentially a resistance within CDS against the current positioning of disability, and those with impairments, within societies regulated by neoliberal ordering principles. This resistance is in a sense political and therefore turns disability into a political category that needs to advocate for a post-human

conception of what it is to be human (Goodley, Lawthom, and Runswick Cole 2014a).

### *3.1.4 The post-human*

The final area central to understanding recent CDS, or at least the CDS relevant for this theoretical framework, is post-humanity. To challenge, resist, and move beyond binary oppositions such as impaired/normal, disabled/able, included/excluded, the socially constructed nature of linguistic terms like impairment, disability, and inclusion is ultimately challenged by a resistance to binary oppositions (Feely 2016). The essentialist view of the human, which results in prizing one human experience over another and has resulted in eugenics and wide-spread suffering, is perceived as inherently flawed. This includes the Aristotelian essentialism which argues for humanity's perfect form, the classical capitalist essentialism which views this perfect form as the able-bodied factory worker, and the late capitalist neoliberal essentialism where the perfect human is the self-serving independent entrepreneur. These have ultimately led to the flawed neo-essentialist concepts surrounding a statistically-derived normal human experience, and the medical and social practices which oppress people (Davis 1995). To oppose these neo-essentialist concepts, there becomes a need to question whether an impairment is a devalued experience compared to a natural state of humanity, or whether the impairment and the essentialist concept of a natural state are both socially constructed and reinforced through language. This can and should result in political action, such as the neurodiversity movement which is a collective resistance to labeling difference as a

disorder. However, by questioning the essentialist view of humanity, CDS advocates aim to expand normative assumptions about what it means to be human to encapsulate a much wider spectrum of experiences. This would require a post-human view of what it means to be human, which is a view of the human which does not judge one experience as being inherently superior. Therefore to consider disability critically and envision a path beyond it, there is a need to become post-human (Goodley, Lawthom, and Runswick-Cole 2014a). This need arises because what it is to be human, impaired and disabled, cannot be separated and therefore disability is required to understand humanity (Goodley 2018). Goodley (2018) goes on to argue that practices such as labeling both give and take and are not inherently bad or good. Similar to other practices which can be considered exclusionary or inclusive depending on who is making the judgment, the focus should not be on the practice but the theoretical framework which is employing it. A post-human CDS approach questions any view of human enhancement that makes the individual responsible for their flourishing, as this obscures the complicated web of relations and contexts the individual finds themselves within and often has no control over. The responsibility for individual flourishing needs to be on the wider society, rather than the individual body, which is why disability is inherently political (Goodley 2018).

Conceptions of post-humanity come from a range of contemporary scholars including Braidotti (2013) who utilizes Deleuze and Guattari to ground her ideas. This is why this piece of research adopts theories from post-human CDS alongside other Deleuzian theories necessary to understand the theoretical framework. There are many ideas surrounding post-humanity in Braidotti's work, such as a need to think

affirmatively and productively for alternative modes of being to emerge which oppose the current oppressive state of humanity (Goodley, Lawthom, and Runswick-Cole 2014a). This arises out of the experiences of those 'not considered fully human now, let alone at previous moments of Western social, political, and scientific history (Braidotti 2013, 1). It is strongly argued within CDS that those who are subjected to biomedical practices of disablism, SEN, and inclusion constitute these less-than-human constructions as they are defined as deficient (Goodley, Lawthom, and Runswick Cole 2014).

The critical post-human subject is constructed within 'multiple becomings, as a relational subject constituted in and by multiplicity' (Braidotti 2013, 49), and there is a need to go beyond the normative convention of the human concept which is used as an instrument of oppression, exclusion, and discrimination by those who have power. This normative concept of the human subject is defined by 'what he is excluded from' and 'the sexualized, racialized and naturalized others that occupied the slot of devalued difference' are viewed as inherently deficient due to their differences' (Braidotti 2013, 144). However, to resist viewing the human within these essentialist terms, there is a need to go beyond this conception of humanity and embrace the post-human view that the human is 'a complex assemblage of human and non-human,' involving relations with both animate and inanimate matter which help assemble and disassemble the subject and their relations to the world (Braidotti 2013, 159). This highlights the need to explore the subject as post-human, within its relations to the multiplicity of becoming which it emerges from, to explore the experiences of 'inclusive' education across different schools, different countries, and different assemblages. To explore the interconnected nature which defines the



post-human subject, there becomes a need to explore the 'radical relationality, non-unitary identities, and multiple allegiances' which it both emerges from and helps to construct (2013, 144). This post-human CDS has ultimately been adopted for this research as it is affirmative, holding out hope of a way of understanding the complex experiences of inclusive education which parents can hold both through and beyond traditional concepts of impairment, disability, and inclusion. Post-human CDS does not claim to have all the answers. However, it maintains that by constructing the self along Deleuzian ideas, it is at least asking the right questions about what it means to be human to allow those currently marginalized to flourish (Goodley, Lawthom, and Runswick-Cole 2014a).

### *3.1.5 Criticisms of CDS*

Some critics of CDS argue its post-structuralist roots in thinkers like Deleuze means it relies too much on analyzing language and therefore ignores the reality of impairment. Shakespeare (2014, 52) suggests 'critical disability studies writers generally seem much more interested in texts than in the ordinary lives of disabled people.' This may have some truth and is evinced by the wide body of theoretical literature which has few references to actual people (For example Goodley, Lawthom, and Runswick Cole 2014; Goodley 2013). However, this just highlights the need for practical research which utilizes a CDS theoretical framework, such as this piece.

Another criticism of CDS is that it could lead to rejecting beneficial devices like prosthetic limbs due to their functions as normalizing devices, or ignoring the

benefits of medication due to their function as disciplinary biomedical science (Feely 2016). However this seems to be based on a caricature of CDS, rather than a position proposed by most scholars within the field, and Deleuze certainly does not say the world is defined by language. Indeed, at the heart of CDS is how the post-human self relates to the material and social worlds, and a rejection of judgments based on outdated binary ways of thinking. This is to lead to a fundamental change about who is valued, what is valued, and how these valuations are made within our society. Shakespeare (2014, 66) is entirely right to 'confess to a certain discomfort when it comes to non-disabled researchers... telling me, who has two rather painful and disabling impairments, that impairments do not exist or are only the product of discourse.' CDS aims to overcome this by its first tenet and to always be mindful of the material reality and the often painful experiences this reality brings for many people. However, whether it achieves this can only be judged by the praxis which emerges when CDS is utilized to understand experiences, and whether it can be utilized successfully to offer an understanding of the perspective of parents of children with SEN/D in international schools remains to be seen.

Recently, Goodley et al. (2020) argued that CDS research needs to enact six goals to achieve its aim of overcoming disablism. These include: analyzing what is considered normative; addressing the ways educational systems reinforce some people as having a 'wrongness of being' (13); promoting how disability and education are both socially constructed; adopting decolonizing attitudes to argue against 'the epistemic privilege of global north disability studies' (14); arguing against essentialist conceptions of what it means to be human; and, watching out for disability studies losing its criticality and domesticating its resistance. This piece of

research adopts all six of these goals as part of its theoretical framework and aims to enact all six within its research.

## **3.2 Deleuze**

### *3.2.1 Deleuzian Critical Disability Studies*

Post-human CDS is based overtly on Deleuzian thinking, and it is important to outline some central concepts surrounding ontology and epistemology to understand the theoretical framework which will be applied throughout this research. As these concepts interweave and overlap, it is difficult to unpick them in a specific order, and I encourage the reader to jump into whichever part they feel connects with them in their context, and read this in any order they choose. The aim of this written expression is not to trace what has come before, instead, it is to 'break forms, encourage ruptures and new sproutings' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, 28). Therefore the usage of Deleuzian concepts can be held to be idiosyncratic, and I only use the concepts insofar as they further the aims of this research to rupture what has come before and sprout new understandings. By engaging with Deleuze, CDS researchers are open to new possibilities for understanding disability, SEN, and inclusion rather than tracing understandings that have come before (Mercieca and Mercieca 2010). The difficulty is that the researcher, the participant, and the research are in relation to each other throughout, even now, which leads not to a template for how to research, rather it maps the possibility where new understandings can emerge - this is the essence of 'rhizomatic research' (Mercieca and Mercieca 2010, 88). This means the research is inherently experimental; it is playful in how it can use concepts in new

ways, question concepts in old ways, and seek to expand the concepts of disability, SEN, and inclusion to understand the experiences of 'inclusive' education in international schools from the perspective of parents of children with SEN/D.

### 3.2.2 *Sense*

As this research is an exercise in meaning-making using language, Deleuze's concept of sense appeared the most sensible place to begin. Previous models of disability, such as the social model, aim to explore understandings of disability by first simplifying them, and then constructing their position in opposition to other positions. Each central idea of their position is a layer of sense, applied to understand the world, but through which other researchers must then also view the world. This simplification of the complexity of disability is a sense-making exercise that closes off the dynamism of real-world experiences such as the painful reality of impairment into something simple. However, in this simplification, the potential for new meanings, new understandings, and new ways of being is lost. In its quest for a positivist universality, it loses the inherent idiosyncrasy of individual impairment and the individual contexts of each body.

This raises the interesting question of whether Goodley's six tenets of CDS (2016), the four major areas this framework has identified, and the six goals of CDS research (2020) represent layers of sense. In essence, they do, however, Deleuze is not critical of sense-making, only tracing what has come before. The tenets, areas, and goals of CDS are designed to open up research to the multiplicity and becoming of the material and social world, rather than provide a template for future research.

There is also a need in the sixth tenet and sixth goal to be critical of CDS, and data that goes against the tenets, areas, and goals should not be discarded but explored to see if they reveal something new.

In language production, such as in interviews and narratives, there are acts of denotation, manifestation, and signification to relate words to the material world. However, there is a fourth dimension of sense, the idea that there is more 'expressed of the proposition' (Deleuze 2004a, 13). Meaning goes beyond words, therefore language cannot fully encapsulate a constantly shifting reality, however through its production the relationship between the person and the world shifts which in Deleuzian understanding changes the world. As the world and the person are intrinsically bound up in a complex web of relations, language production remaps these relations as new meanings are created and the sense continues to escape its signifier.

CDS aims to give ground for the emergence of new ways of understanding disability, SEN, and inclusion, rather than using previous research models to reproduce existing ideas. An example to illustrate this difference from Deleuze (2004) is Robinson Crusoe. Robinson is portrayed as learning nothing from the island he inhabits, instead, he encounters it from the outside and views it as deserted. He is content to trace his European ideas, such as domesticating goats, onto the island to reproduce his understanding of reality. However, he had the opportunity to interact with the island by engaging with its movements, the tidal movements, the weather, the food available for foraging, and in doing so both the island and Robinson could have become more by giving each other new meanings and discovering a new sense. Between the researcher, the participant, and the

research, there are differences in 'tension, potential, difference of intensity' (Deleuze 2005, 2). In these individual differences, there is a need to go beyond current understandings to map new meanings and use CDS to create a new sense to understand the participant's perspectives.

### *3.2.3 Beyond Epistemology*

To discover new meanings and allow more into our understandings of disability, SEN, and inclusion, there is a call within CDS to embrace this Deleuzian experimental research so that there is not just a reproduction of the same ideas. It focuses on using research to map the emerging possibilities and understandings which are still in a process of becoming formed through the narratives of the participants. However, in utilizing only the parts of Deleuzian thinking which work within the specific piece of research to enable this mapping, it is fundamentally 'anti-Deleuzian' as CDS is not following Deleuze; it is only taking what works and discarding the rest (Honan 2007, 532).

The epistemology which is created rejects previous layers of sense, such as defining and reproducing the social model and instead enables 'models of disability (to) multiply and query the notion of 'models' as stable forms of reading the world' (Kuppers and Overboe 2009, 219). There is a need to go beyond models, even the CDS approach itself, to explore the experiences of participants. Instead, the role of the researcher is to map the intensities which become visible through the research process, in their contradictions and complexity (Mercieca and Mercieca 2010).

### *3.2.4 Events and Series*

This research is itself a sense-making exercise to explore experiences as narrated by participants. These experiences, and the interview itself, are examples of what Deleuze calls events. Events are complex webs of intensities, forces, and movements that research tries to pin down and map. To simplify the complexity and make sense of it, research creates a series. A series is itself made of intensities, as it is an intersubjective way of understanding that can be applied to an event (or events) to make sense of them. Disability models represent examples of series, and researchers hold to them despite how they simplify the complexity as they have been told the only way to create sense is by reproducing a previous series.

However, the IS produced by a series is just one particular interpretation, and Deleuze argues that to engage with the intensities and forces you need to focus on AND to see how everything relates - 'the path of all relations which makes relations shoot outside their terms' (Deleuze and Parnet 1987, 57). This includes how the words of the participant relate to each other, to potential meanings, to the different intensities present within the event of the interview, and those of the original event of the experience. To focus on AND rather than IS, the researcher needs to recognize how they affect the participant, just as they are affected by the participant, making the event of the interview a unique event that requires something more than a previous series to understand. In essence, the participant, the researcher, and the research are all becoming something more through the research process, and it is this process of becoming which needs to be mapped to identify new ideas.

### 3.2.5 *Rhizomes*

The complex web of intensities and relations within the interview, between the people, the research, their previous events, and their future experiences, creates what Deleuze identifies as a rhizomatic structure. Previously, the disabilities and impairments of the participant may have been measured in terms of ability, normality, or how they relate to social structures through oppression or power. However, within this rhizomatic research, there is a focus on the engagement and connection, the AND, to map the relations and sense which emerge.

Binary distinctions like ability/disability, normal/impairment, medical/social are viewed as an 'arborescent' or tree-like structure of knowledge' which repeats facts to create a hierarchical system of knowledge. However, Deleuzian CDS maintains that within this system of knowledge, those labeled as disabled will always be oppressed, therefore there is a need to go beyond the present series to find new ways of knowing and being (Goodley, Lawthom, and Runswick-Cole 2014a).

To go beyond the present arborescent structure, the rhizomatic structure of events can be accepted. This is because rhizomes like tubers and rats include 'the best and the worst' without making judgments about what makes sense and what does not (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, 7). Rhizomes have multiple connections, no beginning or end, and they have connectivity that 'can never posit a dualism or a dichotomy' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, 9) so will always avoid hierarchical ways of understanding. In short, the concept of the rhizome allows the fluid nature of identity to be explored and disrupts linear or layered thinking by requiring the researcher to embrace complexity to explore experiences (McKay 2016).



However while the rhizome is opposed to arborescent thinking in Deleuzian thought, it also cannot survive without the tree which grows from it. Therefore it is not invalidating previous models of research, such as the medical or social model, it only highlights how they simplify complexity and cannot fully encapsulate the complexity of events as they provide only one series through which to understand the intensities and relations. In this piece of research, it is likely participants and the researcher hold ideas about disability, SEN, and inclusion which may appear to contradict, invalidate or rub against each other within arborescent thinking. However by focussing on AND, the rhizome allows for these ideas to be mapped rather than judged, and a picture of the events can emerge which will allow for new ways of knowing to be identified. This identification of ways of knowing, the products of the sense-making activity, run throughout the rhizome as each contains 'lines of segmentation according to which is stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed, etc. but also lines of deterritorialization along which it endlessly flees' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, 18). This means that while the experiences of the participants and their perspectives will try to be reterritorialized within this research, the reality is that much of the experience remains deterritorialised and beyond the research. The meanings mapped within the research, the series constructed to make sense of the event, are itself artificial and the experiences themselves will endlessly flee from meaning and escape the sense that can be made from them.

This research is rhizomatic as it utilizes four essential elements of the rhizome which play out across the data. There is connection, which can be seen in how parents relate to their children, 'inclusive' education, international schooling, research, and the researcher. There is multiplicity, seen in the myriad positions the participant and

the researcher adopt concerning the educational systems and the ideological influences being explored. There is the potential for asignifying rupture, which occurs when the parents or the researcher reject previous models of disability or hold conflicting ideas concerning inclusion, their children, or international schooling. Finally, there is cartography as the research presents the parents' meanings constructed in relation to many other elements, including the researcher, their experiences of 'inclusive' education, their contextualized understanding of SEN and disability, and their experiences living and educating a child with SEN/D within the Global South.

### *3.2.5 Cartography*

This act of cartography is opposed by Deleuze to tracing. Tracing is when researchers represent experiences by using series they have adopted from previous research. In the example of the social model, research that utilizes the model does not try to show that disability is socially constructed, instead, this is assumed and this assumption then influences the data collection (Stephens, Ruddick, and McKeever 2015). The researcher is just tracing over something 'that comes ready-made' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, 12).

This research will instead map the moments when 'disability displaces itself when it goes beyond what is expected (whereas tracing perpetuates)' (Mercieca and Mercieca 2010, 87). This intensive map of the constellation of intensities, affects, and relations is an experience of becoming for the participant and the researcher. As previous positions and series become displaced through the new formation of

relations, the possibility of further displacements is opened up which CDS scholars like Mercieca and Mercieca (2010) maintain can result in emancipatory ideas and freedom for disabled people from disability.

### *3.2.6 Assemblages*

The researcher, the participant, and the research need to be viewed as assemblages. Assemblages are formed of intensities, relations, and parts affected by the material and social worlds. These assemblages are in a state of flux, being both built and broken down by the forces of becoming from which they emerge. In Deleuzian thinking, assemblages are both material and discursive, as the subject is formed through both language and materiality. This assemblage can be reterritorialized by words and actions which maintain its borders and limit its ideas, such as through repetition of series which make sense to it. However, the assemblages are also open to the 'cutting edges of deterritorialization' and being broken down by new ideas or forces which go beyond it (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, 88). There are many components to assemblages, including 'economy, money, legislation, policy, institutions, organizations, social and cultural forms, discourse, representation, subjectivities, and effectivities' (Allan and Youdell 2017, 71). Assemblages are not just the subjectivities of the researcher and the participant, but also the ideologies and ideas they interact with, such as the education assemblage or the SEN/D assemblage. There is a need to look within the assemblages of the research to explore the struggles over inclusive education, diagnosed subjects, the experiences of transition, and the interactions with institutions of power across and

within national borders. Power can result in assemblages forming into relatively stable subjects of control and domination, such as segregated schooling, oppressive support structures, or medical practices, however, even these assemblages can be deterritorialized.

### *3.2.7 Beyond Ontology*

This ontology of assemblages is anti-essentialist, as it stands against hierarchical arborescent ideas about what makes a normal or better human experience. Fritsch (2010, 3) argues that the assemblage highlights the need to move away from the 'normative sovereign able body' as it delimits what it means to be a body. The ontology of assemblages is beyond ontology as the assembled subject is built on intercorporeality. There is a dependency on both the material world as well as social connections for the assembled subject to reterritorialize. Therefore it requires other beings, creating a 'becoming-in-the-world-with-others' (Fritsch 2010, 11). This is important for understanding the experiences of parents of children with SEN/D, as they may have been repeatedly exposed to positions that put their child in the place of a less-than-human due to their dependency on them as a parent, their dependency on physical apparatus, or their dependency on academic support. The recognition that all humans are in this process of becoming, and that this process requires other humans and machines, provides a neutral ontology that does not presume negativity.

This allows us to abandon essentialist questions like what is a body, and embrace how it is actualized by asking 'What can a body do?,' and the virtual possibilities by

asking 'What else can a body do?' By embracing the virtual possibility in the process of becoming, an ontology of assemblages enables new lines of deterritorialization to emerge which break down previous concepts like disability and impairment which require binary thinking. For example, a child who cannot speak is only impaired in their functioning until the virtual possibility of technology is actualized (Feely 2016). Therefore concepts like impairment or disability are inherently contextualized ways of understanding the world, which must be understood in research through how their understanding is impacting the participants' assemblages. This also opens up the possibility for better ways of making sense of the post-human world to emerge.

## **Chapter 4 Methodology**

### **4.1 Narrative case study**

A narrative case study design was employed to provide a potential map of the deterritorialization and reterritorialization process that the narratives reflect. This design was to map the terrain constructed by the assembled self of the participant with the researcher and the context of the research,

Narrative research was chosen as the most suitable method because it 'offers no automatic starting or finishing points' (Andrews, Squire, and Tamboukou 2013, 1) and can reflect the rhizomatic reality where the participant positions and repositions themselves in relation to external and internal forces.

In this research, the narratives are held to have no necessary ontological or epistemological significance. However, the narratives can reflect a specific sense or meaning that the participant has formed, and show the process through which the participant establishes their self (Andrews, Squire, and Tamboukou 2013, 2). This narrative research process allows the researcher 'to see different and sometimes contradictory layers of meaning' (Andrews, Squire, and Tamboukou 2013, 2), allowing a deeper and more complex exploration of how the participant's perspectives relate to 'inclusive' education across international schools.

This process is an example of Deleuzian narrative research, which focuses on data produced by the individual, often marginalized, subjects like parents of SEN/D children. However, the individual narratives produced are held to be rhizomatic networks that can plug into one another to create productive 'networks of narrative meaning distributed across the material world, not fixed to a single biographical

subject' (Andrews, Squire, and Tamboukou 2013, 4; Loots, Coppens, and Sermijn 2013).

This questions both the post-structuralist assumption that the narrative reveals multiple disunified subjectivities rather than a singular storyteller and that the storyteller is so caught up in a web of social forces that they do not tell the story; instead, they are told by it (Andrews, Squire, and Tamboukou 2013, 4). The storyteller is in a complex web of becoming with a range of forces and intensities. However, they retain their singular assembled self, even if it is broken down and reterritorialized during the process of storytelling. The participant is both created by the world and creates their world. This is important for the research as it aims to offer an understanding of the participants' perspectives which can produce tools that can improve the experiences of parents of SEN/D children. Therefore the parents' narratives need to be held to relate to a material world beyond the participants. In revealing the complexity of the participant's experiences and their perspectives on 'inclusive' education, the narratives of the participants must be viewed as an act of resistance. This is a resistance against monolithic understandings of SEN/D, such as those from the medical or social model which are expected to be traced onto the world (Gready 2013). The meanings from these models, which are such influential and historical tracings, will undoubtedly influence the parents. However, through the complexity of their narratives, the contradictions and meanings which arise, new understandings can emerge which go beyond the old models and may point towards new post-human understandings of SEN/D. As an act of resistance against tracing, Deleuzian narrative research can be viewed as tightly aligned with a resistance

model of disability that focuses on what is between models of understanding to allow productivity and improvement to grow.

This narrative case study explores the experiences of parents who share the same experience. All their children have been labeled with an SEN/D and are currently enrolled within an international school in Jordan. This international school was selected as it has a roughly equal mix of students from the host country and the expatriate community, which reflects over forty nationalities. It also offers a range of scholarships, hardship funds, and financial incentives with fee discounts. Therefore, the school is not just located within a globally Southern country; it is an international school with clients who are firmly part of the local Jordanian community from various social-economic backgrounds. There is also a sizable contingent of expatriates whose home countries are within the Global South, including Iraq, India, and multiple African countries, who currently reside in Jordan for various reasons, including humanitarian and increased economic opportunities. Finally, there are many expatriates from home countries which are within the industrialized North.

Despite the diversity and complexity in terms of backgrounds across the parent community, the case of parents whose children have been labeled with an SEN/D can be studied using a Deleuzian narrative-based methodology that focuses on the rhizomatic complexity participants form.

## **4.2 Participant Selection**

The research has utilized data from ten participants. These participants were recruited from an international school in Amman, Jordan. The participants all met the



following selection criteria: having a child who has been labeled with an SEN/D; having the child transfer from another school, either within the country or from a different country; having had their child enrolled in an international school previously while having their SEN/D diagnosis. There was an overall population of 126 parents who had children labeled with an SEN/D within the school, of whom 80 met the criteria. The main reason potential participants were excluded was due to not having transitioned between schools, as for thirty-two of the potential participants, their child had only been in one international school (the case study school). Fourteen potential participants were excluded for having received their child's SEN/D diagnosis while in a national school in their home country, therefore not being enrolled in an international school during their SEN/D diagnosis. Some of these children had previously been registered in international schools; however, this was before their diagnosis.

The 80 potential participants remaining who met the participant selection criteria represented a total of 43 individual children (as three families had two children who met the criteria). Due to time constraints and being mindful of over-representation of specific experiences, only one parent from each couple was interviewed. This reduction meant there were forty potential participant pairs to approach.

The forty potential participant pairs were sent an email with details of the project, my role as the lead researcher, and the possible commitment required. All forty potential participant pairs had before this been in regular, weekly communication with me from the time they joined the school. The length of time of this previous relationship varied from eighteen months to forty-two months, and I would characterize my relationship with all the potential participant pairs as being professional and productive.

In the research design phase, there was a choice whether to recruit participants from the school which I worked in, or from a different international school also located in Amman. It was determined that 'insider research' would meet the research aims while posing the least amount of difficulties (Busher and James 2012, 100). This was for a range of practical reasons: I had strong positive relationships with all of the potential participants; access to the overall population which received approval from the principal of the school (acting as a gatekeeper); and data available to inform participant selection. Also I could use my previous experiences to inform a purposive sample of the participant pairs which would lead to 'information-rich' individuals being chosen who would be able to provide extended narratives around multiple experiences of inclusion across different international schools (Patton 2002, 230). However, I considered some limitations before deciding on conducting insider research (Busher and James 2012). Ethical considerations detailed in the next section could have been mitigated if the research had been conducted with participants from a school with which I had little connection. There was a need to shortlist the participants to include the most information-rich participants, which required designing selection criteria and a process for selecting from the respondents (See Appendix A: Considerations for Selection). I, therefore, shared the research aims with a colleague who had prior access to the participants' data as part of her role within the school. We both independently rated the potential participants from one to ten regarding how useful we believed the potential participants to be in sharing narratives about inclusion. This rating then led to a comparison of our lists, improving the inter-rater reliability and selecting the most valuable participants (Bush 2012). There was a 90% agreement rate between our rankings for the top ten

potential participants and only one discrepancy where a potential participant was rated 2 points higher on the colleague's scale than my own. We had agreed that, in the case of a difference, the individual case would be discussed for the potential merits. In this case, after a discussion between myself and my colleague, we agreed to keep the higher rating of the participant due to strong views on inclusion in a different country that I was not aware of but had been shared at length with my colleague.

I consider myself an insider despite not having a child with SEN/D due to the collaborative community which I operate with the parents within. I find international schools to be more collaborative in terms of support arrangements, potentially due to the ease of implementation and ability of parents to afford or access the services. Therefore I would not define the relationship between SEN professionals working in international schools, at least the ones I have worked in, as hostile or combative. As such, in a pursuit of what is best for the individual child, I do consider myself to be an 'insider' with the parents of SEND children, working together to achieve the best outcomes for their children.

Of the forty potential participant pairs who were sent the recruitment email, there was a 75% response rate, with at least one of the parents responding from thirty of the potential pairs. Twenty of these parents agreed to be included in a shortlist in their responses, and ten agreed to be included after receiving additional information about the project.

These thirty respondents were then separated into two categories, depending on whether their child had transitioned from another international school within Jordan or had transitioned from a school outside of Jordan. This categorization was so

potential comparisons could be drawn relating to transitions for parents with SEN/D children, and findings may relate to the international school literature detailed in the literature review section. It was determined that five participants would be selected from each category, based on their scores on the inter-rater scale, taking note of ‘gender, ethnicity, and phase of schooling’ as these categories appeared salient for the analysis (Coleman 2012, 259). There were eighteen potential participants in the category of transitioning from outside of the country, and twelve potential participants in the category of transitioning from within the country from a different international school.

The twenty participants who were not selected received emails thanking them for their offer of sharing their narratives relating to inclusion but informing them that due to time constraints and a limited number of researchers that their data would not be collected in this phase of the research project unless a participant withdrew. This created a backup pool of potential participants who could be contacted in the event of participant withdrawal.

*4.2.1 Table 1: Participant Table*

	Child's Pseudonym	Child's Age	Child's SEND Labels	Nationalities held by Child	Child's Gender	School Phase	Ethnicity	Parent Met
<b>Transitioning within the Country</b>	Abdullah	10	Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)	Jordanian, British	M	KS2	Arab	Father
	Anas	16	Asperger's Syndrome Disorder	Jordanian, Egyptian	M	KS4	Arab	Father
	Raed	16	Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD); Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	Jordanian, American	M	KS4	Arab	Father
	Mahmood	12	Dyslexia	Jordanian, British	M	KS3	Arab / White	Father

							British	
	Wadad	11	Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Sensory Processing Disorder, Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)	Canadian	F	KS2	White Canadian	Mother
<b>Transitioning between Countries</b>	Tiffany	8	Dyslexia; Reading Difficulties	Australian	F	KS2	White Australian	Father
	Isabel	11	Dyslexia; Developmental Coordination Disorder; Oppositional Defiant Disorder	British	F	KS2	Black British	Mother
	Edward	18	Moderate Learning Difficulties; Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder.	American	M	KS5	White American	Mother
	Ashley	14	Dyscalculia, Reading Difficulties; Moderate Learning Difficulties	American	F	KS4	African American	Mother
	Anne	9	Trisomy 21 (Down's Syndrome).	Italian	F	KS2	Italian	Mother

### 4.3 Interviews

The ten successful participants received an email in response to their offer informing them of their successful inclusion within the project and providing details of when their interview would occur. The times of the interview had to be adjusted for some of the participants, and due to safety measures relating to the covid-19 pandemic, an online interview was safer as it would 'allow the researcher to interview people to

whom access might otherwise be difficult' (Coleman 2012, 257). This mode was an unexpected development; however, I felt that an in-person interview wearing masks would restrict my ability to accurately interpret the participant's meanings and lead to a greater risk of misidentifying words and phrases used. By conducting the interviews online, faces could be seen, and the risk relating to traveling to a shared location could be avoided. This risk also factored into the decision to conduct insider research, as the pre-existing relationship with the participants was vital in ensuring a successful online interview facilitated using Google Meet. A significant downside of this approach was that fewer data could be recorded relating to paralinguistic features, such as bodily signs of frustration or excitement, as the majority of the participant's body would be off-screen. This restricted the ability to use paralinguistic features as part of any rhizomatic analysis (Loots, Coppens, and Sermijn 2013). The participants received a briefing before the interviews took place, where the research aims were restated, and the participants were informed of their ethical rights (Coleman 2012). All of the interviews were conducted in English, a language known by both the researcher and all the potential participants. Knowledge of English was one of the barriers upon entry to the school community, and I felt it was important to avoid the need for translators given the online format of the interviews. This was another reason why the school I work in was chosen, and insider research favored over a potentially more objective form of research.

The interviews followed a semi-structured format with pre-designed questions; however there was 'provision for negotiation, discussion and expansion of the interviewee's responses' (Opie 2004, 118). The semi-structured approach enables the participant to respond in their way and contribute to shaping the conversation.

However, Bush (2012, 79) notes how ensuring reliability is complicated within this approach 'because of the deliberate strategy of treating each participant as a potentially unique respondent.' He argues that reliability may be unattainable and undesirable for semi-structured interview-based research due to the unique contexts of the participants (Bush 2012). This appears plausible, however, within narrative research reliability is associated more with the replicability of the methodology (such as the research questions) (Coleman 2012). Also, reliability can refer to the trustworthiness of the data, in terms of how accurately the study reflects the participant's meanings and their authority to comment on the matters under investigation (Mears 2012). Another issue is that there is more possibility for research bias in a semi-structured design, where questions are designed to elicit specific responses. Opie (2004) suggests that to mitigate this, the researcher needs to be open to the complexity of social meanings and have a strong rapport with the participant which enables different meanings to the ones which were intended to emerge. This appeared particularly suited to this piece of research, which is exploratory, without generating too much data to analyze which was a concern with an unstructured approach.

To encourage participation, the questions were designed to outline the context and then open potential routes for a response using a two-sentence format (Morrissey, 1987). This approach was suitable for oral history fieldwork as it avoided closed questions, and instead, an open format was utilized for the ten planned semi-structured questions. An example is 'I am interested in learning about the SEN/D labeling process. Please tell me about your experiences of this process.' (See Appendix B: Semi-structured Interview Questions). There were follow-up

questions in the form of general probes and prompts designed on Coleman's research (2012, 252) such as 'Could you enlarge on that' and 'Could you explain a little more?'

While the technology allowed for a recording of the video, I felt that this could be disruptive as when a google meet is recorded there is a constant reminder which could be off-putting to some participants. There may also be long silences and pauses, and the constant reminder of being recorded could lead to the participant feeling compelled to speak or constantly observed which could affect the data they provided. Therefore to make the participants as relaxed as possible, I decided to use an external voice recorder alongside a voice-to-text recording software (Transcribe - Speech to text) that could transcribe the interview's audio data. The main benefit of using the voice-to-text software was in terms of time taken to transcribe as it greatly sped up the process. This took place on my screen while the interview was being conducted, and I could make and clarify word choices when the software had misunderstood a word that had been pronounced. One of the main limitations of this approach was that the transcribing software did not record punctuation or pauses, which I had to add manually at the time or in my initial reading to better understand the transcripts. The transcripts were compared to the voice recordings to check for accuracy before the voice recordings were destroyed for ethical reasons to protect anonymity. This approach had considerable benefits such as time-saving benefits and preventing undue stress for the participants, however, it was ultimately the result of necessary safety measures relating to the covid-19 pandemic rather than a preferred choice over mask-free in-person interviews.



The interviews led to the production of ten transcripts, however, this conventional research approach is rightly open to criticism that it demonstrates the 'tyranny of the transcript' (Andrews, Squire, and Tamboukou 2013, 9). This is the idea that the transcript of an interview between two people speaking individually is defaulted to in the majority of narrative research, and is prized despite its restrictions. These restrictions include its lack of physical artifacts which can lead to further discussion or represent in themselves symbolic meanings; a lack of other forms of expression such as dance, drama, or art being utilized which can also convey the participants' meanings; and the artificial nature of clear turn-taking and narrative prompts to encourage storytelling and narrative making. These restrictions were considered, especially in light of the Deleuzian methodology, which has typically led to alternative modes of expression. However, the limitations seemed outweighed by the benefits of written transcripts which allowed for reflection from both participant and researcher. This reflection could lead to a shared process of forming narratives which suits the Deleuzian understanding of participants as assemblages in a formative relationship with the researcher and other forces within the interview.

To further these benefits, a subsequent interview which was more unstructured was held with each participant to go over the interview transcripts and encourage further narratives and debates, as well as allowing the participant to clarify any meanings they intended to convey or offer corrections (Coleman 2012). These multiple interviews allowed participants to go beyond what Mears (2012, 171) describes as 'the oft-told tale' to focus on reflection, depth, and detail.

This depth requires two interviews, approximately 60 minutes each, spaced about a week apart (Mears 2012). This structure creates the space for deeper reflection as

the first interview asks about experiences across international schools, the labeling process, experiences of transition, and experiences of different support systems.

Whereas the second interview aims at clarifying points from the first interview; asks about overall feelings about how their child's SEN/D label has affected their life; how he/she would describe inclusion internationally to someone considering a transnational move.

This reflective review of the transcript was productive in creating a space for further narrative making where the participants' stories represented lines of deterritorialization from the original terrain of their narratives. Participants could re-tell or re-order their thoughts, produce additional detail, or clarify their positionings within the narratives. This reflection represented a breakdown of a linear view of selfhood and meant the self represented in the narrative was an assemblage being deterritorialized and reterritorialized as it participated within the rhizomatic nature of the research.

#### **4.4 Ethics**

Despite this being an online piece of research, there was a need to clarify the rules of engagement between the participants and myself by ensuring ethical considerations had been explained and mitigated significantly (James and Busher, 2009). This enabled the research to be conducted respectfully and followed the ethical guidelines for educational research (BERA 2004). These guidelines are in place to 'keep participants safe from harm, build trust with participants and ensure

trustworthy outcomes from the research which will benefit society' (Busher and James 2012, 91).

Confidentiality was maintained by ensuring the participants' views and the data generated would not be shared with anyone within the school or community. There was also a code generated so that the participant's data was stored within anonymized categories, and without the key (located separately to the data) the identities of the participants could not be deduced (Busher and James 2012).

Despite this intention, selecting an insider research model can cause some unintended ethical considerations. Insider research typically has difficulties protecting participants' anonymity due to their proximity to the researcher (Busher and James 2012). This proximity can be troublesome for confidentiality, as when published, the identities of participants can be deduced. These concerns were mitigated by focussing the research on previous experiences and schools, and only recording essential information necessary for the analysis about each participant. Participants were informed about their right to withdraw, which was assured for six weeks after participating in the study. As the participants had two interviews, this six-week period began after their second interview. Participants were informed in their briefing and debriefing, and in the recruitment literature, concerning their right to withdraw.

There were concerns relating to the participants' privacy, which was why personal information about participants was not stored electronically and instead was stored physically in a locked drawer. This was separate from the actual data, which was stored digitally on a secure, password-protected, encrypted drive. There is also the potential for the data to influence future relationships between myself and the

participant, causing a 'leakage' that might breach confidentiality and the participants' privacy (Busher and James 2012, 101). Following BERA guidelines (2004, para 26) that 'the form of any publication... [should] not directly or indirectly lead to a breach of confidentiality and anonymity,' I aimed not to mention the contents of the data or to use the data in any way outside of the Ph.D. thesis, which could have otherwise included lessons in research methodology or future interactions with the participants. There was little risk of deception, as the research aims were clear for the participant from the recruitment literature and the briefing before the first interview. Following research conventions this led to a debrief for the participant after the interviews, where I outlined how the data would be stored and used, and answered any follow-up questions they had.

I strived for informed consent from the participants, who were all eager to share their narratives, and the meanings they had constructed for these. In the briefing and debriefing, I checked that the participants had all read the research literature and were happy to contribute their time and experiences to the research. However, I was concerned that my position as a senior leader could be considered an unintentional form of coercion, which breaches a fundamental principle for research with participants (ESRC 2005). The only potential impact I could have on their child's education was within re-enrollment decisions; therefore, conducting the interviews after this point meant my role could not influence their child's education. Finally, participants were informed that the data they provided would have no bearing on their child's schooling or any future interactions they may have with either myself or the school (with whom the data would not be shared in any form).

I was aware that my role within the school threatened the credibility of the findings, as participants could be more likely to perceive a particular agenda if the questions were related to practice in school (Ball 1987). Therefore, the interview questions were designed to focus on previous experiences before the current school, and the participants were all selected because they had experienced multiple schools so they would have an external knowledge base.

#### **4.5 Researcher Biography**

It was necessary to reflect on my reasons for undertaking the research and position myself within this project as a researcher who has a past and present with which the participants are familiar. I was diagnosed as having an SEN/D label when I was six and received specialist instruction in the form of pull-out interventions for literacy from the ages of six to nine. Alongside this, having been diagnosed with a speech and language communication disorder, I received weekly speech therapy off-site at a high cost to my family. The reason for this disorder, as it was labeled, was a lower level of reading ability when compared with my peers. After a year of therapy and multiple years of remedial instruction within the school, I felt I could read sufficiently and access the whole curriculum. However, the stigma of the disorder remained throughout my primary schooling until I entered secondary, where I was able to enter a competitive meritocracy free from my SEN/D label and subsequent stigma. When training to become a teacher, I realized many of the students who struggled with literacy I met, and who themselves carried SEN/D diagnoses, had never received the expensive treatments which I had obtained thanks to my grandfather's

generosity (as my parents could not have afforded the therapy). This inequality drove me to both become and train SEN coordinators, yet despite being heavily involved with SEN/D practices and completing a masters degree titled 'Special Educational Needs and Inclusion,' I could not commit as wholeheartedly to rhetoric concerning inclusion while practicing many academically beneficial practices associated with SEN/D which are inherently exclusionary, such as pull-out support. Having worked across four countries (the UK, Kenya, India, and Jordan) in three international schools, it seemed everyone within the field is caught up in the traced meanings of SEN/D and inclusion from different sources while having also formed their conceptions based on powerful personal experiences. While I currently operate within the case study school as the Head of Inclusion, I do not hold to a fixed understanding of any term or have a singular view of best practice within the field defined commonly as Inclusion and SEN/D. Instead, I make clear to all parents and children that I respect their understandings, meanings, and expectations, and any power I have is used to create a site for their child to grow.

Therefore while I hold a degree of positional power, this is mitigated by the collaborative approach to engaging parents readily in decisions as equal partners within the department, and my personal experiences of the benefits of different approaches and understandings within the field.

#### **4.6 Analytic Framework**

When selecting an analytic framework, it was important that the framework could address the research questions while operating within the Deleuzian CDS theoretical

framework which this project adopts. This meant I had to be able to analyze the six tenets of CDS by being able to: analyze the material reality of disablism; analyze late capitalism's influences; explore contextual factors impact on disablement; accept cultural relativism; explore how the self is constructed in relation to others; resist models of SEN and disability (Goodley and Lawthom 2019).

To achieve this, the 'rhizomatic perspective' developed and practiced by Loots, Coppens, and Sermijn (2013) when analyzing narrative data was utilized similarly to how it was applied to their Ugandan women's narratives. The similarities lie in the steps taken in the analysis, the ontological position of the participants and the researcher as assemblages, and the epistemological position of the data collected as a map of intensities. The differences lie in the participants, the research contexts, and the voices heard through the data.

The rhizomatic perspective is based on a voice-centered relational method for analyzing narrative data developed by Gilligan et al. (2003) called the Listening Guide and utilizes three distinct steps for analyzing the data. This analysis presumes that the world is multilayered and inherently connected; therefore the narratives have wider connections to different cultures and relationships which can span far beyond the conscious words of the transcript. This is relevant as this project explores participants' experiences across national borders and international schools, creating a complex web of connections with different cultures, classes, and perspectives across the Global South and North. These connections create the possibility for multiple voices with unique expressions of sense that can be heard across the narratives. This multiplicity of voices means there are multiple entryways for listening to the stories, and multiple audiences for whom the stories are intended. These

include past audiences such as people or schools who have hurt or supported them; present audiences such as myself as the researcher; and future audiences like their children when they have grown or the readers of this thesis. All of these voices have an equal claim to representing the voice of the participant. Therefore, the analytical framework is a virtual exercise in mapping possible voices, and cannot rely on tracing previous understandings onto the data as participants are in a unique event reflecting and narrating previous events and the sense they have for them. The unique assemblage of forces that make up the event of the interview requires an analytical framework that can adapt to its uniqueness by mapping the terrain while noting lines of flight that deterritorialize understandings and destabilize voices. The rhizomatic approach can map this complex web of becoming while articulating it in a written form through following the different voices.

The analytical framework is intended to map the selfhood as a rhizomatic story with multiple entryways, and no right way leading to a real self for the participant (Sermijn, Devlieger and Loots 2008, 637). The participant is accepted as an assembled self in a process of becoming through the narratives, which provide multiple connections and present different versions of the participant's selfhood which are intimately connected to the context of the speaking. The rhizomatic nature of the assembled self of the participant forms in relation to other parts of the rhizomatic event of the interview, such as the researcher, the local context and culturally relative understandings, the international forces of neoliberalism and capital. These impact the possibilities and the limitations within which the stories of the participant are constructed, and allow the stories to connect to broader ideas of ableism, neoliberalism, disability and impairment, and post-humanity, without losing



sight of the material reality of dis/ability or the confines of the interview and transcript format. This is described by Loots, Coppens, and Sermijn (2013) as replacing the image of a storyteller revealing a core self through the narrative with 'the image of a multiple, multifaceted individual who shapes and reshapes him/herself within specific contexts and who is open for the continuous inclusion of change' (2013, 112).

Therefore the rhizomatic perspective is an analytical framework that can explore the complexity of international school parents' experiences using narrative data.

4.6.1 Table 2: Analytical Steps

	<b>Identify</b>	<b>Key Words</b>
<b>Step 1</b>	Plot of narratives	What, when, where, with whom, why
	Lines of Segmentation	Themes, repeated images, metaphors, recurring words
	Lines of Deterritorialization	Break downs, contradictions, emotional expressions, silences
	Links to broader connections and contexts	Local and international understandings, ableism and disableism, neoliberalism, impairment, resistance, post-humanity, research literature
<b>Step 2</b>	My emotional and personal responses and reflections	How do I feel? How did I feel? How does this link to my own history? What is the impact?
<b>Complete after all interviews conducted and analyzed with Step 1 and 2</b>		
<b>Step 3</b>	Recurring voices across participants narratives	Lines and links, research literature, speaking for and against.
	Re-read transcripts and note Step 1 in relation to a recurring voice	

This rhizomatic perspective has three steps for framing the analysis of narrative data. The first step is an overall listening to the plot. Here it is noted what is happening in the story, when, where, with whom, and why. Certain lines of segmentation are pointed out at this point, such as dominant themes, repeated images and metaphors, recurring words. Also, certain deterritorializations are notes, such as breakdowns in storylines, contradictions, emotional expressions, and things not expressed. Finally, connections to broader social and cultural contexts, both local and international, are considered to contextualize the data alongside links to the research literature in chapters two and three.

The second step is to reflect on my positioning as the researcher, utilizing the biography above and more comprehensive life events to reflect on my social positioning to the participant. This process explores my subjectivity and considers my emotional and personal responses and reflections on the stories shared. Finally, step three identifies recurring voices which speak across the narratives, whether these are points of segmentation or deterritorialization. This is intended to map a sense that the participants share and connect with, even if these connections are contradictory. Once the voices have been identified, all the transcripts are re-read to listen for one voice at a time, with all the indications of that voice and the potential parts of the transcripts that connect with this voice underlined in a specific color in order to map them.

As this can result in a multitude of sense-making voices emerging, the voices most pertinent to the research questions are selected to be represented through the results section. This act of cartography, in representing the voices which emerge, is intended to show both the consonant and dissonant voices through which the assembled self has related their connections to external forces such as myself, traced understandings of SEN and disability such as the medical and social models, and the broader socio-cultural context of neoliberalism and international schooling within the Global South.

It is worth highlighting the decision to analyse the voices in relation to the research literature of chapters two and three. This is completed initially as part of the rhizomatic perspective's first analytical step, and again within the third step when the transcripts are being reviewed. As the research literature is used during the analysis, the results are presented below in their analyzed form with the literature interwoven

with my data. I felt this works better than considering the research literature separately in the conclusion, as it highlights the rhizomatic nature of the data relating to the external forces of the research literature.

The rhizomatic perspective developed by Loots, Coppens, and Sermijn (2013) is designed to be 'a continuous process of differentiating, connecting, and rupturing, and [these voices] grow into divergent lines that energize the actualization of life and human subjectivity as an ongoing process of becoming' (2013, 121). However, in developing the rhizomatic perspective as a systematic voice-centered relational method for analyzing narrative data, Loots, Coppens, and Sermijn (2013) have created an analytical framework that can create space for new post-human understandings which potentially resist current understandings of SEN/D to emerge.

## **4.7 Research Questions**

RQ1: How do SEN/D children's parents' experience inclusive education in international schooling?

*RQ1.1 What are the parents' experiences of choosing international schools for their SEN/D children?*

*RQ1.2 What are the parents' experiences of having their SEN/D children attend international schools?*

*RQ1.3 What are the parents' experiences of having their SEN/D children transition between international schools?*

RQ2: How can international schools improve SEN/D children's parents' experiences of inclusive education?

## **Chapter 5 Analyzed Results**

The four voices that emerged clearest from the three steps of the rhizomatic perspective have been attached loosely to the research questions to provide a possible way of entering the data. However, there are many ways of entering the data, and many ways of becoming with and emerging from the data, and this functions as one way of many to enter the rhizome, trace the outlines of previous understandings, and chart the new meanings which form. This presentation of the voices made sense to me and helped me map new meanings related to the research and understandings that have come before. It was not always an easy fit, and there were frequent lines of flight that deterritorialized the attempt to trace the research questions onto the structure of four voices.

### **5.1 Voice 1: 'Our choice processes demonstrated our desire for normativity'**

*RQ1.1 What are the parents' experiences of choosing international schools for their SEN/D children?*

The concept of normality kept recurring in many ways across the participants, with many parents expressing it in both positive and negative ways. One way it manifested was in keeping with concerns regarding placement and whether placement within a more specialized school would be considered as a normal schooling option. The sense which overflowed the words was that anxiety existed

that if a child required a specialized placement school, then they would no longer perceive themselves or be perceived by others as normal:

Abdullah: It had the biggest effect on us, as it narrowed our options so much.

The schools, they just wouldn't consider him as soon as they learned he had a problem... We applied to so many schools and were met with so much failure.

My wife was worried that he'd either have to continue in his school or leave school altogether, so we were so happy when he was accepted.

From Abdullah's father, Abdullah's impairment was framed as a problem when it led to rejection from mainstream international schools. The uncertainty created by the impairment led to repeated experiences of failure, reinforcing the idea that the normal mainstream schooling experience is to be sought after and that Abdullah was somehow deficient for not being welcomed into this schooling option. Abdullah's example highlighted the impact of what Burch (2018, 109) calls 'Inclusion for All' where parents want their children educated for all or part of their time within the mainstream regardless of whether it is the most effective method of instruction. This desire goes further than the findings of Anastasiou and Kauffman (2011) that the social constructionist model's promotion of inclusion may lead to an end to specialized schooling, as it shows parents less concerned about having their child educated or happy and more concerned with their child being perceived as normal by being within a mainstream school.

This desire is a line of segmentation around the concept of normativity; how parents were willing to pursue it through repeated applications represents a potential event

within the data. However, an interesting moment of deterritorialization for this event came from Ashley's mother. Ashley had been in multiple mainstream international schools, and every time:

Ashley: We choose an international school where she can fit in, apart from the one in Canada. In that case, we went solely on her needs and chose a school that could help her with her neurological development as the school promised. You see, being in a special school didn't seem to be a problem, as she'd been in special classes for her entire experience of schooling in Cambodia and America, and in America, she'd been solely in a special program so it seemed logical when we got the placement to focus on her needs and it worked out well.

Ashley's mother traces the understanding of SEN or specialist schools being separate from mainstream schools; however, she goes beyond the limited understanding of inclusion provided by Oliver's Social model (2013). She presents specialist schooling as part of a continuum that flows from the SEN/D practices evident within the mainstream schools Ashley had attended, creating an understanding of SEN/D and inclusion, which went beyond the binary opposition. In doing so, the concepts of normativity and impairment are recognized as being in flux, as what is normal for Ashley is recognized as being relative to her experiences. This could suggest a need within CDS for the third tenet to go beyond global, national, and local contexts and embrace the individual context to see whether a practice



(such as specialist schooling) nurtures or resists ableism for the individual (Goodley and Lawthom 2019).

A series of repeated understandings like normativity which can be traced to late capitalism and neoliberalism as a global ordering principle was evident across the data in a myriad of ways. This supported the second tenet of CDS that disability must be explored in relation to neoliberalism due to the impact of the growing gap between rich and poor. However, rather than simply tracing this understanding from CDS onto the data and reproducing the negative bias within CDS towards neoliberal ideas, I want to highlight how some parents have utilized them. Wadad's mother said:

Wadad: We offered to bring both Wadad and her sister, as we know schools do care about money, and the more kids you can bring the closer they'll consider your application.

The sense which overflowed the words was how she recognizes the competitive marketplace the school is within, and also the power she has as a consumer with financial capital within that marketplace. By maximizing the potential profit for the school, she increased Wadad's value, demonstrating a positive impact of the competition within the educational marketplace (Wilton and Schuer 2006). This position of strength was reinforced by Raed's father who said:

Raed: I guess having a child who is academically able meant that we had a lot of choices in terms of the curriculum and the schools available, and luckily we can afford any schools.

He recognizes how having a child who is cognitively able when statistically compared to his peers means he would be more desirable for a school that functions as a meritocracy. This focus on the meritocratic nature of cognitive ability gives a potential reason why Florian (2019) found inclusion as an ideology has grown within a simultaneous growth of a broader policy context of neoliberalism. It also highlights how these parents are utilizing neoliberal influences like meritocracy and competition, and receive benefits from the neoliberal influences as well as the negatives associated with being deemed abnormal.

The amelioration desired across the data was not resistance against the concept of normal. Instead, there was a desire to expand the concept of normal so more children could be included. This may reflect that the relationship between disciplinary powers of education and medicine results in a person choosing the current social order, rather than resisting it (Foucault 1977). Reflecting on inclusion generally, Edward's mother said:

Edward: It must be very difficult for parents going abroad to find a school that can provide the ABA for their children. Now, so, my children, and Edward in particular, inclusion is about him and them with the opportunities to make friends and get as normal a life as possible while overseas.

The idea of normal was combined with this idea of being overseas, and therefore the conception of normal was seen as needing to adapt to accommodate a wider range of experiences due to this exculpatory factor. Yet this sense of normal needing to broaden reflects more the cultural relativism of the term within the community of international school parents, where normal may indeed be broader than some state schools as alternative sites of learning may not be existent so international schools may have to accommodate a wider spectrum of need than some state schools in globally Northern countries. This is supportive of Byrne's argument (2013) that specialist schools are held to be intrinsically worse than inclusive mainstream schools but goes further by suggesting in this context the preference for inclusive mainstream schools may be due to a lack of alternatives. However this desire to broaden normality still traces the understanding of normalization from Foucault (1977, 184) where the concept of normal is seen as an 'instrument of power' to suppress desires for deviance. The SEN/D status was still positioned as undesirable by many parents to a certain degree, usually due to the difficulties in school applications, and labels related to SEN/D were accepted insofar as they either agreed with the parents' experiences or offered a means to access perceived benefits. In Anas's case, his father articulated both by agreeing with the diagnosis:

Anas: They said he had Asperger's syndrome. We had to look it up, but it isn't Autism, and my wife, she understands that there is something there... he just doesn't want to make friends, and right the way back to preschool, he just didn't interact with the other kids, you know.

And identifying many of the techniques Nes, Demo, and lanes (2018) associate negatively with a medical model of disability, such as pull-out support, segregated settings, and alternative examinations, as positive consequences of Anas's diagnostic label of Asperger's Syndrome:

Anas: Now he gets much better support, as he loves his assistant and he gets interventions in addition to his classes. His assistants use his love of football to teach him on his own.

There is an evident contradiction in this parent's response, as they were positive about the diagnosis as it helped them understand why he struggles to socialize, yet the practices they were positive about were not designed or referred to in relation to increasing social opportunities. The diagnostic label, which they ascertain 'isn't autism' which was implied to be abnormal, they held to be within a spectrum of normality and just explained how his differences were a part of what made Anas normal. They also presented the techniques argued to be exclusionary as a positive aspect of inclusion within an international school, suggesting that these practices can be perceived as part of normal international school education for these parents whose children transitioned from within the country. This contradicts the findings of Burke (2018, 109) that inclusion relies on positioning those labeled with SEN/D as other to the presumed normativity of non-disabled peers, as these parents and others present their labeled child within a broader definition of normal, which is either existent or the parents believe should be existent, within international schools.

The parents all positioned themselves as consumers within a competitive marketplace, making choices concerning the future. This choice utilized a range of decision-making strategies, such as Anne's father who will:

Anne: Try to meet other parents with children who have needs within the UN, so we can hear about their experiences or use their connections to make the choice. We do a lot more networking because of the SEN, and my wife is trying to make links before we move to a country. We're as careful as we can be, although we've yet to have a huge amount of choice within a country.

This sense of a lack of choice crossed over the boundaries of individual transcripts, however, there was a positivity that emerged from this sense, suggesting the event of having chosen a school is a rupture with any negative previous feelings. Instead, parents will reterritorialize their previous understandings in a positive light as a result of having a school placement. This intersects with the findings of Bajwa-Patel and Devecchi (2014) where there was no difference in positivity between parents who felt they had no choice and those who felt they did in the UK state sector. A possible reason for this is the reterritorialization that occurs after the school choice so that a positive school experience creates a complex web with the choice-making process causing even a lack of choice to be held positively. In Raed's case, his father detailed how they were worried about the choice in case of rejection so they did not disclose Raed's needs:

Raed: It seems counter-intuitive that we wouldn't tell the school about the diagnosis as he would have got the right support from day one, but at the time we just wanted to get him in the door. It was a few weeks later when we got the call that Raed was crying and hitting himself, and we were okay with the idea of having a shadow teacher support him.

He even presented the requirement to have a support assistant as a positive choice which they had made in Raed's interests due to its perceived success. Perhaps this highlights how the capitalist marketplace has reconceptualized the subject to become fundamentally an individual who makes choices, as even when there is no choice to make Raed's father still believed it was a choice. Just as Anne's father believed they were making a choice, and was happy about this, despite limited options.

Both these examples demonstrate parents' positioning themselves as making choices, and this was reflected in most of the data, however, Ashley's mother was keen to point out how involved her daughter was in the choice-making process:

Ashley: We give her a lot of the choice when choosing a school and she chose the programs but they don't get called special or labeled like that. The wording is quite important so that she doesn't get put off.

This suggests Byrne's (2013) research findings are applicable for international schools as well as the UK community he researched, and the majority of parents make the choice for their child. However, in Ashley's case, it highlights the need for

schools to target both the parents and the children with their wording when it comes to advertising SEN/D programs and inclusive support.

Across all the instances of school choices narrated, there was a complex web of influences and considerations which the parents (and to a lesser extent their children) were navigating. This created a range of complex intersections between disablement and other factors like class, status, and family values for the parents. When Mahmood's father was making a school decision, he chose to limit his options so that he could be seen as affording an expensive education:

Mahmood: You need to send your kid to a school which costs a certain amount, which means there are only about six schools that make do, with names you keep hearing again and again, and for the support arrangements it limits our choices.

Mahmood's father wanted to maintain class status and social standing by being seen to spend money, regardless of whether the product being purchased was a superior quality or the option Mahmood desired. This supports Cucchiara and Horvat's (2014) findings from United State's State schools that parent's making a school choice can focus on performative identity construction by using it as an opportunity to display their values. However, for all the parents, their child's SEN/D status was a predominant consideration and other factors were considered in relation to it. For example, Edward's mother had a strong sense of her national identity which she was trying to instill in her children, yet even then she reflected on this process in relation to SEN/D labeling:

Edward: We try to live on American life and we try to instill American values in them... We are lucky as Edward's label or disability can be easily accommodated in any good school.

The nationalistic values associated with her home country which she is trying to inculcate for her children within a myriad of host countries abroad are an important force, however, they must be mapped with a rhizomatic AND, as in national values AND SEN/D labels AND disability to begin mapping this assemblage of human and non-human forces.

Another aspect of this voice that talked about how parents chose 'normal' was related to admission processes. Every parent has experienced many different processes, with many narrating repeated experiences of rejection, difficulties, and inflexibilities. Wadad had to complete the same process twice in a school as she failed the first time. Her mother said:

Wadad: So the first trial day was difficult as she had to do the entrance assessments which are far too hard for a child with needs... But on her second trial day, she was calmer and we made sure to give her a lot of medication before she went in.

Here the tool of medical biocapitalism is being utilized by Wadad's mother so that her daughter can ape the ableist normativity required within the admissions process. The



need for this arose out of the previous rejection and a lack of alternatives within the Jordanian international school marketplace. This supports the findings of Jessen's (2013) study which found an SEN/D label is a frequent barrier to school choice within marketplaces characterized as having neoliberal influences, such as state education in America or Europe. Within the international school marketplace, the SEN/D label and the presentation of behaviors that were perceived as abnormal in the first trial day were a barrier to her admission within a school which labeled itself as inclusive. This experience of disablement and exclusion was repeated across all the parents' data and suggests that the inclusion promoted by international schools within neoliberal discourses is based on a significant exclusion of the less-able disabled (Qvortrup and Qvortrup 2018). The market-driven economics, which underline positively some aspects of parental experiences of school choice earlier, function as a double-edged sword as when a child presents behaviors that could impact the experiences of other consumers, then they are treated as a liability for a school competing for students' fees to survive (Brown and Lauder 2011). The admissions procedures functioned as gateways to acceptance and perceived normality, and the parents' relationship to normativity prized it and meant they were willing to engage with a range of strategies to attain it. However, unlike Francis and Mill (2012) who found education systems of the Global North were damaging young people by practicing this exclusion before entry, all the parents accepted it as necessary. This could be due to their comparative economic privilege giving them a greater sense of control.

To further their desire for normativity, the parents utilised a number of strategies to inform and improve their choice processes. External professionals and advice played

an important role in the school choice process across the parents' narratives, however, what stood out was the range of who was considered to provide this information. Ashley's mother, a parent transitioning from outside of the country, highlighted:

Ashley: You've got all different types of levels and types of kids going to them and it's important for her, because she's black, that she can go to a school where she isn't going to be experiencing any racism or discrimination. We look at the schools the embassy recommends in the country, before checking out all of the information we can find. I'm an absolute nerd for this kind of thing, and I go through school reports and social media looking for reports on race and the makeup of the children.

Here the intersection with race was explicit. The concern for Ashley to fit in and be considered normal in a school meant both race and learning needs were considerations for Ashley's mother. However, to gather information for the choice, she utilized her professional connections (her embassy) due to its knowledge and sensitivities over race, putting it in a position of power when informing her about the choice. She struggles to get the information she needs from schools, suggesting a lack of relevant data for parents making a school choice for children where racial discrimination and disability discrimination are perceived concerns. This reflects Ashley's mother's privileged position in being able to mobilize social capital to inform her decision and receive information most parents cannot access, which could reflect Lilley's conclusion (2015a) that the amount of external professional advice available

to parents reflects their ability to mobilize social and economic capital on their child's behalf. This was further reflected by Isabel's mother:

Isabel: We also like it if we can directly contact someone from an SEN department, and if they tell us about the wider support which is available in the area. It's good to start forming links before you go, and we try to email any providers or specialists in the area to get a picture. We also ask for their recommendations, as usually you find the specialist will all recommend the same school in the city.

She cross-referenced the recommendations from the school with the views of external professionals in countries she has yet to visit. This is contrary to Jessen (2013) who found one way to restrict the school choices of parents in New York City was to utilize admissions personnel and counselors who could advise about the low chances of entry or provide negative information about SEN/D children's experiences in a specific school. The information from schools and external counselors were all being collected to inform the choice, suggesting at this stage of information gathering the parent feels empowered. This resembles the Code of Practice in England which promotes both the role of the parent in choosing a school and the importance of external professionals in informing that choice process, even if in practice the picture may be more complex (Lehane 2017). Rather than this being a weakness, it is a strength for parents who have enough social and economic capital and are not inexperienced in mobilizing it, such as these international school parents.

Isabel's mother alludes to the idea of marketing and how duplicitous some schools have been in her experience by using the term inclusion with a different understanding to her own. This seemed a particular consideration for parents transitioning from outside of the country who did not all have access to localized sources of information yet to inform their choice. Anne's mother, reflecting on a school choice in Israel, said:

Anne: Anne was the only child with Trisomy 21 in the school but there wasn't any entrance testing and the admissions interview was over skype which I think helped? Definitely, choosing the international school was more difficult from abroad... but the websites and the marketing do genuinely help, as well as anything you can glean from the admissions process.

Here the complex web of intensities that form the event of choosing an international school are laid bare, yet Anne's mother thinks affirmatively and appreciates the current marketing processes which Isabel's mother found could be misleading, and indeed Anne's mother was experiencing a negative result outcome. Certainly, all the parents found international schools were marketing themselves as inclusive, and the negative experiences many related like Anne's mother suggests some of this marketing is designed to attract parents of SEN/D students without having the necessary support. This offers strong support for the ideas of Brown and Lauder (2011) that international schools may use duplicitous marketing, in this case to the detriment of SEN/D parents making an informed choice. In a summary of a typical process for parents affiliated to an embassy, Edward's mother outlined:

Edward: We contact the embassy in the country, talk to some parents, check out a few websites and then apply to a few... We rely a lot on advice from other parents, and now with the diagnosis, our choices are more limited.

The website she refers to appears to be common practice within the international school marketplace, and every parent discussed websites, advertisements, and marketing in some form suggesting this is a crucial factor for parents making school choices internationally. However, talking to parents within the country was also a frequent strategy. This form of grapevine knowledge was as important for parents transiting from within the country. For example, with Anas's father:

Anas: I guess, because of his Aspergers, we want to make sure his classmates and teacher really understand what is going on and how they can help him. To make the decision, we ask around, our family and friends as well as anyone who has graduated from the school... So we had a friend with a son who had Aspergers, and we asked him how he had found the school.

Here the ability to use a highly contextual localized form of grapevine knowledge was clear, and the advantages of transiting within the country were clear in terms of the amount of access to alumni. This was a powerful force within the process for Anas's father, which could suggest that international schools need to recognize potential new parents as relational subjects built in relation to others (the fifth tenet of CDS) who need external information sources to become actual clients (Goodley and

Lawthom 2019). This may require mobilizing the international school's alumni networks to improve admissions processes for parents transiting from outside of the country. The prioritization of grapevine knowledge when selecting the school by both parents transiting from outside and within the country supported Lilley's findings from Australia (2015a), however going beyond just parents of children judged highly autistic and suggesting this as a predominant source of information for all parents of SEN/D children making school choices within international schools.

A few parents who had transitioned from outside of the host country referenced the accreditation processes as giving them confidence in a school's ability to provide an inclusive experience for their child. An accreditation process is when a school receives an award from an external body to certify an area of its practice as reaching a certain standard. Tiffany's father said:

Tiffany: The system is quite developed in Thailand, with the accreditations and awards so we look at those and then ask around the embassy.

This does suggest accreditations are an influencing force within the school choice process. The lack of research within international schools relating to SEN/D children was highlighted in Tarry and Cox's (2014) interviews with Teaching Assistants from COBIS International schools. One hole in the literature was whether parents' were influenced by accreditation processes, which Haldimann (2001) had highlighted twenty years ago as a potential way to increase the visibility of SEN/D in schools, despite no data being available then on whether SEN/D parents use accreditation process outcomes as part of their choice processes. The parents' who transitioned

from outside the country certainly referenced the accreditations suggesting Haldiman (2001) was in part correct, however, the extent to which this source of information was prized felt far less than grapevine knowledge or direct contact with the prospective school.

Finally, there was a sense that the schools had no obligation to alter what they were doing to accommodate SEN/D parents. When it came to choosing a curriculum, Mahmood's father was happy that he perceived he could make choices from within a prescribed curriculum which would more suit Mahmood.

Mahmood: You see, Mahmood has had an easier time with this British system, which may be because it has less writing or maybe it's because of the creative media classes, but I'd say he's having a lot more fun and enjoying the options which he has.

However he never goes further to consider a rupture from tracing the current model by asking the school to map new curriculum choices for his son. This reinforces the idea that Mahmood's individual flourishing is his responsibility, rather than a responsibility on the wider society to resist what came before and produce post-human alternatives. There was acceptance of the admissions processes from all the parents, even if they had led to exclusionary barriers. There was little focus on schools changing to accommodate children, and instead there was a focus on the child subjecting themselves to a medicalized gaze from prospective schools which colonizes their individual experience and views the children of these parents first through their labels of abnormality (Gillman, Swain, and Heyman 1997). This

seemed all due to the parents' desire to choose normal and not require the schools to change to fit the child's needs. For example, Abdullah's father said:

Abdullah: There's nothing wrong with him, it's the learning that is wrong, and he responds best when the learning is shaped to fit him. I don't see a lot of it from his teachers, but from his support there is a lot of shaping that goes on, so it feels for him like he is doing well even if what he is doing is less than the class.

Abdullah's father believes that the school's learning is at fault, however, he does not connect this problem to the need for the school to modify the curriculum for his son. This could reinforce Cutajar and Adjoe's (2016) idea of a one-way transfer of information from the Global North. It appears that by choosing to desire normality, the parents forsook a desire to resist what the schools currently practice and insist politically on action and a rupture towards alternative forms of education and instruction. The international schools within the parental narratives, which were held to reflect Global Northern practices by utilizing historically transient categories currently used to label individual SEN/Ds as natural, treated differences as divergences to perform the 'exclusionary iceberg' which requires the individual to adapt rather than the school (Robinson and Goodley 2018, 432). Therefore this perceived inflexibility from the schools reflects exported concepts from the Global North that frame how international schools perceive normality.



## **5.2 Voice 2: 'We experience disablement as part of being international'**

*RQ1.2 What are the parents' experiences of having their SEN/D children attend international schools?*

The acceptance of the process of normalization, and the desire for their children to participate within these educational institutions, felt connected to a wider view of what it meant to be international. This sense of an international identity was associated frequently with transnational companies and organizations which many of the parents themselves worked for or with. However, what occurred at different moments was a hope that internationalism could function as a line of deterritorialization within perceived hegemonic barriers associated with disability within host countries. Anas's father summed this up as:

Anas: So Anas, he is so good with Maths, we hope he will be able to get a job in accountancy with an international company abroad, as they will protect him and have to provide for him. They cannot discriminate, as the worst case scenario is that he would have to be in Jordan... So that is why we didn't mind the label, as it will help him when he applies to study and work internationally.

Anas's father has associated the label of Asperger's Syndrome as being an export from the Global North, and therefore offering an advantage when applying for opportunities within the Global North (or international companies which are positioned as separate to employment opportunities with companies from the

globally Southern country itself). Despite there being similar protections in his home country, these are distrusted in comparison to similar protections for disability. This then reveals the hope that being labeled as having a disability can deterritorialize his son's employment prospects in Jordan by providing an advantage for accessing employment prospects that are perceived as having a higher status due to their association with the Global North and therefore being international. This is an interesting subversion of Greenstein's (2016) argument that medicalization gives scientific credence to the bourgeois hegemony that views able-bodied workers as desirable and normal. In this case, Anas's father believes his son will be more desirable within international companies due to his recognition of a medicalized label. This questions how ableist normativity has responded to the increasing practice of medicalized labels and perhaps suggests that there is a perception that subjugating their child to a medicalized label for a disability can offer a competitive advantage. This requirement to label deviance as disability still reflects the requirements of mass-production which entailed framing the productive able-bodied worker as an average (Davis 1995). However whether this average is still aspired to, or whether there is a growing recognition that having a medicalized label has become some socially acceptable form of deviance, remains to be seen.

Within a school setting, there was a consensus that the terms 'inclusion' and 'international' meant very little, and for several parents they meant racial diversity (or racial supremacy) to host country citizens. For example, Edward's mother from America said:

Edward: He was one of the only international kids, well, non-Indian kids really, and I think that led to a lot of bullying. He's a big kid, quite tall, so he stands out before you notice he's the only white kid in the class. So race is pretty important... Never fitting in, being seen as different, it must have an effect on him, which is what we saw. I think international schools need to consider their racial profiles in relation to their special needs and look at which kids are getting the support and the diagnosis.

Again the intersection between race and SEN/D was highlighted, however this time it formed a complex web of intensities with the concept of being international. From Edward's mother, there was a sense which went beyond the language used that positioned all host-country nationals as other to children deemed international. This concept of international, rather than being tied to employment and transnational companies, was linked far closer to race and discrimination. The line of segmentation she drew was between host-country nationals and everyone else, a conception of everyone else quickly being associated with 'white kids.' This tracing of an us/them model reinforces the biases within third-culture thinking, where host country nationals are separated from the international children despite cohabiting in the same school. The inherent problems, such as host nationals having multiple passports or having been born and brought up abroad, do not factor into this simplified racialized thinking. It also reflects a colonized attitude towards the concept of international, linking it explicitly with race and perceived supremacy of globally Northern ideologies. In this case, it is interesting that she links internationalism and race to SEN/D, advocating for increased support and diagnostic opportunities for the

children she perceives as being more worthy or international due to their race. This almost functions as a rupture within the narrative, revealing a reification of SEN/D practices and a belief that only those children from the Global North are in a sense worthy of receiving an increase in resource allocation. This association between internationalism as a product of the Global North, and SEN/D practices as another product of the Global North, views them both as therefore having a sense of advantage. This is similar to the advantages Anas's father places upon medicalized diagnoses showing a lack of cultural relativism when utilizing these concepts imported from the Global North.

This bias towards associating disability labels and SEN/D practices with a belief in internationalism's superiority has segmented an understanding that disability is in some ways desirable if it offers a material or potential future advantage within a competitive meritocracy. This was often found in relation to discussions surrounding impairments. The disablism which was supported as long as it claimed to offer an advantage also led to many parents placing the burden of their child's impairment on their child. For example, Mahmood's father was very positive about his son's dyslexia diagnosis and future prospects but when narrating how it had impacted them, he said:

Mahmood: He's great at his extracurricular, but he doesn't seem to make many friends even though he was in the school talent show. A big disappointment was during the whole-school concert when my mother came to see him sing. He refused to go on.

Mahmood's father was blaming his son's social anxiety and desire not to perform in this story on his status as having a deviant need, with the tenuous link being that Mahmood likes extra-curricular as he struggles with the curricular, and therefore when he fails to perform his extracurricular it must also be due to the apparent failings within his ability to access the curriculum. In essence, his son's impairment is treated as an individual problem that manifests in all perceived personal failings. This represents how Oliver (1996) positions the medical model of disability as framing impairment as an individual problem caused by psychological and physical factors within the person. We see in the story what Goodley (2001) argues is the tyranny of medical professional discourses which have resulted in an SEN/D child being viewed solely as a collection of his impairments, and as having all of his actions being defined by and attributed to these biological deficiencies. The idea that Mahmood's actions may have been a valid response to a hostile social world was not considered by his father, who expected Mahmood to perform on stage despite narrating repeated instances of Mahmood experiencing failure, embarrassment, and isolation. This narrative shows how disability models lead to impairments being referred to as individual deficits and highlight the need to develop at least a version of the social model where the impairment is also socially constructed and produced via the specific culture (Anastasiou and Kauffman 2011). This requires viewing Mahmood within the tenets of CDS, such as being a self in relation to others and the cultural relativity which may cause social anxiety for performing in public in front of his grandmother (Goodley and Lawthom 2019).

The sixth tenet of CDS is to be critical of CDS, and I think this is needed when ideas about post-humanity are linked to a need for political action. The majority of parental

narratives did not reference responding politically, and in many cases supported common exclusionary practices. This may have been due to not considering disability critically, however, there was an affirmation shown for disablement when it was perceived as offering a competitive advantage. Therefore CDS may be too simplistic in its desire to think affirmatively to produce alternatives, as some of the parents think affirmatively and accept the current systems of power.

However, analyzing more rhizomatically, it appears that parents are embracing a contradiction between accepting what is the current state (such as discriminatory admissions processes) and resisting it within a constant flux of beliefs. This resistance manifested itself in both actual and virtual ways across the narratives. When talking about induction programs in multiple schools, Isabel's mother said:

Isabel: You're trusting a lot, trusting a lot of strangers basically, to make a very important decision. But we figured we could just move schools if we had to, or complain to other parents and have our voices heard, as it had really helped moving schools in Delhi so you can always make the choice again.

Despite accepting and praising the induction programs of schools, as part of this she was explicit that there was a virtual possibility of complaining to other parents and having her voice heard if she was unhappy with any part of the school. She retained the virtual possibility of political action, despite not using it so that she could resist practices she disliked. Maybe this does show the strength of disabled person's movements which challenge discrimination globally (Oliver 2013), as she felt she would have no problem forcing a school to adapt their practices once her child had

been enrolled. This demonstrates a belief from the constructionist and the post-modern version of the social model, that when social and economic structures propagate disability for SEN/D people by not adapting to non-normative bodies, there is a need from the oppressed group to respond politically. Isabel's mother was certainly aware, as were all the parents, of the possibility of discrimination and she had a political response ready.

Raed's father thought everyone should become an activist so that all schools and workforces become inclusive. There is a sense that inclusion means more a participation or opportunity of employment in the future for Raed's father; however, his support of activism demonstrates an awareness that inclusion should be a rupture to the present tracing of perceived discriminatory hiring practices, and the concept of inclusion can somehow map a new reterritorialization where autistic people are offered employment based on their interests:

Raed: We're worried about later on in the workforce, without an education of inclusion across all the schools and workplaces there just won't be inclusion and Raed won't be able to find a job as he's so fixated on the things that he enjoys, like creating his videos and playing games. Are there jobs in that? So inclusive education is very important for society, and all schools should teach and be inclusive so children with autism can be a part of society and not shut away. I think everyone should be an activist.

There is a recognition of the need for political action, a belief that the products of the present models should be resisted if they do not lead to productive outcomes, and

maybe even a tacit belief in the post-human. Raed's father wants a job for his son where he can pursue his interests in making videos and playing games, both activities which require the non-human force of computers to be assembled with the human force of creativity as a relational subjectivity. This post-human conception of human flourishing is linked to a need for an alternative future that would require resistance, activism, and political action.

When approaching the term inclusion, some of the parents had more difficulty than others due to it being a relatively new word for some parents. For Abdullah's father, he disagreed with the practices of labeling having been brought up himself in an education system that did not label SEN/D. The consequences of having a label attached to his child, a label he expressed a lack of understanding about, were experienced negatively until he associated acceptance with inclusion:

Abdullah: Now I'm not saying he has this Moderate Learning Difficulties, but he definitely does struggle with learning, and that school was quite challenging and pushed children a lot, which wouldn't suit him. So we asked our friends and then approached some schools. Most wouldn't consider him, but the ones that did we realized they all said they were inclusive. Now that's not a word you see a lot in Jordan, so we had to get a translation, and it seemed like the thing he needed as they'd take him.

Abdullah's father demonstrated how the colonial roots of linguistic dependence on English resulted in these loan words (a word from one language used in another) being utilized which had no meaning in the local language of Arabic. Terms like



Moderate Learning Disabilities and Inclusion had no meaning, suggesting Cutajar and Adjoe (2016) are correct to ascertain the need for new words in the Global South to reflect local contexts and understandings, rather than becoming dependent on Western derived knowledge and words. Abdullah's father felt disenfranchised by the discriminatory admission practices which rejected his son due to his medicalized label. Tanu (2016) is right to assert a more localized understanding of experiences labeled as SEN/D can result in more empowerment. Abdullah's experiences concerning his previous schooling, language development, and transition within the country could have been considered and common terms from the local culture could have been adopted to describe the experience, rather than international schools adopting language and practices from the Global North without considering the local context.

However, it is not just parents transitioning within the host country who struggle with the imported language. Ashley's mother narrated how difficult it is transitioning between schools due to their different systems, and their different understandings of the same words:

Ashley: Moving between systems has been difficult, you know as the British system just seems so different from the Canadian and American ones... Just understanding what different categories on the IEP mean is so confusing, like practical assistant or push-in support, I mean, aren't they just the same thing?

Ashley's mother shows how the meanings of these terms, and larger terms like inclusion and international, are in flux and form in relation to the parent's previous

experiences. This can result in differences of understanding about the same terms, which become deterritorialized as they are understood by different humans in different ways. There is a need for the localized understandings of key terms to be written down and shared, as well as using terms originating from the host culture and being sensitive to local understanding of terms so that parents can understand what a school or person means when they use a word like IEP or inclusion within the context of that school.

Despite the usage across international schools of shared terms like inclusion, it was clear from the parental narratives that the actual experiences of their children were highly variable in schools that labeled themselves. Raed's father detailed an account of Raed's kindergarten failing to make minor accommodations to the social structures within the school:

Raed: He particularly doesn't like loud noises, so he's very scared of balloons. I remember how another child was having a party and their parents bought in balloons, and rather than not blowing them up they just wouldn't let Raed join.

While first appearing trivial, the refusal to make a small modification (such as not blowing up balloons) demonstrates hostility towards removing social barriers to inclusion in a school setting labeled as inclusive. This reinforces the findings of Bajwa-Patel and Devecchi (2014) that inclusion often leads to experiences of physical, social, and psychological exclusion for the children labeled as different, rather than modifying the environment or adapting the social structures to match the

needs of the child. The event of the balloons demonstrates how the schools traced dominant practices associated with celebrating birthdays without considering how Raed's impairment requires new possibilities of celebration.

This is not to suggest all parents in all schools felt their children received exclusionary experiences at all times. There were many hopeful narratives where the children were described as being part of teams or making friends. Ashley's mother talked about constructing a science fair project where they created a solar system model as a family, in a school where:

Ashley: She felt very much at home there. So she never had any behavioral problems, she just couldn't keep up with the other kids and had to get taken out more and more.

During the narrative about the perceived inclusivity of project-based learning within an international school, the need for Ashley to be taken out in increasing amounts was mentioned. This was framed positively by Ashley's mother, however, the conflation of inclusion and exclusion within the same narrative demonstrates how inclusion has been deterritorialized by the parents and then reterritorialized to frame exclusionary practices as inclusion. This could account for the wide range of understandings of the term.

A common practice which parents reported as constituting part of the experience of raising an SEN/D child in international schooling was the need for expensive therapies. This had an impact on all the parents, even though it was the parents who transitioned within the country who typically had to pay the fees out of their economic

capital, whereas parents transitioning from outside were covered by embassies of the transnational corporations the parents worked for. Referring to her daughter's return to school after a year supporting her mother in Canada, Wadad's mother recounted how much therapy her international school required:

Wadad: They said we had to get the assessments and then the ABA person full time... So she went part-time, and I had to get her at midday and drive her across town and stay with her for her afternoon therapies which took so much time.

Her child was being excluded from half her school day, and required to undergo behavioral modification therapy for the half she was permitted to be inside the school. This prescription of therapies supports Greenstein's (2016) argument from the UK that SEN/D people are being subjugated to exclusion and violence through forced academic and behavioral management interventions to ape a socially approved normality. However, rather than the argument relating to the UK's practice, we can see it in this international school, and the connections it had to so many other parents' narratives suggest a common experience.

However, Pletser (2019) argues the therapies themselves lead to international school parents being priced out of inclusive international schools due to the premium charged. This was not evinced in any of the parental narratives, possibly due to the recruitment of parents from an elite international school where the parents were comparatively affluent compared to the average incomes, in receipt of full scholarships which covered SEN/D expenses, or receiving compensation from an

embassy or transnational employer. This highlights how the status and position of the parents may impact their perception and response to the costs of therapies, as the cost would likely have a bigger impact on less affluent parents.

However, the prescription and requirement of therapies still had an impact on the parents, due primarily to the practical considerations of locating, providing, and monitoring the therapies. Anne's parents who select schools without visiting the country detailed how difficult the process can be for families transitioning from outside of the host country:

Anne: That's been one of the most difficult things, as after you arrive, and you're setting up your routine while trying to see everything, you have to maintain these therapies which aren't at the same standard. We've been through a range of therapists now trying to find the same quality as Israel, but nothing yet. It's a shame there's no international review process or rating system, even internally, or examples of practice we could refer to as it'd make choosing a lot easier.

She is not criticizing the need for therapies, despite the quality being variable. This is similar to Wadad's mother, and the other parents, in that they were all positive about receiving these open-ended therapies across multiple years. The taxonomic system decried by Oliver (1996) of medicalization where disability requires these therapies for treatment was perceived mostly positively. However Anne's mother does perceive it somewhat critically, and her suggestions to improve practice for parents transitioning between countries by having a rating system, international review

process, and parental testimonies shared by international schools demonstrates a measure of affirmative resistance aimed at improving the present therapeutic system.

The taxonomic system Oliver identified of medicalization within SEN/D also required diagnosis and labeling, which were presented far less positively than the therapies.

The practice of labeling came under some criticism in part due to the process and the result.

Abdullah: We had to get this report written by some psychologist who didn't know Abdullah and just ran some tests, got him to draw some pictures, and decided he had this moderate learning difficulties... we showed the school the report, and then it was like they just gave up on him.

The distance between the therapist and Abdullah was noticed and remembered by his father, as well as the impersonal nature of the process and the resulting label. His father objected to the label however there was no scope as part of the diagnostic process for the voice of the parent to be meaningfully heard. The label was then perceived as diagnosing an intrinsic flaw in Abdullah's nature which the school had no responsibility to address, leading to increased responsibility for the parents. This narrative shows the inherent violence and oppression within the medical model, as argued by Skritic (1995). Labeling Abdullah's difference as deviance and then identifying him as needing correction which the school was unwilling to provide shows the failure of the international school to provide for all its students' learning needs. It compartmentalized Abdullah's deficiencies within the educational system

by labeling the flaw not with the schooling system or its disciplinary power, but as an individual deficiency within Abdullah, an SEN/D child. While it can be argued that labeling is a common SEN/D practice that legitimizes the exclusionary strategies utilized with those defined as different, and is opposed to inclusion (Nes, Demo, and lanes 2018), the reality of these inclusive international schools is that they are utilizing labeling within a set of practices labeled (perhaps paradoxically) as inclusive. This demonstrates again how SEN/D practices which are perhaps physically or socially exclusionary, are held by some international schools and parents to be inclusive practices that somehow support physical, social, or psychological inclusion.

With Mahmood, another child transitioning from within the country, he had to go to a globally Northern country to receive his medical diagnosis. This was due to a perceived superiority in diagnosis and labeling within the Global North by his father. However, his experiences made him question this:

Mahmood: Ultimately we had to go on a Google search and just go with the one which looked the best. We tried to help out as much as possible before the assessments by getting them in contact with the school. I don't know how much communication there was with the school... It was quite impersonal as we haven't ever gone back to the clinic or seen the person who diagnosed the dyslexia again, but maybe when Mahmood goes to the UK we can reach out and they'll be more involved.

There is an optimism that having the diagnosis from the Global North may one day provide benefits for Mahmood when he returns to the Global North. This positions the diagnostic procedures in the Global South as at a disadvantage or less legitimate than those from the North. This could be due to the recognition that the origin of these practices is from the Global North, making them somehow better despite noticing certain flaws and difficulties with the process. This ability of parents to seek diagnoses without requiring school approval (as Mahmood's father detailed how he tried to put the diagnostician in touch with the school but didn't know the result), could account for the increasing numbers of children being labeled in international schools within different SEN/D categories (ISC Research and Next Frontier Inclusion 2020). However, this may also be due to these SEN/D practices becoming more common internally within schools, or more available within the Global South generally. Still, the ability of Mahmood's father to seek and acquire a label, alongside the narratives from the other parents who all sought and acquired labels for their children, does support the idea from ISC Research and Next Frontier Inclusion (2020) that labeling is becoming a common practice within 'inclusive' international schools.

Both these parental narratives have highlighted the impersonal nature and short duration of the diagnostic procedures, as well as the lack of participation by the parents themselves. This opens the process up to concerns that by delineating SEN/D within the educational system it ignores social factors which lead to an increased risk of identification, such as race and class (Riddell and Carmichael 2019). However, unlike in the findings from Riddell and Carmichael's (2019) study, it is more likely that a higher class status would result in a medical diagnosis for



international school parents within the Global South due to the need to have it to access an inclusive international school (Pletser 2019).

The diagnostician and therapists are brought into a complex web of intensities with the parent and SEN/D child, with monetary remuneration associated with providing a medicalized label and long-term therapeutic support. This may raise concerns about the subjective nature of labeling and diagnosing differences within SEN/D categories, as the people diagnosing the needs have the motivation to do so.

In Abdullah's and Mahmood's cases, the diagnostic procedures were completed in a short time at the parents' convenience due to their sufficient economic capital.

Compare this with Edward, whose parents had him diagnosed twice, both through an international school in India and again through a state system within the USA. The difference was stark for his mother, who noted that it was almost instantaneous in India but took far longer in the USA:

Edward: (In India) We removed him from the school when he was externally excluded and home schooled him for 6 months. It was just after we got the diagnosis from an ed psych about ADHD, which was really quick when the school asked. However then we had to again get it confirmed in America when we went back for the summer. It was quite a long procedure.

So there is an apparent ease with obtaining medicalized diagnostic labels within inclusive international schools, and there is a common practice of framing this process as part of inclusion within international schools. This stands in opposition to the intentions of Oliver (1996) in pioneering inclusion within a social model but does

reflect the argument from Slee (2013) that the term inclusion is being used to promote SEN/D practices (2013). However the ease, and lack of contact or time, provide further concerns about the subjective nature of labeling and diagnosing differences within SEN/D categories in international schools. It was found the role of socio-economic background and race affect the medical label provided by diagnosticians in Scotland by Florian and Graham (2014), with white middle-class children more likely to be labeled with SEN/D terms like dyslexia or moderate learning difficulties, and lower-class children from minority ethnic backgrounds more likely to be labeled as having behavioral difficulties for the same observable behaviors. The subjective biases which diagnosticians bring to the process, and the complex intensities which impact the diagnostic event, could explain why Edward received a more socially acceptable ADHD label despite his parents fearing and wanting support for violent behavior which could (and did) lead to him being permanently excluded from school.

The international school parents were caught up in these wider forces of disablement which restricted their ability to participate and choose what is best for their children, forcing them to accept diagnostic procedures, medical labels, and prescribed therapies with no endpoints. Therefore they all experienced and accepted this disablement as part of their desire to be international.

### **5.3 Voice 3: ‘We support many understandings of disability and inclusive international schooling’**

*RQ1.3 What are the parents’ experiences of having their SEN/D children transition between international schools?*

The transitory nature of the school choice process, in that it provided a juncture for moving from one way of learning to what was frequently detailed as a different way of learning, was shared across the narratives. In telling the stories about how their children moved between schools, and their experiences both positive and negative with these movements, the amount of similarity between parents transitioning within a country and those transitioning from outside of the country was clear. Even this separation broke down at times, with Edward’s mother and Tiffany’s father both detailing narratives about transitioning within a host country due to exclusions or seeking a more inclusive experience.

Isabel’s mother conveys the sense of difference well, where her expectations in relation to the school had to be reformed both during and after the international transition to reterritorialize with the new forces.

Isabel: I never realized how different schools can be. Coming from the UK with the Ofsted and the local authorities, you just think most schools are good but since going international, you notice that anyone with a building will call themselves a school. You get random days off, you hear of fights with the owners, parents going in and protesting. It’s crazy.

She perceived a distinction between what was known previously within her globally Northern country and the expectations across international schools within the Global South. She narrated fears about experiences she had heard about, which contributed to her fear but were not based on her own experiences. This suggests her understanding of international schools has been influenced by other sources of information, such as potentially exaggerated tales of uncertainty and ineptitude, resulting in more importance being attached to researching as part of the school choice process to avoid a negative transition experience.

Isabel's mother portrays Isabel as being a typical third culture kid (Morales 2015), having schooled in multiple locations outside of her home country, yet still referencing her home country's educational system. This was seen with Tiffany's father as well, who was considering returning Tiffany to Australia due to the pandemic. This positioned the Australian educational system as a permanent backup to the transitory international schools:

Tiffany: Now with the pandemic and schools being shut we're thinking of moving back to Australia and getting her into a school that's working face to face as we don't know enough people here to be able to get help.

He references the lack of strong connections, like family and friends, as being a contributory factor to the decision. These external influences which he perceives as lacking in his current situation have contributed to his negative experience of transition and a continuing feeling of being deterritorialized due to the uncertainty of

schooling and living through a pandemic. The pandemic functioned as a rupture to their previous experiences of transition, where three had been very successful, and perhaps offers a force that required the father to map a possibility of returning to Australia early to seek a feeling of reterritorialization and safety.

However, this usage of third culture kids did break down when analyzing the majority of the narratives, as parents transitioning locally were affluent enough to have options abroad or to have multiple passports, which meant their children did not fit easily in a host national category.

For example, Mahmood's father detailed how he was considering schooling in the UK after receiving the dyslexia diagnosis from there. Schooling within the globally Northern country of the UK was positioned above the international school experience within the Global South, leading to considerations about whether his son would be better served to study where he received his SEN/D diagnosis:

Mahmood: We ended up visiting England in the summer and stayed in London for a week and Mahmood had to go to a clinic a few times for some testing, and we came out with a report saying he was dyslexic... We then seriously considered whether Mahmood would be better off schooling in London.

This showed how Hayden (2011) was right to argue that the separation between national and international is harder to maintain when clients from both sides are members of the global middle and upper classes. She called for international schools to be viewed as transnational spaces where all families are viewed as both national and international, and this was certainly supported by some parents transitioning

from outside and within the country. Anne's mother talked about the benefits of staying within an international school for Anne, as due to the high turnover of children she had been able to keep friends who have stayed:

Anne: I think it's helped that she's been here for three years now, as the children have mostly stayed the same. Some of her friends have come and gone, but that's actually worked well as the girls who are left have grown closer together.

Compared to Tiffany's experience, the length of duration within an international school does appear to be a factor. Tiffany had joined the school within the year and due to the deterritorializing force of the pandemic, had been unable to school physically with her peers. This had apparent implications on her father's ability to build a support network compared to Anne's mother, who had mapped a strong network of social connections for Anne and mobilized her social capital by recruiting friends within her professional network for her daughter. The uncertainty surrounding Tiffany's transition is far closer to Mahmood's experience than Anne's, which does position all these parents as being within a transnational space open to the forces of transition. It also offers support for Bailey's (2015) questioning of the third culture model's presumption of a monolithic host country experience. The parents from the host country had in some cases, like Mahmood's or Anas's fathers, spent very little time in the country having been abroad in recent years on business and pleasure trips. All the parents had experienced transitioning between schools inside and outside of the country as frequently as their supposedly expatriate peers, which

meant tracing the third culture series onto the narratives broke down and did not work.

Based on Meekosha's argument (2008), the concept of the 'third culture' represents a form of scholarly colonialism as research from within the Global South has to trace its lines and repeat its model despite it not being able to analyze the rich tapestry of narratives being produced from people experiencing international schooling within the Global South. This analysis functions as a response to Grech (2015), who wondered why there is a lack of theories originating from the Global South. The 'third culture' theory does not ignore the divide due to an indiscriminate focus on the Global North, however, it does assume the Global South and the host country as being inferior and stifles theories originating from the Global South by perpetuating a myth of the superiority of globally Northern citizens' experiences (Grech 2015). When considering facets of the various disability models, there was a range of support for different understandings and parts of the models. When it came to additional adult support, through interventions outside of the classroom or support within the classroom, there was unanimous positivity. Abdullah's father, who was against the labeling and diagnosis of his son's needs, said:

Abdullah: I think there should be extra classes for the children who fall behind or don't get a specific something so that it's not about labeling individual children, but it's about creating opportunities for all the children to catch up and succeed.

Extra classes and different goals are positioned within the idea of inclusive education, despite the likely need for a form of physical exclusion to implement these practical strategies. This was mirrored across the narratives, with SEN/D practices being perceived as inclusive. This reinforces the findings of McRuer (2006), who found that while there are cultural discourses that enforce the belief that able-bodies are better, practical classroom-based solutions will continue to be sought which may lead to more SEN/D practices being perceived as inclusive. McRuer was specific in pointing out that these SEN/D practices cannot be inclusive, whereas for Abdullah's father they are, suggesting the meaning and understanding of the term inclusive can be very different. More influentially, Slee (2013) argued the utilization of SEN/D strategies was a result of the pathologization of low-incident experiences as a form of medical disorder. Practices such as educating diagnosed learners in separate rooms for part of or all of their days, or within separate schools entirely, are argued to be inherently exclusionary and negative. However when the focus of an exclusionary practice, such as therapy or academic intervention, was designed or perceived to accelerate the child's progress, then all the parents were in favor of these practices as part of inclusive international schooling. Only Ashley's mother went further in support of SEN/D schools, as for the most part parents agreed with Caruso (2010) in positioning SEN/D facilities as negative due to concerns about social stigma and segregation. Ashley's mother narrated how her daughter received services from a discreet SEN/D section of a mainstream school in America alongside therapies, and then had a positive experience in Canada relating to enrollment in an SEN/D school:



Ashley: The separation and the support began on day one (In America)... She was always receiving some form of pull-out support in small groups for her literacy and maths... In Canada we were so excited that she could go to a school specifically for children with mental difficulties, it was a neurologically focused school, the first of its kind.

It was interesting to note the only parent who had had their child enrolled in a specific school for SEN/D children had a positive experience, but then she returned to mainstream international schooling due to a lack of availability for this type of SEN/D school in other countries. Ashley's mother noted how this particular school was 'neurologically focused' and was only for a particular type of SEN/D, which her daughter had. This gives some room for deterritorializing how SEN/D practices, including SEN/D schools, have been positioned within the social model as almost monolithic and exclusionary. Their variations in practice, the potential scope of the aims and objectives of interventions, and their ability to support social integration and provide a platform for more effective inclusion at a later point within international schools all suggest they may now exist within a complex multiplicity with 'inclusive' international schools. This multiplicity highlights that the exclusion which is argued by Slee (2009) to be inherent within these practices, may be a vital part of locally-derived conceptions of inclusion. There is a fundamental separation between the literal understanding of the terms 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' which grounded Oliver's (1996) demarcation of the medical and social models. However, the parental narratives reveal a voice with a more fluid understanding which demonstrates the

interdependent nature of these contradictory concepts. Mahmood's father struggles with this contradiction, recognizing the benefits and negatives:

Mahmood: We hired a support assistant full time to stay with him in school and help him with the reading. The difficulty was that Mahmood was now having to work a lot more in their 1-2-1 additional education needs department. That meant Mahmood was getting even more separated from his peers, despite him enjoying the support. Throughout the holidays, the support kept up and Mahmood made some improvements with reading and spelling, but he can still shut down and refuse to work.

There is a sense that the support is valued but questioned during school time as it requires some time away from the mainstream class, however when the same practice is used during leisure hours then it is wholly beneficial. Mahmood also enjoys the support and being educated away from his peers, which can be interpreted in a Foucaultian (1977) sense as the disciplinary powers having colonized the subject to reinforce their physical, social, or psychological exclusion by enjoying it. However, it can equally be interpreted in a post-human way as a child finding a practice labeled as exclusionary enjoyable and affirming this alternative to his regular schooling as a way to promote his flourishing and ability to access the wider society. This requires viewing the practice not as inherently inclusive or exclusive, but beyond this binary opposition.

Wadad's mother was very clear in using a separation between SEN/D and inclusion to promote a mainstream placement for her child, but for her, the opportunity for her

daughter to participate and become within a mainstream classroom with adult support was inclusive education.

Wadad: She loves going to a sensory room to play rather than work, but if you're strict then she learns well... With Wadad, inclusive education means she can get her adult support, she can be in the classroom, and she can learn what the other kids are learning.

There is a sense that Wadad's mother has outlined the existence of many children experiencing an inclusive program, being included physically without a focus on social or psychological inclusion (Bajwa-Patel and Devecchi 2014). However, unlike the participants in Bajwa-Patel and Devecchi's study (2014), Wadad's mother believes this is an inclusive education for her daughter, or at least it is enough inclusion. There is a real conflation of inclusive education and mainstream classrooms, despite her daughter enjoying and perhaps needing to receive access to a sensory room. Wadad's mother articulates a view of mainstream inclusion within the classroom which deterritorialized itself, as the focus on the physical appears to contradict the view of inclusion as a social and psychological experience. Access to an external environment comes across as being potentially better for helping Wadad be included at a social and psychological level and is only disregarded by her mother as she is tracing an understanding of inclusion which relies on conflating being in the mainstream with inclusive education. A more fluid understanding of inclusion and exclusion would create new possibilities for supporting Wadad's impairment.

Specifically focused on international school's inclusive provision, Pletser (2019, 209) argued on-campus special education and additional funding charged to parents challenges the ability of an international school to call itself inclusive. However, the research did not present the voices of any parents to see whether they viewed these practices as barriers to inclusive education. Wadad's mother was seen to be quite opposed in her understanding of SEN/D placements, whereas Mahmood's was more nuanced in recognizing the benefits and detriments. Isabel's mother was clear in summing this up as being opposed to SEN/D schools which group all children with labels together into one classroom, however being in favor of restricting admissions to preserve a perceived inclusive educational experience:

Isabel: We have big expectations, and we make her work every night...

Inclusion is about that, helping children to work their hardest. Not every child should be included in a school, but I think the school needs to choose the ones they can make great... I don't think Isabel should have to be in some SEN class with kids who have SEN labels, as they're all completely different.

Again we see the apparent contradiction between promoting inclusion while recognizing the benefits of an exclusionary practice, in this case, restrictive entry requirements. Despite being on the negative end of this sometimes exclusionary practice, she affirms this practice as did many of the parents earlier. This could be a simple case of being conditioned to affirm a disciplinary power, however, she appears to have a genuine concern to want the best for her daughter and to provide as much investment as possible to maximize her returns. Her belief in exclusion as

promoting inclusion comes down to promoting her daughter's life chances and ability to be (presumably) included in the workforce. This desire for a future return (or a future inclusion) has led to her accepting the short-term unhappiness of her daughter in having to work nightly, requiring her daughter to work her hardest at all times, and promoting the benefits of restrictive entry requirements. Therefore unlike the findings of Pletser (2019), it appears there are international school parents who do not feel certain practices typically considered exclusionary are if they aid the long-term ability of their child to be included within the future workplace.

There is certainly a sense that inclusion as a term is far more complex and used in a much larger variety of ways by the parents than even they recognize. Contrary to the findings of Timberlake (2018), there did not seem to be a focus on saving money by placing children in inclusive mainstream international schools. This may be due to Timberlake (2018) focusing on state education within globally Northern countries so it has less applicability within either the private sector or the international schooling sector. However it may also be due to specialist schooling costing less than mainstream international schools, but the stigma of sending a child there and paying fewer fees meant it was advantageous to build social capital by having a child attend a more expensive fee-paying school with additional charges for inclusive services which were typical across all the parental experiences of international schools.

As with there being many different understandings of what constitutes an inclusive education within the parental narratives, so too did their narratives reveal a myriad of understandings from the schools themselves.

Abdullah: In Jordan, inclusive education can mean whatever the school says it means, but we looked at many inclusive schools which would put a disabled child in a picture, but when you go there you realize that they separate the children in special rooms and classes. That's inclusive, but it's not the inclusion Abdullah needs. He needs to be with his peers so he can learn the skills he'll need for the business.

Abdullah's father's account of school choice reveals both a personal belief that inclusion is about personalization, while contradicting this by saying a school that has special rooms is inclusive, but not the type of inclusion his son needs. He seems to recognize that inclusion is a problematic term with multiple understandings by schools that contradict his own, while believing his understanding of the term is correct. There is again a focus on the future, a future business role his son needs to perform, and inclusive education adopts a performative role in enabling this virtual future. This more future-focused conception of inclusive education can perhaps be said to reveal the forces of a neoliberal policy, in that it is focused on preparing children and judging their worth on their ability to participate in a future employment market.

Yet beyond this trend, there was a plurality in the parental beliefs about what constitutes an inclusive education. Tiffany's parents believed it is about character education and promoting a more democratic plurality of voices like Young (2000):

Tiffany: They needed catch-up programs, parental classes, interventions which they just didn't have or provide. But one thing I do believe is that inclusive

education is about including everyone, and that means all races, genders, and needs. It's more than just helping Tiffany to read, as a school is an important place to teach family values.

However they also link the value-driven understanding to the practical supports they believe a school needs to put in place to support their daughter, so it is difficult to argue this represents a singular model for understanding inclusion. With Ashley's mother, she highlighted the intersection with race and concerns relating to diversity as part of understanding inclusion:

Ashley: When it comes to inclusive education, for us that means a racially-sensitive curriculum and support in terms of ensuring the diversity of the learning body and the community comes through... So inclusion is about her equal participation, her ability to access the systems which are so racist and trying to disempower all black people.

There is a recognition that within an international school setting a focus on the curriculum is important, and the forces of racial identity intersect with the disability theory to provide a wider view of inclusion as democratic participation within the international schools and the wider society. This resistance to viewing inclusion through solely a disability model perhaps offers a hopeful alternative to the predominant disability models within the field, by showing the value of Gabel and Peters' (2004) resistance model. Rather than focusing on tracing a series by using an understanding of inclusion from either the medical or social model, Ashley's

mother, and in a way all these parents, show they have mapped new possibilities for understanding the terms 'inclusion', 'exclusion' and 'inclusive education' in relation to their child's impairments and contexts across cultures. This shows the value of Messiou's (2017) critique of disability models which rely on differentiating a minority before including (or excluding) them and his preference for a culture that recognizes the inherent difference of every citizen. However, he argues that the continuing conflation of inclusive education and SEN/D practices within predominantly neoliberal education systems is due to this differentiation. Some of the parents in this study rejected the labels their child had been given or did not value them due to the diagnostic process or their subjective nature. However these parents, despite disliking the differentiation, still promoted and expressed the benefits of conflating inclusive education with SEN/D practices. This suggests SEN/D practices are believed to be inclusive by parents for reasons beyond their child being differentiated and labeled as SEN/D.

Therefore singular models of disability, when traced onto the parents' narratives, did not work to provide an understanding of how they positioned inclusion. There was too much resistance to a singular model of disability, and instead, a high degree of fluidity, contradiction, and idiosyncrasies as each parent presented and represented their understandings of inclusion across narratives of transitioning between international schools.

Another reason why parents resisted presenting inclusion as inherently positive was due to negative experiences with transitions and schools. When Raed moved from a Primary international school to a Secondary one, his parents experienced hostility when questioning the expanded use of small group support settings:



Raed: Maybe it was secondary, with all the lesson changes and different teachers, but he just wasn't ready for it and it all started to go wrong. They treated us so poorly, honestly like dirt, when we complained about Raed not being in the mainstream.

The narrative suggests Raed's experiences of being within his first 'inclusive' secondary school were poor due to a difficult transition between the schools. The practices being utilized the parents did not fully understand, and they felt Raed struggled due to the many changes which occurred with the transition. Similarly, after being excluded from a school due to his additional needs, Edward's mother recounted how negative she found the support procedures after Edward was diagnosed with ADHD:

Edward: It's such a shame that the country is not willing to support him just because of this ADHD label. I mean what does it even mean to have ADHD, it seems so many children have it these days... so this time when choosing an international school we had to be more selective with fewer options.

The experiences of receiving poor support and having a negative experience within an 'inclusive' international school get quickly linked to restricted school choices, which suggests these forces are closely linked. She also questions the medical label, or at least the significance of it, due to a perceived commonality with medicalized diagnoses and children making it a more common or normal occurrence to have a

medicalized label. This questions the medical model as labeling requires diagnosing differences as deficiencies outside of a normal distribution, whereas the commonality of this particular SEN/D label means the process of labeling can be questioned as the deviant experience is perceived as within a normal distribution of human experiences (Oliver 1996). However, it also questions the social model as the need is not believed to be a result of societal barriers, as Edward is expected to fully access the future society. His mother recruits the benefits from the medical and social models to advance his education and future access, while complaining about the negative consequences of this strategy to support Edward's impairment (Shakespeare 2009).

Across the parental narratives, there is mostly a presumed superiority of an inclusive mainstream schooling choice over choosing a specialist setting. However, within the international schools, there is little stigma attached to SEN/D practices and any other educational practices which are perceived as enhancing the future employability of their child. Gabel and Peters (2004) appear right to argue that it is difficult to find one model which can accommodate the eclecticism of this experience while providing a singular mode for praxis. This has led to high variability in practice experienced when transitioning between international schools, and both negative and positive experiences for the parents.

#### **5.4 Voice 4: ‘We want international schooling to prepare our children for their transnational futures’**

*RQ2: How can international schools improve SEN/D children’s parents’ experiences of inclusive education?*

Echoing throughout the voices so far has been a desire from the parents for their children to be ready for future study and employment, typically within transnational corporations or globally Northern educational institutions. This desire manifested itself explicitly against several topics throughout the transcripts.

One of these topics was the future workforce, with both parents transitioning from outside of the country and inside positioning their children in relation to their future employment opportunities. This was clear in Abdullah’s case, whose father referred to his education as an investment:

Abdullah: So we wanted him to be able to learn English so he could explore the world beyond the Middle East and make connections and grow the business when he’s a part of it. He’s an investment, this schooling is an investment.

His father was explicit in using business terms to describe his son’s education, and building a web of forces that included business terms and a focus on the outcomes which can aid his son’s future employment. International schooling was viewed as a serious issue for the Global South for their ability to funnel the most educated children into transnational corporations where their capital would be exchanged

outside of the Global South by Brown and Lauder (2011). This is seen as perpetuating the global inequalities of neoliberal capitalism. However Abdullah's father, by owning a transnational corporation outright, can view his son's future employment both as part of the Global South he originates from and a transnational entity requiring fluent English. Brown and Lauder's (2011) concerns arise from a belief that all transnational corporations funnel profit to the Global North, and transnational workers spend the majority of their remuneration within the Global North. However, this would be an oversimplification if corporations from the Global South can be considered transnational. Contrary to Brown and Lauder (2011), children from home countries within the Global South attending international schools who go on to work within transnational corporations may not perpetuate the inequality of capital by moving to the Global North or settling in the Global North. More research is required on parental expectations of international school students, and whether the intention is for the children who attend international schools to return any remuneration to their home country. Isabel's mother narrated a similar expectation for her daughter, only it was to return to her home country for work after she finishes attending international schools abroad.

Isabel: We have to get her working if she's going to get a good job back in England... We do try to find a school with the same values and work ethic. We want Isabel to believe work is important and to keep trying harder to overcome her dyslexia... I think coming from England, there is a much bigger range of

schools than I realized, and a guide would be really helpful and a network of other parents and their experiences.

Isabel's mother was very focused on her daughter returning to England for employment, despite herself working abroad in multiple countries. She recognizes that her own assembled self has changed across countries, and believes parental guides to the international school process and parental networks in countries would help with school choice and transition. This school choice was viewed as positive if it led to her daughter working harder, which was perceived as improving her future employment. Therefore the international schooling experience was framed in relation to her daughter's future employment.

This focus on future employment shows these international school parents do not believe their child is contributing to society through providing an employment opportunity for paraprofessionals. Tarry and Cox (2014) found that the use of paraprofessionals is widespread in international schools, which was supported through parental narratives. However, the children were not valued for providing this employment opportunity, which may be a conclusion requiring more staff-focused data. For example, Anne's mother narrated how much she valued her child's shadow teacher:

Anne: We had to keep going into the school to explain that she needed fixed times as otherwise, she struggled to regulate... We'd get calls that she wasn't following instructions and that she wouldn't learn in the afternoons or she was

biting other children. Eventually, we realized the only answer was to have a shadow teacher.

Here the shadow teacher was a vital strategy to overcome a range of difficult situations. However, Anne is not valued more or less for requiring the support and providing an employment opportunity. This narrative also shows the difficulties with inclusion when a school is not willing to remove socially constructed barriers, and perhaps highlights the concern of Reindal (2016) that key documents like the Salamanca Statement do not detail how inclusion should be conducted in schools. So while the parents were focused on future employment opportunities for their children, they demonstrated a range of different understandings of the global workforce. Contrary to Abdullah and Isabel, Anas's father traced an understanding of a future workplace that was transnational and based on globally Northern values:

Anas: He did well in his Maths, and he's very smart, so we only looked to move him to develop his English. It's for the future, as he'll need English if he's going to work abroad or do anything. You see, especially with Aspergers, if he's going to work it'll need to be for an inclusive employer and that'll mean an international company. The international schools are great at preparing children for these international companies where there is more acceptance and he'll be able to find somewhere to work and use his skills in Maths.

To try to obtain a future inclusion in an international company, Anas's father wanted his son to learn English and attend an international school. This reinforces the idea

that international schools enhance social capital and are believed by parents to improve employment opportunities. However, the goal of transitioning schools was to improve his son's future employment, as with Isabel's mother moving her school in India. When transitioning between countries, it was more typical that this was due to the parent's employment moving to another country. Therefore the parents' narratives reveal that the reason for transitioning to international schools was tightly related to enhancing the child's future employment or fulfilling demands of the parent's current employment, supporting the findings of Hayden's research into non-SEN/D international school parents (2011). This is very different from the parents in Lilley's study (2015b). There the parents were motivated to move children within Australia due to a perceived benefit to the child's immediate education, often framed as enhancing social inclusion. This discrepancy could be due to Lilley's focus specifically on mothers of autistic students with a low level of functioning and may show a difference in the rationale for moving children between international school parents of SEN/D children and non-international school parents.

One strategy to prepare their children for transnationalism mentioned earlier was enrolment in international schools. However, this enrollment frequently required agreeing to hire or pay additional costs for an adult assistant to pass the selective admissions processes, or for the child to attend academic catch-up programs and interventions. For some parents, the desire to access a program delivered outside of the classroom designed to catch the child up with the class, or to have a support assistant assigned to their child within and outside of the classroom, is a reason to choose schools labeled as inclusive. These traditionally SEN/D practices were

perceived as an intrinsic part of an international school being inclusive for their children:

Tiffany: Getting the label was the hard part and we only got it the last time we were back in Australia. But we don't focus on the label, but we do look at the support section of the website and make sure they have programs for catch-up and advanced placement.

Another desirable factor was the option to have therapies delivered within the school, which was also seen as part of an inclusive international school:

Wadad: She's been receiving DBT, after having CBT, and that's helping. Or at least, it was when she was having it every day before the pandemic with her OT and her SLT. She does have it all! It's better now that she can receive some of the services within the school.

However, despite the labeling of a school as inclusive, or its ability to provide the traditional SEN/D services of support assistants, academic catch-up programs, and therapies, it was argued by Bajwa-Patel and Devecchi (2014) that their participants' everyday experience was not one of inclusion. This is despite the participants in their study having had access to these services within schools labeled 'inclusive' in England. They argued a complex web of intensities involving psychological, social, and physical forces manifests itself around a child's experience, so that they may feel excluded because of or with these common services. This finding was mirrored



across the parental narratives, who were positive about 'inclusivity' and their own definitions of inclusive education, but also told tales concerning considerable exclusion and violence experienced within 'inclusive' international schools which had these SEN/D support services. This indicates that while parents perceive these services as inclusive despite them requiring a degree of exclusion to perform. It also indicates that parents desire these SEN/D services within 'inclusive' international schools, even though they have experienced negative consequences for inclusion due in part to them. For example, despite having experienced tremendous exclusion due to the services, Mahmood's father still desires his son to receive these SEN/D services within an 'inclusive' international school:

Mahmood: Using a laptop in class when his friends weren't allowed to made him look different. I guess if international schools wanted to improve their inclusive education, they could focus on sharing with parents what is going on and helps children see it as normal as he needs it.

One of the indicated support services was for Mahmood to integrate his learning and transform it using a machine interface. However, this post-human solution to help him overcome his disability led to differentiation and social exclusion from his peers due to perceived deviance. This indicates that many if not all the desired 'inclusive' services which may be provided by international schools, be it classroom modifications, catch-up programs, adult assistants, or diagnostic labeling, can lead to or require a degree of exclusion. It would appear that the parents in this study, in their desire for these services which are positioned as 'inclusive', accept the

contradiction that inclusion for their children within international schools requires a degree of exclusion.

Another strategy employed by the 'inclusive' international schools narrated by many of the parents was that their children were included within entrance testing and standardized testing or curriculums. This was a double-edged sword, as it gave them access to a typical experience while sometimes forcing the children into a negative exclusionary experience. Take for example Anne's admission to one school:

Anne: Even here in Amman, she still had to do entrance testing which she couldn't do, which was a waste of everyone's time. If a school wants to have children with needs, they need to realize some kids have a need which means they can't do a test! Yeah in her most recent ones, she just threw a tantrum.

The ineffectual nature of entrance testing for children already known to have cognitive weaknesses was clear, as well as the sense that this experience is repeated across schools as they trace a standard entrance procedure for these children. This questions whether a more 'inclusive' approach is to modify the entrance procedures, or to have all students sit the same examination. The easiest approach would be to remove this socially constructed barrier to improve the children's experience of inclusion, contradicting Felder (2018) who concluded removing socially constructed barriers to inclusion was difficult for children with intellectual difficulties like Anne. It would appear some socially constructed barriers that are commonly experienced across international schools may be very easy to remove. However while this would improve the experience of the admissions

procedures, it does not demonstrate that removing socially constructed barriers within the international schooling experience inside the classroom is possible.

Raed's father detailed some positive experiences of his son being included within examinations and the classroom:

Raed: He enjoys his BTECs and his coursework. He works hard on it and it's good to see him doing well. He doesn't like exams, and the school has been accommodating to get him his room, and support assistants he knows to work with him to keep him calm. He's been in the school play, mostly doing the lights but also singing on stage, and he's enjoyed his drama IGCSE. His American accent in Streetcar was hilarious, and his mother enjoyed seeing him on stage.

His father certainly believes he is experiencing an inclusive education due to his son's participation in the external IGCSE examinations, and the choice of a coursework option that all children can take meant his son could choose a route that fit him. De Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert (2011) argued that it was impossible to include children by removing socially constructed barriers, however, Raed's father narrated a scenario where his son's inclusion was valuable to the school (as his exam results were external) and curriculum decisions which affected all children enabled his son to be included in a wider range of subjects than if they had all been examination based. This suggests that whole-school curriculum choices can perpetuate and alleviate socially constructed barriers to inclusion, and 'inclusive' international schools need to ensure their curriculum decisions are taken with SEN/D children in mind. Graham (2016) was optimistic that the national schools in New South Wales

were able to greatly improve their efforts to include SEN/D children in the mainstream after deciding to include their standardized exam results within league rankings. One of his conclusions was that increasing the value of the results created a reason for schools to seek to improve these results. This is supported by Raed's father's narrative, as Raed received a range of accommodation to support his ability to take the external test due to its importance and value to the school. This external examination, and Raed's participation within it, appear to support efforts for his overall inclusion. However, with Anne's experience of entrance assessments which are only used internally, her participation was not a positive experience and the school did not even provide her usual modifications in the form of an adult assistant as the testing outcome was already known and not valued. The hypothesis from Nes, Demo, and Janes (2018) was that globally Northern countries are required to publish their attainment results within a neoliberal market of school choice and competition adopts SEN/D practices as part of their inclusive pedagogies. These include push-in and pull-out support models and labeling of additional needs among others, but they are only utilized if they are believed to support external test-taking. This is due to the external test results being how the school is valued externally. It is interesting to note that while international schools are typically not required to publish their attainment data, they were still narrated as being engaged in adopting the same SEN/D practices, framing them as 'inclusive,' and including children in external (and internal) assessments. As they are free of the influences of the neoliberal marketplace in relation to competitive league tables which require the publication of attainment results, there is real scope for international schools to think affirmatively and produce alternatives beyond the inclusion/exclusion binary for the current

examination model. Just because external examinations were positioned as inclusive whereas internal examinations were positioned as exclusive, does not mean that either is better. If anything, this could provide evidence for the need to move beyond this binary opposition, as inclusion requires and entails exclusion to be practical. As long as the merits of a strategy are judged by the extent to which it can be labeled as inclusive or exclusive, its ability to help an individual's flourishing within the wider society is not being considered, nor are productive alternatives that need to be mapped. Therefore tracing the binary opposition between inclusion/exclusion inherent within the medical and social models limits a school's ability to consider disability critically and create political action which can aid the individual to map their own productive future.

This study utilized a range of parents whose children had transitioned either within the country or from abroad. One factor which limited the study was that the international school it utilized for recruitment, despite offering a range of scholarships, cost more than many international schools in the local area. Tanu (2016) found that despite traditionally being associated with a transnational elite, schools labeled as international which operate with a degree of autonomy outside of locally-derived concepts of curricular are increasingly becoming a schooling option that is accessible to a large number of globally Southern denizens. This may indeed be true, however, the globally Southern denizens in this study were all working for transnational corporations, had established their own transnational corporations, or had acquired dual nationality. This does question the distinction in Tanu's work between transnationality and globally Southern denizens, as in this study, there was a lot of overlap with many participants belonging to both categories. This highlights

how complex transnationality can be, and a need to resist a simple portrayal of transnationality as inherently evil or as against the interests of globally Southern nations and their people.

International schools were an intrinsic part of transnationalism, which offers some support for Brown and Lauder's (2011) argument that international schools are transnational spaces chosen by the global elite to educate their children outside of the host countries' educational systems. However it does not appear that international schooling is the preserve of a global elite, as the participants with the least tales of wealth were often the parents who transitioned from outside of the country, and originally came from a globally Northern country. Many of these parents would not have been able to afford school fees and relied upon companies and organizations to meet the costs. The diversity of wealth within the transnational parents indicates that the term 'elite' is out of date, and rather transnational people may reflect a broad spectrum of people with a wide variation in abilities to mobilize capital on their children's behalf.

Edward: You are expected to make a choice to move or not, you know as in to receive better pay or to stay and not receive the benefits but be able to live a normal life. I know a lot of people are doing it temporarily to improve their job chances at home.

Edward's mother reflects this diversity, and while she may be privileged in relation to the median income of the globally Southern countries she has lived within, her experience of compromises and her friends' experiences of temporarily living abroad

to improve their employment prospects indicates the precarious nature of transnational employment. Far from feeling elite or privileged, the requirement to transition between countries for her employment demonstrates the more neoliberal need to sacrifice her 'normal life' to satisfy her economic needs.

Yet overall the parents wanted their children prepared for a transnational future of education and employment in countries beyond where the international schools were located, or across multiple countries. This desire for internationalism had led to parents having their child's SEN/D label diagnosed as a strategy believed to improve their future employment prospects by increasing their educational outcomes or performatively demonstrating a globally Northern practice through the labeling.

Raed: We thought it best to get a diagnosis to prepare schools and universities, I mean, it will cost more but he'll get more help to find work with an inclusive employer later on, or we'll help him set himself up as a doctor or engineer like his brother.

Despite the consequences in limiting school choice, the short-term disadvantages for the international school parents were believed to be outweighed by long-term benefits for future inclusive opportunities (which may be when they return to a home country's educational system, apply to a globally Northern higher education institution, or employment within a transnational or globally Northern country). This indicated the diagnostic and support practices within international schools had formed a complex web of intensities with both the concepts of inclusion and exclusion, and the wider idea of transnational internationalism. The internationalism

of the international schools was reported as interwoven with ideas of neoliberalism, privilege, and eurocentrism as Tanu (2017) had argued. The parents certainly believed they had made school choices for their SEN/D children which prepared them for the future and were willing to transition to another international school within the country when they felt they had made a poor choice for their child's future:

Mahmood: We were originally at YYY which was a great school when Mahmood was younger. They kept us in the loop on things, my father is on the board there, and I went there as a child. So we had a lot of strong ties to it. However my brother took his kids and moved to XXX, so that's what made me start thinking that maybe there were other ways of doing things to improve Mahmood's chances, and their way wasn't the best way to help Mahmood succeed in the future.

Despite strong historical links to an international school, Mahmood's father moved his son from the school he had gone to for a perceived benefit to his future employability. This highlighted an idea across the narratives of the parents who transitioned within the country, that some of the international schools in their narratives they had been a part of for a long time. The international schools were perceived as reinforcing the parents' class status while schooling in the Global South as Brown and Lauder (2011) argued, so it was impossible to escape how the forces of privilege and capital assembled with the concept of transnational internationalism. There were benefits perceived concerning social and economic status in sending their children to a specific school, which further limited the school choice. However,



despite these benefits, the parents of SEN/D children were willing to move their children to another school in another country or part of the country (as long as the school at least maintained or enhanced the parent's current social or economic status) if that school was perceived as improving their SEN/D child's future educational and employability opportunities. This focus on moving outside or away from the host countries, as being a transient member of the local community but a more permanent member of an international community, revealed the wider idea that the local settings were parochial backgrounds for performing the transnational internationalism which was conflated with ideas that international schools offer a 'western culture' (Tanu 2016, 431). However, this performance was not just through the recruitment of expatriate staff from the Global North, the speaking of English, or the western curriculums offered which were ideas identified by Tanu (2016). An integral part of the performance of transnational internationalism for the parents was the concept of 'inclusion' and the requirements of an 'inclusive' school to offer a range of traditional SEN/D services alongside the parents' understandings of inclusion. These understandings of inclusion intersected with a wide range of ideas, such as racial diversity, physical placement within mainstream classes, a feeling of belonging ETC. However, despite the variation in the understandings of what inclusion is and what an inclusive education entails, the constant paradox revealed was that all the approaches towards inclusion required a degree of exclusion. This exclusion which may have been within admissions procedures, a transition between schools, or experiences within the schools, was contradictorily presented across the narratives as part of an inclusive experience.

Part of the parents' belief that inclusion was a positive force was due to its perceived relationship to globally Northern educational pedagogies (labeled as international). The concept of 'inclusion' was bound up as a force within a complex assemblage of transnational internationalism. This revealed a bias among the parents in the Global South towards the educational practices produced in the Global North, similar to the bias within research detailed by Cutajar (2009). 'Inclusion' appeared to be an educational ideology that functioned as one tool utilized to maintain the Global Northern hegemony through positioning an international education based on and connected to the Global North as intrinsically superior to local forms of education.

## **Chapter 6 Conclusion**

In bringing together for the first time the disparate fields of research into international schools, school choice, and inclusive education, an original contribution to knowledge is provided. This contribution is an understanding of both how parents of SEN/D children experience inclusive education in international schools, and how international schools can improve. However this contribution still requires conclusions to be drawn.

There are many conclusions that can be drawn from the narrative data as analyzed, and many more conclusions which could be drawn if it were analyzed in different ways. The rhizomatic research practices mean that every re-reading of this data, even by you as the reader, brings a new layer of meaning as you engage with and construct your own meanings from and with the data. However, as you trace your understandings onto this data whilst you follow my lines of segmentation, no doubt new ideas and ways of understanding took flight and deterritorialized the narrative territory I have constructed through my presentation of the analyzed results. A conclusion could be that a Deleuzian approach to narrative research is a successful tool for researchers, as it enables the research to continue and the analysis to deepen every time it is read rather than finishing with the researcher.

To focus on my original contribution within this original field, I chose to loosely structure my analysis around the research questions and sub-questions. The first voice speaks to the past, whilst the second and third voices speak to the present, and all three of these voices are linked to sub-questions relating to how parents of SEN/D children experience international schooling. The fourth voice speaks about

the future, and is linked to my second research question about how international schools can improve. However, this future was not the requirement of death for the lives of SEN/D people to have meaning, as Fritsch interpreted in her parental narrative (2016). Instead it was an optimistic conclusion that the future was hopeful for all the participants, and a transnational internationalism was positioned as offering hope of better access, less discrimination, and more opportunities.

International schooling, as a conduit for this perceived transnationalism, was viewed positively despite any negative experiences. Inclusion and inclusive education, in so far as they are connected to the transnational workplace of the future, were viewed positively despite any negative experiences. Similar too with the school choice processes, where discrimination was quite often experienced. This discrimination conversely was viewed fairly positively, in so far as it was connected to the transnational workplace of the future. Therefore I think a suitable conclusion would be that globally Northern educational practices as seen within international schooling are positioned favorably by parents of SEN/D children because they are believed to relate to a better future.

Part of my original contribution to knowledge was the second research question focussing on how international schools can improve the inclusive education for parents. For the international schools that seek to improve the experiences of parents with SEN/D children, I can suggest they are honest in their advertising and clearly define their understanding of inclusion in a form accessible by parents within and outside of the country. There is a need for a transparent application process and a publication of the reasons for rejections and acceptance. The production and distribution of policies related to SEN/D and inclusion generally was viewed

positively, as well as making inspection reports available online. In relation to therapies, having a clear rating system and system to share reviews would give parents more options before they join a school. Accreditations were used to inform decision making, however not nearly as much grapevine knowledge. Many of the parents valued making connections with other parents of SEN/D children, and while here many had their own networks to draw upon, monitoring and connecting future parents to current parents would only have improved their experiences.

This research opens up an interesting avenue of further research, namely whether international schooling offers better access to employment in transnational corporations for SEN/D children and whether these corporations offer a better experience for SEN/D people.

An obvious limitation of this research where it is rightly open to criticism is in its lack of engagement with the children who have SEN/D labels. This approach was not taken due to many practical research considerations such as time and word count, however I feel it is essential to recognize that this piece of research is poorer for not including their voices. I would have liked to have asked them how they feel about moving between schools, making new friends, navigating new support systems, however this will have to wait for future research and future researchers.

There is a need for more research within this intersection between international schooling, school choice, and inclusive education to explore further how these three forces foster and reify normativity, ableness, and transnational internationalism. However this piece of research has tried to bring these concepts together for the first time in order to make an original contribution. Their influence over the parents of SEN/D children in international schools needs to be highlighted, and this piece of

research goes part of the way to addressing the gap in the literature highlighted by Pletser (2019). It is also worth noting that in the school choice literature relating to SEN/D parents, Byrne's (2013) influential review which highlighted seven factors on which parents make their choices did not include either normativity or future employment which both came to the fore in this analysis. This suggests there is a need to view parents of SEN/D children making a choice of international schools as their own group in future research, as they have their own distinct priorities when making decisions regarding school choice.

The results avoided using the third-culture concept due to how little it could apply within an international school where many of the 'local' children held international passports acquired due to their parents' often sizable social and economic capital. The use of transitioning as the distinctive trait, and parents being grouped based on in-country or between country transitioning, held up well for the analysis and provided a surprisingly useful rigour for understanding and presenting the different narratives. This approach should be considered in future research within international schools.

This piece of research has tried to live up to the six goals of CDS research argued for by Goodley et al. (2020). However despite going some way towards five of the goals, the third goal proved challenging as it was to promote the socially constructed nature of disability and education. I preferred to give the participant's words and interpretations as much authority as possible, which meant it was unable to promote a view of disability or education which the participants themselves did not position themselves within. In this case, the third voice shows they were in a very complex relationship with this goal, at times promoting and at times denigrating the ideas. I

would, however, argue that this approach to operationalizing CDS within narrative research actually demonstrates the sixth goal of CDS as it ensures it does not lose its criticality. Rather than tracing and promoting one understanding of SEN/D, this research retains its criticality by presenting the participants' narratives in their complexity and contradictions - even if they do at times disagree with the goals of CDS research.

One of the main criticisms of CDS noted in the theoretical framework section was that CDS ignores the reality of impairment by rooting itself in post-structuralist thinkers like Deleuze who rely on analyzing language. I was fairly dismissive of this criticism in that section, however having tried to operationalize CDS as a theoretical framework, I now think Shakespeare (2014) is making a very important point. In trying to analyze and understand experiences through the participants' narratives, there was an inevitable loss of sense which could not be written down in words. Part of this sense was the reality of living with and around impairment, an experience that could not always be successfully articulated. However, I feel that utilizing both Deleuze and CDS felt like a genuine attempt to try and record this sense while recognizing that the reality of impairment represented a deterritorializing force to whatever understandings could be constructed. Therefore this criticism highlights the need to view this research rhizomatically, as still open to being reinterpreted by you (the reader). Thus: for the reader whose experiences is influenced by their (or their child's) impairments; for the reader who is trying to understand their own school choice process; for the reader who is trying to figure out how to resist globally northern ideologies; this research piece is always open for you to deterritorialize and reterritorialize in any way that may help you achieve your ends.





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## **Appendix A: Considerations for Selection**

- 1) Eager to share narratives about Inclusion?
- 2) Ability to extend narratives?
- 3) Strong views on Inclusion ever expressed?
- 4) Strong views on school choice ever expressed?
- 5) Strong views on international education ever expressed?
- 6) Ability to reflect on views?



## **Appendix B: Semi-structured Interview Questions**

- 1) I am interested in learning about the SEN/D labeling process. Please tell me about your experiences with this process.
- 2) I am interested in learning about how you choose an international school. Please tell me about your experiences with this choice.
- 3) I am interested in how having a child with an SEN/D label may have affected how you choose an international school. Please tell me about your experiences.
- 4) I am interested in how your child has found their international schools. Please tell me about your child's experiences with international schools.
- 5) I am interested in how you have found moving between international schools. Please tell me more about your experiences with this process.
- 6) I am interested in your understanding of inclusive education. Please tell me more about your understanding of inclusive education.
- 7) I am interested in how international schools can improve their inclusive education. Please tell me about your experiences across international schools relating to inclusive education.

## Appendix C: Letter to Participants

Dear Parents,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me online last year and share your stories, experiences, and narratives around 'inclusive' international schooling. I wanted to take the time to recognise how impactful your experiences have been, and how I hope to use the anonymised data to improve practice across international schools now that my PhD is completed.

To do this, I will be publishing the results in a series of magazine articles widely read by international educators, as well as more research-focussed academic journals for other researchers within the field to build on in future research.

I wanted to highlight the specific ways international schools can better serve parents of SEND children in the future identified from my study. I will be promoting these internationally from now on:

- 1) Be honest in advertising services and available provision within the school;
- 2) Define what 'inclusion' within the specific school context means;
- 3) Transparent application processes with published reasons for acceptance or refusal;
- 4) Policies related to SEN/D to be freely available on the website;
- 5) Inspection reports available online, either on the website or signposted through it;
- 6) Specific parts of inspection reports related to inclusion to be summarised and highlighted;
- 7) Advise on recommended therapeutic providers who have a long-standing relationship with the school;
- 8) Put parents in contact with other parents within the community in a similar situation;
- 9) Focus on providing employment advice and workplace opportunities;
- 10) Consider all parents and students as in a state of transition which requires support.

Thank you for your participation, and I look forward to a continuing relationship moving forwards.

Best wishes,



Matthew E. Lee