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To: Fiona.Campbell@griffith.edu.au

Date: Friday, September 21, 2007 12:13AM
Subject: Disability and Society article

Dear Fiona

I am very pleased to be able to inform you that your paper entitled "Exploring internalised ableism using critical race theory" has now been accepted for publication. It will appear in Volume 23, Number 2 (March 2008) of the journal. Proofs will eventually be sent to you via email directly from the publishing company (Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group), but this will not be until much nearer the time. If you have any further queries in the meantime, please do contact me. Thank you for considering our journal.

Yours sincerely

Helen Oliver
Journal Administrator
for Professor Len Barton, Editor, *Disability and Society*

Article Title : Exploring internalised Ableism using critical race theory AUTHOR :

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Abstract

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Keywords:

Ableism; Social theory; Critical race theory; Subjectivity; Disablism.

Author Biography To precede references.

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Title Page Footnote:

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Article Title

Exploring internalised Ableism using critical race theory

Abstract

This paper is an attempt to theorise about the way disabled people live with ableism, in particular internalised ableism. Typically literature within disability studies has concentrated on the practices and production of disablism, examining attitudes and barriers that contribute to the subordination of disabled people in society. My exploration occurs through examining the insights of critical race theory (CRT) and the contribution that CRT can further make to thinking through the processes, formation and consequences of ableism. A focal concern is the ways the concept of internalised racism, its deployment in CRT can be applied to critical disability studies. The paper is interested in working through points of difference between the way internalised racism/ableism are mediated in the processes of subjectification and identifying points of convergence that can benefit dialogue across sites of scholarship. The author concludes that the study of ableism instead of disability/disablement may produce different research questions and sites of study.

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Exploring internalised Ableism using critical race theory

I. Mapping the project

From the moment a child is born, she emerges into a world where she receives messages that to be disabled is to be *less than...*, a world where disability maybe *tolerated* but in the *final instance*, is *inherently negative*. We are all, regardless of our subject positions shaped and formed by the politics of ableism. This paper is about theory – it is an attempt to theorise about the way we as disabled people live with ableism. My exploration occurs through a theoretical assessment of critical race theory (CRT) and examines the contribution CRT can make to thinking through the processes, formation and consequences of ableism as well as the project of speaking *otherwise* about disability. In particular the paper explores the concept of internalised racism, its deployment in CRT and application to critical disability studies. The paper’s focal interest is working through points of difference between the ways internalised racism/ableism is mediated in the processes of subjectification and identifying points of convergence that can benefit dialogue across sites of scholarship. First, I will outline the purview of CRT; second, the conceptual framework of ableism will be addressed. The paper then discusses internalised racism and considers the connection to the phenomena of internalised ableism.

CRT has not only problematised the notion of race as a permanent and abiding classification, but also made a contribution to race as a subjectifying practice resulting in internalised racism studies (Frankenberg, 1993; McClintock, 1995;). CRT considers racism not aberrant but rather a natural part of American [and no doubt, Western], life. Expanding on this stance, Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (2000, p. xvi) declare

... Because racism is an ingrained feature of our landscape, it looks ordinary and natural to persons in the culture. Formal equal opportunity – rules and laws that insists in treating blacks and whites (for example) alike–can thus remedy only the more extreme and shocking forms of injusticeIt can do little about the business-as-usual forms of racism that people of colour confront everyday and that account for much misery, alienation, and despair.

Applying Delgado’s reasoning to the state of disablement, the ‘business-as-usual’ forms of ableism are so refracted into the metabolism of western societies that ableism as a site of social theorisation (even within critical disability studies) represents the last frontier of inquiry still preoccupied with the arcane distinction between ‘impairment’ and ‘disability’ in the government of disability. Whilst acknowledging the neologism *disability* is both culturally and economically constructed, the state of impairment remains under theorised, (see Tremain, 2005 and Corker, 2001 for notable exceptions). Cultural practices of shaping bodies can affect the aetiology of ‘typical’ human functioning. The marking and evaluative ranking of bodies are additionally intertwined and partitioned by descriptors of ‘race’ and ‘disability’ (see Lingis, 1994; Grosz, 1994; Mitchell & Snyder, 2003; Stubblefield, 2007). Gordon and Rosenblum (2001) suggest that convergences in social constructionist approaches to race and disability may lead to new and productive sites of engagement. They argue we can see likenesses and distinctions in the ways disabled people and other subalterned groups are named, enumerated, dis-enumerated, partitioned, stigmatised and denied attributes valued in

the culture. One example is the enshrinement in Indian law of the notion ‘backward’ classes which refers to a specific segment of the population grouped by caste and location. ‘Backwardness’ also is rendered in intelligence quotient scales – the exposure of so-called ‘sub normalcy’ and ‘retardation’ (Scheerenberger, 1983). Certain theories of development describe whole nations of the ‘third world’ as ‘backward’ and ‘undevelopable’ (Baster, 1954). CRT then, has an investment in ‘interest convergence’ a concept developed by Derrick Bell to delineate situations where white people with power endure or foster black advancements to the extent that these advancements promote white interests (Delgado and Jean Stefancic; 2000). A critical disability studies perspective invites us to explore as Bell suggests, the limits of liberal tolerance of disability, interest convergence and the points of departure away from the interests of ableism.

II. Accounting for ableism – conceptual frameworks

In the social sciences and disability studies fields literature has concentrated on the practices and production of disablism, specifically examining those attitudes and barriers contributing to the subordination of people with disabilities in liberal society (as an example, Bolderson, 1991; Goggin & Newell, 2001; Johnson & Moxon, 1998; Stainton, 1994). Disablism is a set of assumptions and practices promoting the differential or unequal treatment of people because of actual or presumed disabilities.

Whilst diverse the strategic positions adopted to facilitate emancipatory social change essentially relate to (re)forming negative attitudes, assimilating people with disabilities into normative civil society, providing compensatory initiatives and safety nets in cases of enduring vulnerability. Although *some* disabled people have refused the assimilationist imperative by resisting any mitigation of their impairment and spoken *otherwise* about disability (through new disability histories, cultures and the arts), significant numbers of disabled people still adopt culturally valued roles to blend into society. The site of reformation has been at the intermediate level of function, structure and institution in civil society and shifting values in the cultural arena. For some the term *ableism* has been used interchangeably with the term *disablism*. However these two words render radically different understandings of the status of disability to the norm. *Disablism* relates to the production of disability and fits well into a social constructionist understanding of disability. Whereas *ableism* can be associated with the production of able-ness, the perfectible body and by default the creation of a neologism that suggests a falling away from able-ness, that is *disability*. Harlan Hahn (1986) testifies there is a close link between the attitude of paternalism, the subordination of disabled people and the ‘interests’ of ableism:

Paternalism enables the dominant elements of a society to express profound and sincere sympathy for the members of a minority group while, at the same time, keeping them in a position of social and economic subordination. It has allowed the nondisabled to act as the protectors, guides, leaders, role models, and intermediates for disabled individuals who, like children, are often assumed to be helpless, dependent, asexual, economically unproductive, physically limited, emotional immature, and acceptable only when they are unobtrusive (Hahn, 1986, p.130).

Jones's (1972, p.172) seminal work on racism argues that race-based power relations are galvanized "... with the intentional or unintentional support of the entire culture". However Richard Delgado (2000) claims that the situation of members of racial minorities is akin to persons with (physical impairment). Supporting this conclusion, Delgado cites the work of Oliver Cromwell Cox (1948) who exclaims that a

... rebuff due to one's skin color puts [the victim] in very much the situation of the very ugly person or one suffering from a loathsome disease. The suffering ... may be aggravated by a consciousness of incurability and even blameworthiness, a self-reproaching which tends to leave the individual still more aware of his [sic] loneliness and unwantedness". (Cox 1948, cited in Delgado, 2000, p. 132).

Despite the remarkableness of Cox's proposition no further exploration is made by Delgado to explore intersections between the experiences of racism and ableism. As a conceptual tool ableism transcends levels of governance related to procedures, structure, institutions and values of civil society and locates itself clearly in the arena of *genealogies of knowledge*. Ableism is embedded deeply and subliminally within culture. At the outset it is important to refute an essentialised understanding of ableism. The intention here is not to propose ableism as another explanatory 'grand narrative', a universalised and systematised conception of disability oppression. Rather my approach indicates a convergence of networks that produce exclusionary matrices and ontologies. Focussing on the study of ableism instead of disability/disablement may produce different research questions and sites of study. Whilst the players in the government of disability may change, other formations such as the use of regimes of law and medicine remain constant. Campbell (2001, p.44) maintains that ableism is

... a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species-typical and therefore essential and fully human. Disability is cast as a diminished state of being human.

The corporeal standard has an illusory self-evident permanence but is always in a state of flux. Commenting on a recent dictionary definition of ableism as a kind of discrimination in favour of able-bodied people Simi Linton adds this definition also "includes the idea that a person's abilities or characteristics are determined by disability or that people with disabilities as a group are inferior to non-disabled people" (1998, p. 9). Linton however points out that unlike discourses of racism and sexism, there is little consensus amongst the general public (and scholars) as to what practices and behaviours constitute ableism. The nuances of ableism close off certain aspects of the imagination. As Judith Butler puts it:

The operation of foreclosure is tacitly referenced in those instances in which we ask: what must remain unspeakable for the contemporary regimes of discourse to continue to exercise power? (Butler, 1997a, p.139)

The processes of ableism sees the corporeal imagination in terms of compulsory ableness, that is, certain forms of 'perfected' materiality are posited as preferable. A chief feature of an

ableist viewpoint is a belief that impairment (irrespective of 'type') is *inherently* negative and should the opportunity present itself, be ameliorated, cured or indeed eliminated. What remain unspeakable are readings of the disabled body presenting life with impairment as an animating, affirmative modality of subjectivity. Instead of ontological embrace, the processes of ableism like those of racism induce an internalisation which devalues disablement. Unspeakable silences exist regarding the study of certain aspects of race. Pyke and Dang (2003) note there is an intellectual taboo/fear surrounding the study of internalised racism; attention to internalised racism may undermine the political potency of the African-American rights movement and eclipse liberalism's black 'success' stories. What then about the hidden stories of the 'can do' generation of successful professionals with disability? One might be led to believe that the pathologisation of the disability 'problem' has, in contrast to matters of race, meant an acceptance and awareness of internalised ableism.

III. Bodies of internalisation

Joel Kovel presents a bleak but pertinent testimony of the impact of internalised racism. The "... accumulation of negative images ...presents [racial minorities] with one massive and destructive choice: either to hate one's self, as culture so systematically demands, or to have no self at all, to be nothing" (Kovel, 1970, p. 195). Penny Rosenwasser defines what she terms 'internalised oppression' as

... an involuntary reaction to oppression which originates outside one's group and which results in group members loathing themselves, disliking others in their group, and blaming themselves for the oppression – rather than realizing that these beliefs are constructed in them by oppressive socio-economic political systems (Rosenwasser, 2000, p. 1).

The key ingredients then are negative ontologies of human signification (perverted sexualities, ambiguous bodies and skins) the processes of subjectification which act as regulatory norms. CRT's notion of internalised racism indicates a process whereby people of colour absorb and internalise aspects of racism (Akbar, 1996; Freire, 1970; Harvey, 1995). The nature of differentially situated realities means that one's standpoint places us in a different relationship with internalised racism. Watts-Jones (2002) argues that for people of European descent internalised racism can empower if not privilege, feelings of superiority. "It is an experience of self-aggrandizement on an individual, sociocultural and institutional level" (p.592), whereas for coloured people internalised racism induces self-mortification and estrangement. Internalised racism compels people of colour to adopt strategies of disavowal as "enjoyment or privileges we accrue are by virtue of abandoning our identity to approximate that of the extolled group. There is no entitlement or sense of entitlement" (pp. 592-593).

Recent research correlates the experience of racism to low socio-economic status and acquisition of physical and psychological impairment (Williams & Collins, 1995). The subjectifying experiences of racism as racism not only cause distress but impact on mental health status (Kreiger *et al*, 1999). Pyke and Dang argue that because internalised racism is an adaptive response to racism, compliance and resistance which in their own ways reproduce or replicate racism, are interrelated processes (Pyke and Dang, 2003, p. 151). One

of the approaches of CRT is storytelling – counter storytelling in combination with the “historical triangulation of facts that have an impact on present-day discrimination...” (Parker & Stovall, 2004). The silence of disabled people has been inverted with the emergence of a disability rights movement and the development of critical disability studies. Speaking otherwise about the lived body with impairment needs to extend to spaces exploring the *personal costs* of living under ableism beyond the dominant genre of biography into theory. In this respect a study of ableism especially internalised ableism, moves outside the narrow confines of an individualised phenomenology and squarely locates the analysis within a collectivist history of ideas and the field of discursive practices.

IV. Connecting with internalised ableism

Having considered the dynamics of internalised racism, this section addresses a hitherto underdeveloped concept within disability studies scholarship, namely *internalised ableism* or disabled self-hatred. In examining sites for the internalisation of racism, Burstow makes it clear that we should not be looking at a single event or site of impact, rather internalisation occurs through the accumulative, residual and reoccurring experiences of racism. Burstow sharply remarks: “the point is oppressed people, are routinely worn down by the insidious trauma involved in living day after day in a sexist, racist, classist, homophobic, and ableist society” (Burstow, 2003, p.1296). Within ableism the existence of disability is tolerated rather than celebrated as a part of human diversification. I contend that internalised ableism utilises a two-prong strategy, the distancing of disabled people from each other and the emulation by disabled people of ableist norms.

Tactics of Dispersal

The experience of disablement can arguably, be spoken of not in terms of individualised personal tragedy, but in terms of communal trauma where the legacies of ableism pervade both conscious and unconscious realms. Although the prevailing trope has been the individualisation of disability by the domination of biomedical realism, nonetheless histories of catastrophe, negative ontologies of disability and an absence of oppositional role models saturate the lives of disabled people collectively. Unlike other minority groups disabled people have had fewer opportunities to develop a collective conscious, identity or culture let alone interrogate cultures of ableism. The connection between epistemologies of ableism and the production of internalised ableism can be seen in Social Role Valorisation Theory (SRV) as articulated by Wolf Wolfensberger (1972). His strategy of ‘conservatism corollary’ *explicitly* discourages fellowship amongst persons with disabilities and other minorities. Clearly this is a precursor to a strategy of dispersal, predicated on the belief disabled people should not draw attention to each other via ‘mixing’ (with culturally devalued people) (Szivos, 1992). This ‘dilution of deviancy’ or mitigation campaign rings familiarly in the histories of other marginalised populations such as indigenous, coloured, gay and lesbian peoples. Dispersal consequences generate internalised ableism because congregating with other people with impairments is interpreted as a negative, inadvisable choice. Tactics of dispersal have not only received credibility through SRV, but ensure another form of biopolitics for governing the population.

The work of Schwalbe *et al* (1996) on the injuries of racism supports this point. He argues that for Asian-American's to deflect stigma and have imputed the characteristics of their 'ethnicity', they often engaged in "defensive Othering". Defensive Othering occurs when the marginalised person attempts to emulate the hegemonic norm, whiteness or ableism, and assumes the "... legitimacy of a devalued identity imposed by the dominant group, but then saying, in effect, 'There are indeed Others to whom this applies, but it does not apply to me'" (1996, p.425). This attitude readily taps into a State supported system of diagnostic apartheid and evaluative ranking of bodies according to type and severity of impairment. Dispersal policies are only permissible because the *integration imperative* exists and receives, albeit critically, tremendous support from the disability services sector and is based on the belief that mainstreamed institutions and methods are superior to separate settings (O'Brien & Murray, 1996). Separation however should not be confused with segregation. As Watts – Jones (2002) points out 'within group' processes can act as a sanctuary for healing internalised oppression.

Emulating the norm

The 'naturalness' of the notion of the abled-bodied liberal individual coupled with the negation of a disabled sensibility makes many disabled people queue for the chance to be anointed as 'people first', whilst simultaneously disavowing their previous embodied positions as 'gimps;' and 'cripples'. Ironically, disabled people who achieve 'people first' status are not achieving full normative status but are only legitimizing an able-bodied resemblance through their desire for normality. (Overboe, 1999, p. 24)

The desire to emulate the Other (the norm) is contemporaneous with a process of colour and/or impairment disavowal. It attempts to establish and maintain a wide gap between that/those which are loathed and that which is desired. The linkage between internalised racism as a 'rational' response to oppression makes it possible to examine the operation of dishonour. Watt-Jones notes two levels of shame; first is linked with being a person of colour, the second tier relates to a shame induced by being consciously aware of one's shamefulness. Steven Kuusisto's autobiographical extract, *Planet of the Blind*, captures this sense of shame for people with disabilities:

Raised to know I was blind but taught to disavow it, I grew bent over like the dry tinder grass. I couldn't stand up proudly, nor could I retreat. I reflected my mother's complex bravery and denial and marched everywhere at dizzying speeds without a cane. Still, I remained ashamed of my blind self, that blackened [sic] dolmen (Kuusisto, 1998: p.7).

Shamefulness is magnified in culture where the rhetoric of being a survivor, a non-victim, is powerful and being a victim is to be "passive or deficient" (Watt-Jones, p.594). For 'enlightened' disabled people such shame taps into a wellspring of discourses of residual disability deficiency. The emerging counter-discourse of the disability survivor mitigates against exploring the personal costs of disability subordination and normalisation. In my own scholarly community the few faculty with disability teaching disability studies report privately struggling with demands to perform, live up to leadership challenges and mentoring expectations. An isolated minority within a marginal teaching area, there are few

opportunities to find a sanctuary for healing/sheltering from the forces of ableism. In Australia there is an awareness that many of our disability rights movement leaders are suffering 'burnout', have had emotional collapses or just moved on in order to cope with the realities of living in a hostile world. This cognizance has not to my knowledge, been translated into theoretical explorations.

In the case of disability subjectification internalisation of negative ontologies of disability contributes to the formation of a docile and readily pliable disabled body, continuing various ways to inhibit performances of disability acceptance and rehabilitation so demanded by the inclusivist impulses of liberal contract theory. Internalised ableism can mean the disabled subject is caught 'between a rock and a hard place'; in order to attain the benefit of a 'disabled identity' one must constantly participate in processes of disability disavowal, aspiring towards normativity, a state of near-able-bodiedness, or at very least to effect a state of 'passing'. As Kimberlyn Leary (1999, p. 85) puts it:

Passing occurs when there is perceived danger in disclosure..... It represents a form of self-protection that nevertheless usually disables, and sometimes destroys, the self it means to safeguard.

The workings of internalised ableism by way of 'passing' are only possible when viewed broadly, moving focus from the impaired individual to the arena of relationships. In the interactivity with the norm (such as an able-bodied person) another form of erasure is required. Ableist passing is not just an individual hiding their impairment or morphing their disability; ableism involves a *failure* to ask about difference ie. disability/impairment. For internalised ableism to occur there needs to be an existing *a priori* presumption of *compulsory ableness*. Such passing is about keeping the coloniser happy by not disturbing the peace, containing the matter that is potentially out of place¹. An example of 'passing' under these circumstances would be the conundrum encountered by some university academics with impairments who experience trepidation about revealing their impairment status fearing stigma and tenure discrimination despite the fact that many argue that they and others would benefit from disability focused mentoring and networking arrangements (see Bishop 1999; Monaghan, 1998).

Whilst successful rehabilitation may be measured in terms of personal care management, employment retraining and placement, the *benchmark* of successful inclusion is the acquisition of new skills for performing the part(s) of a disembodied abled self. Though there can be no denial of an injured body by rehabilitation professionals and the injured client, a way out of the strictures of injury is to adopt and emphasize those aspects of self and subjectivity that are able to mimic the qualities of ableist personhood. The corporeality of the disabled body is constantly in a state of deferral, in a holding pattern, waiting the day it will be not just repaired but made anew (cured). Until then the conditions of fabrication, of mimicking the abled-body are usually of a disembodied kind; because it is assumed that flight from the body will act as a distraction towards those assimilating qualities of social conduct and deportment. In time, rehabilitation personnel will be able to re-create corporeal

¹ Thomson cites a number of strategies such as charm, humor, deference to relieve the discomfort of able bodied people (Thompson, 1997, pp. 12 -13).

normalcy by way of rebuilding or morphing the injured body to a form that for all practical purposes replicates the old (whole) form (see Campbell, 2004). Developments in new technologies have the effect of re-conceptualizing impairment in terms of provisional or tentative disability (Campbell, 2005, 2007).

Ableism produces disabled subjectivities

Internalisation involves apprehending that which “... belongs to the other” [and incorporating it as] one’s own” (Wertsch, 1998, p.53). Clearly the processes of internalisation are not straightforward and predictable. As Fanon remarks: “In the colonial context the settler only ends his work of breaking in the native when the latter admits loudly and intelligibly the supremacy of the white man’s values” (Fanon, cited in McClintock, p.329). But the absorption process is deeper implying a belief that the subaltern body requires something that “...only their superior dominators have or can give them” (Oliver, 2004, 78). This may be a somewhat lumpy and indigestible process as many words obstinately refuse, sound alien in the voice of the one who enacts them through speech. In any case, the internalisation of negativity ultimately shapes and inspires technologies of self and ways such technologies become mediated within a range of networks:

Internalized oppression is not the cause of our mistreatment; it is the result of our mistreatment. It would not exist without the real external oppression that forms the social climate in which we exist. Once oppression has been internalized, little force is needed to keep us submissive. We harbour inside ourselves the pain and the memories, the fears and the confusions, the negative self-images and the low expectations, turning them into weapons with which to re-injure ourselves, every day of our lives. (Mason, as cited Marks, 1999, p.25).

Internalised ableism means that to assimilate into the norm the *referentially* disabled individual is required to embrace, indeed to assume an ‘identity’ other than one’s own – and this subject is repeatedly reminded by epistemological formations and individuals with hegemonic subjectifications of their provisional and (real) identity. I am not implying that subjects have a true or real essence. Indeed the subjects’ formation is in a constant state of fluidity, multiplicity and (re)formation. However, disabled people often feel compelled to fabricate ‘who’ they are – to adopt postures and comportments that are additional to self. The formation of internalised ableism cannot be simply deduced by assessing the responses of individuals to Althusser’s famous interpolative hailing “Hey you, there” (Althusser & Balibar, 1979). Whilst a subject may respond to “Hey you there, crip!” – it is naïve to assume that an affirmative response to this hailing repressively inaugurates negative disabled subjectification. In fact the adoption of more positive or oppositional ontologies of disability by the subject in question may be unexpectedly enabling. As Susan Park (2000: 91) argues “what is at stake here is not so much the accuracy behind the hailing privilege, but the power of the hailing itself to instantly determine (or elide) that thing it is naming”. Nonetheless, censure and the cancellation of the legitimacy of oppositional subjectivities remains common place as Cherney reminds us with respect to Deaf culture: “If abnormal [sic] bodies must be fixed to fit within dominant cultural views of appropriateness then the Deaf celebration of their differences must be read as an illegitimate model of advocacy”. (Cherney, 1999, p. 33).

Foucault's (1976; 1980) theorisation of power as productive may provide some offerings from which to build a conversation about internalised ableism. I am not so much interested in the 'external' effects of that power, but for the moment wish to concentrate on what Judith Butler aptly refers to as the 'psychic life' of power. She describes this dimension:

... an account of subjection, it seems, must be traced in the turns of psychic life. More specifically, it must be traced in the peculiar turning of a subject against itself that takes place in acts of self-reproach, conscience, and melancholia that work in tandem with processes of social regulation (Butler, 1997b, p.19).

In other words, the processes of subject formation *cannot be* separated from the subject him/herself who is brought into being through those very subjectifying processes. The consequences of taking into oneself negative subjectivities not only regulate and continually form identity (the disabled citizen) but can transcend and surpass the strictures of ableist authorizations. Judith Butler describes this process of the "carrying of a mnemonic trace":

One need only consider the way in which the history of having been called an injurious name is embodied, how the words enter the limbs, craft the gesture, bend the spine ...how these slurs accumulate over time, dissimulating their history, taking on the semblance of the natural, configuring and restricting the doxa that counts as "reality". (Butler, 1997b, p. 159)

The work of Williams and Williams-Morris (2000) links racism experienced by African-Americans to the effects of hurtful words and negative cultural symbols on mental health, especially when marginalized groups embrace negative societal beliefs about themselves. They cite an international study by Fischer *et al* (1996) which *inter alia* links poor academic performance with poor social status. Although using different disciplinary language Wolfensberger (1972) in his seven core themes of SRV, identified role circularity as a significant obstacle to be overcome by disabled people wanting socially valued roles. Philosopher Linda Purdy contends it is important to resist conflating disability with the disabled person. She writes

My disability is not me, no matter how much it may affect my choices. With this point firmly in mind, it should be possible mentally to separate my existences from the existence of my disability. (Purdy, 1996, p. 68).

The problem with Purdy's conclusion is that it is psychically untenable, not only because it is posited around a type of Cartesian dualism that simply separates being-ness from embodiment, but also because this kind of reasoning disregards the dynamics of subjectivity formation to which Butler (1997a; 1997b) has referred. Whilst the 'outputs' of subjectivity are variable the experience of impairment within an ableist context *can* and *does* effect formation of self – in other words 'disability *is* me', but that 'me' does not need to be enfolded with negative ontologies of subjectivity. Purdy's bodily detachment appears locked into a loop that is filled with internalised ableism, a state with negative views of impairment, from which the only escape is disembodiment; the penalty of denial is a flight

from her body. This finds agreement in the reasoning of Jean Baudrillard (1983) who posits that it is the simulation, the appearance (representation) that matters. The subject simulates what it is to be 'disabled' and by inference 'abled' and whilst morphing ableist imperatives, in effect performs a new hyper reality of be-ing disabled. By unwittingly performing ableism disabled people become complicit in their own demise – reinforcing impairment as an outlaw ontology.

Before proceeding I need to clarify this argument because my reasoning and your reading about subjectivity occurs always in context. Much of the discussion about 'disability *is* me' raises another related claim that requires comment, namely the matter of immutability. In recent years claims around minority rights protections, especially within the Federal arena of law in the United States, have been based on the immutability argument in opposition to cultures or identities of 'choice' (Currah, 1995). The argument suggests that when individuals or populations have an attribute that is inherent and unable to be removed (e.g. colour and race) there is a stronger claim for civil rights entitlements than claims being pressed by groups where referentiality can be chosen or changed (e.g. the controversy of 'homosexual' orientation is an often cited example).

Within this illusionary binary world of fixed or chosen corporeal attributions the status of impairment is not so clear. Impairment inheres within the body (or mind, cognition and so forth) however impairment despite being often characterised (etiologically) as 'permanent' is in a broader sense 'provisional'. Impairments exist in a state of constant deferral, being open to the interventions of psycho-medical regimes posting corrections, cures or indeed elimination. (Campbell, 2001; 2005). The act of strategic essentialism (utilising strict categories of personhood to access social benefits, e.g. Deaf people registering for disability programs even if sections of this group do not identify as 'disabled') might initially seem commendable and even viewed as an act of subversive resistance, also brings into itself acts of 'self-subversion', wherein passports of recognition become passports of unfreedom for it can be difficult to uphold the divide between negative ascriptions and negative internalised incorporations of impairment into one's subjectivity.

What begins as an attempt to gain benefits and potentially usurp the forces of enumeration and calculation in the governing of disability often ends up becoming complicit, reproducing the constitutional ontologies essential to the continued power of ableism. The deployment of the neologism disability strategically cannot be undertaken without some incorporation of internalised ableism, either at a conscious or unconscious level. Within ableism disability cannot be detached from its negative association. People living with impairment face these two dilemmatically co-existing dynamics, sometimes jostling in tension, even when adopting outlaw and resistant subjectivities and lifestyles.

Conclusion: let it all hang out!

I HATE [it] when people tell me how well I've overcome my disability. To me, it's suggesting that I am separate from my body. But my body is me and I am my body. This includes my disability. It is part of who I am and a part of what makes my body beautiful and a part of what makes me a beautiful person. My disability CANNOT be separated from who I am. I cannot overcome my own body (Shain, 2002).

The ruminations of CRT (cf. Delgado & Stefancic, 2000) transposed to an analysis of ableism point to its embeddedness. The very existence of ableism and its effects, like racism, are covert but more often profoundly veiled. Ableism as an epistemology and ontological modality frames an individual's subjectivity and thus becomes the power "...that animates ones emergence", complicity and resistance (Butler, 1997b, p.198). At the end of this paper two strong images of living with impairment emerge. The first is of disabled people as *survivors*. People with disabilities labour under the pain and burden of violence - violence that is epistemic, psychic, ontological and physical. This labouring has resulted in lives of *ontological vulnerability*. For scholars there is an ethical imperative to interrogate the violence of ableism and speak of its injuries. By exposing the practices of ableism and unravelling the psychic life of internalised ableism, unearthing various *states of injury*, (apologies to Wendy Brown), when reiterating these violences and injuries I am mindful of the necessity not to re-perform them. An example here could be the continual usage of photographic images of people exhibited as freaks when alive, and re-exhibited in a form of fetishist graphics on the internet. To do so would be to fall victim to a theorizing that reinstates the notion of an overwhelming vision of catastrophe, where disabled people are forever sucked into the vortex of being perpetual victims. This paper invites the reader to sign up to the field of critical ableism studies and argues the critical need to investigate internalised ableism and its effects on the psychic life of our community. Further research could explore the process of counter-story telling about liberalism's so-called 'disability success stories', and the way these stories differ when the individual 'succeeds' in spite of impairment and those stories which embrace impairment and frame success in terms 'because disability'.

The second image is of disabled people engaged in guerrilla activity – rejecting the promises of liberalism and looking elsewhere, daring to *speak otherwise* about impairment. For too long critical theorist's have figured places of marginality and liminality as places of exile – where the emarginated are to be 'brought in from the cold' and integrated so that they too can sit beside the 'warm fires' of liberalism (and all will be well). However, as Bell Hooks reminds us, the margin can be "... more than a site of deprivation ... it is also the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance" (hooks, 1990, p.149).

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