Old Dominion University

ODU Digital Commons

Summer 8-2020

Counterpublics, Abled Sex, and Crip Discourses on Twitter: A Discourse Analysis of Conversations of Sexuality and Disability

Claudia Garcia Mendoza
Old Dominion University, cgarc017@odu.edu

Recommended Citation

COUNTERPUBLICS, ABLED SEX, AND CRIP DISCOURSES ON TWITTER: A

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF CONVERSATIONS OF SEXUALITY AND DISABILITY

by

Claudia Garcia Mendoza
B.A. December 2003, Tecnologico de Monterrey, Campus Guadalajara

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

LIFESPAN AND DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
August 2020

Approved by:

Avi Santo (Co-Director)

Allison Page (Co-Director)

Ruth Osorio (Member)

Thomas Socha (Member)

ABSTRACT

COUNTERPUBLICS, ABLED SEX, AND CRIP DISCOURSES ON TWITTER: A
DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF CONVERSATIONS OF SEXUALITY AND DISABILITY

Claudia Garcia Mendoza
Old Dominion University, 2020
Co-Directors: Dr. Avi Santo
Dr. Allison Page

We live in an era in which essential conversations occur online. Social media has become
the official voice of presidents and corporations. Donald Trump, the president of the United
States, uses Twitter to address public issues and make policy announcements. Similarly,
alternative voices have emerged from social media and evolved into public debates, social
movements, and massive mobilizations (e.g., Gerbaudo, 2012; Tufeksi, 2017). The community
gathering opportunities of social media (boyd, 2011; Parks, 2010; Chambers, 2013) and the
possibilities to generate collective knowledge (Jenkins, 2004) stress the necessity to continue to
expand the research in digital spaces.

It is important that society and researchers listen to marginalized voices that are seeking
empowerment by their use of social media. This thesis seeks to advance this area of research by
conducting a discourse analysis of tweets and comments about sexuality, from a community on
Twitter that self-identifies as disabled (*Disabled Twitter*). In this thesis, I conceptualize *Disabled
Twitter* as a counterpublic and argue that their conversations about sexuality are activist and
citizenship claims. I analyze tweets from two different readings: a neoliberal and a queer. I pose
a neoliberal approach that demands inclusion into our current model, and a queer approach that
seeks to reimage a disabled identity apart from the ideas of normalcy. Finally, although these

contradictions might seem infructuous, I suggest that these are starting points to reformulate more productive discourses to contest ableist conceptions of bodies and sexualities.

While this study only considers two vantage points, these conversations have the potential to be explored from other perspectives. This study is an invitation to expand research at the intersections of disability and sexuality taking place online, and also a call to consider how this participation in digital spaces has the potential to transcend to offline settings.

This thesis is dedicated to Sofia and Pablo.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Prologue

I am able-bodied and I grew up in a household that valued ableness. My parents, especially my dad, always stressed productivity, perfectionism, efficiency, and every single value that evoked able-bodiedness. My mom, a very Catholic woman, prayed, and thanked God for our "able-bodiedness." After all, Jesus must be the patron of able-bodiedness because he cured deaf people and healed paraplegics. Still, disability has been present in my family, and was often made invisible: my uncle's schizophrenia was "a need for attention," and my grandmother's agoraphobia was "nervousness." Although very much loved, there was a sense of otherness when interacting with my cousin, with whom I spent many summer days, traveling on the same bus, on the same day, for rounds and rounds around the town (she was secretly in love with the bus driver).

I write from a limited perspective and a learning position. As an immigrant, I have encountered otherness, and as a non-native English speaker, I have encountered ableism. However, my experience does not equate to disability. I write from this perspective. As Hall claims: "We all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always 'in context, *positioned'*" (Hall, 1989, p. 68).

Overview

On January 17, 2019, blogger and disability activist @Imani_Barbarin tweeted: "Make sure to look just disabled enough so that people believe you but not so disabled that they think you're a burden. #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow". The hashtag #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow" became a trending topic after that first tweet. I started following Twitter users who participated

in this trend. Four weeks later, many of these same users started posting selfies using another trending hashtag: #DisabledPeopleAreHot. This new hashtag was initiated by @AndrewxGurza, host of the *Disability After Dark* podcast. On March 15, 2019, Imani Barbarin, started another trending hashtag, #AbledsAreWeird, to recount conversations that reflected odd encounters with abled-body people. It became evident that the tendency to participate in hashtags was ritualistic and had been established years back.

While the hashtag #DisabledPeopleAreHot is mainly centered on bodies, the hashtags #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow and #AbledsAreWeird explore a myriad of subjects. Since these hashtags do not explicitly call for specific topics, their conversations have varied, predominantly referring to accessibility, political rights, healthcare, labor, and sexuality. I became interested in how Twitter users who self-identify as disabled followed each other, contributed to others' hashtags, engaged in conversations, and defined their virtual gathering as a community that they refer to as *Disabled Twitter*. I became interested in the intersections of sexuality and disability, especially because sexuality is a distinctly invisible aspect of disability. Moreover, the need to explore this topic further was evident when sexuality, a private matter, was recurrently discussed, emerged from very generic hashtags, and was addressed in the same rank of importance as other social rights claims.

In this thesis, I identify *Disabled Twitter* as a community, a group of self-identified disabled users in Twitter who interact with one another. I frame *Disabled Twitter* as a networked counterpublic. I argue that the conversations of sexuality from this community are political claims of activism and citizenship. I analyze these forms of activism and citizenship from two approaches, a neoliberal and a queer approach. Since these conversations take place in social media, I explore how the platform's affordances shape these interactions.

In this chapter, I explore how citizenship, activism, and sexuality intersect with disability. Before delving into these concepts, I explain the terms in which I conceptualize *Disabled Twitter* as a community.

Disabled Twitter

Communities are groups of people who gather around mutual interests, beliefs, and practices. Before the internet era, communities had been conceived in physical spaces because there is a collective agreement in the notion of boundaries and membership (Cohen, 1985; Anderson, 1991). The emergence of the internet and social media gave rise to a more unstable conceptualization of communities (Chambers, 2013), in which members are physically dispersed, and belonging could be imprecise. Membership in virtual communities is vague. Belonging is not defined solely by connectivity, but also by the engagement in practices and rituals (Parks, 2011). In turn, engagement depends on the affordances of the platform (boyd, 2011), and in the creativity of the users. Membership is, as in Anderson's (1991) term, "imagined." It is impossible to know every member, and the sense of belonging is fostered through rituals and symbolic actions that create a collective identity (Anderson, 1991).

Black Twitter is a recurrent example of how communities in social media can build cultural connections, reflect racial identities, and introduce Black discourses (Brock, 2012; Florini, 2014). In a parallel manner, soon after I started following the hashtag #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow, I noticed strong engagement with hashtags, sharing, and retweeting. Although participation in Twitter does not require reciprocity, many users follow one another and referred to each other with familiarity, even though it is evident that there is no face-to-face relationship. The sense of belonging to a virtual community became clear when users identify as part of a community, sometimes explicitly calling their community *Disabled Twitter*

or using a hashtag to address the community as #DisabledTwitter. I put forward a few examples

(the stress on *DisabledTwitter* is mine):

> Hey *#DisabledTwitter* Should we get taught about disability in schools?
>
> (@titaniumtori, 2020, June 9)
>
> My disabled friends mean so much to me... *#disabledtwitter* (@Imani_Barbarin,
>
> 2020, May 23)
>
> I want to thank @Imani_Barbarin for the work of creating hashtags like
>
> #UHateDisabledPeople. *Disabled Twitter* has been a powerful way for us to share
>
> our experiences as disabled people and create a sense of community through our
>
> collective activism and sharing our stories (@DNewmanStille, 2020, January 26)

As the hashtag states, the community identifies as "disabled." This same identity is

stressed in bios, tweets, and other conversations. @Emmyjewel, a Twitter user unfamiliar with

Disabled Twitter posted:

> 9 times out of 10 a bio with pronouns will also have identified every past ailment
>
> & setback.
>
> For instance:
>
> She/her bi-pan-genderqueer [Rainbow emoji]
>
> •chronic fatigue •allergy sufferer •mum of ADHD child •autism •hearing impaired
>
> •disabled cat carer
>
> Is it a need for sympathy?
>
> (2020, February 12).

@scallymac replies to @Emmyjewel to clarify how these practices are part of community

identity:

These people are usually in twitter communities for their "setbacks" (otherwise known as disabilities for your future ref), we put these on our bios so that others know we're in the disabled twitter community. It's people who don't understand disabled people who need sympathy (2020, February 14).

@scallymac explains that identity remarks are useful to recognize one another in an online setting; they serve as community builders. The shared implicit agreement to point at specific identity characteristics becomes ritualistic practices that, as Parks (2010) notes, reinforce the community's identity. These bios are identity references and contribute to constructing a resistance identity (see Castells, 2010). The unfamiliarity of @Emmyjewel with the ritualistic practice of identifying as disabled in contrast with @scallymac, exhibits, as Cohen (1985) notes, how certain symbols only have a meaning within the community. In other words, and borrowing from Gershon (2010), these bios are "idioms of practice."

Collective identity is performed through different means. Florini (2014), interested in how race is performed on Twitter, notices the practice of—signifyin[1]— online through the use of linguistic cues. Although *Disabled Twitter* does not have a particular vernacular, they certainly use and promote distinctive wording, for both, their self-identification and their activism in the field. Many members of *Disabled Twitter* adopt a username that describes their disability and use emojis to identify their sexuality, country of origin, and disability, embracing their identity and simultaneously strengthening the communal links. In a different form of identity embracement, *Disabled Twitter* users post photos wearing "hashtag apparel" (t-shirts with popular hashtags), supporting a fellow member, stating their community belonging, in what Santo (2017) would call a "lifestyle brand." For instance, "The Future is Accessible" was a hashtag from Annie Segarra

---

[1] Florini (2014) purposefully uses the word "signifyin" to refer to the African American wordplay.

(@annieelainey) and is a popular "brand" of t-shirt worn by *Disabled Twitter* users. Similarly, other hashtags have evolved into brand t-shirt such as "Ableds are weird" and "Disabled people are hot."

Disabled Twitter also functions as a support group. Members ask for others' well-being, demonstrate empathy, call action or participation by referring to the group as "family" or "community," tag others, and share a genuine camaraderie. Users have mentioned how the disabled community on Twitter is a support group they do not have in an offline space. While digital accessibility is still restricted for certain bodies (Ellcessor, 2016), for others is a ramp, an access door with the capability to discuss experiences, politics, rights, and sexuality.

As I will review in the following chapters, identity and belonging are persistent claims. Throughout this thesis, I use identity-first language ("disabled people," instead of "people with disabilities") because this is the preference of this community. I acknowledge that identity is a personal choice and that other people, or communities, may not choose this identity. I refer to this community as *Disabled Twitter*, and occasionally, as "this community." *Disabled Twitter* is a community that encompasses users with a broad range of disabilities. Some members of this community are as well part of more specific communities such as #SpoonieTwitter or #ActuallyAutistics. In this thesis, I analyze the position of *Disabled Twitter,* which does not represent *all* disabled people's claims.

Citizenship and Disability

In March 2020, BBC News reported a story of a blind Mexican who was denied citizenship because he was unable to *read* the naturalization test. A braille version was denied because he needed a doctor's note. He was unable to pay for a doctor's appointment because he

did not have insurance. This case illustrates how citizenship is restricted to disabled people from very basic grounds. American-born disabled people are not necessarily in a much better position.

For minority groups, the demand for citizenship is a ceaseless endeavor because citizenship, rather than being a stable position equally granted to all, is an upright scale ruled by dominant groups. Each benefit has to be individually battled. For example, women's suffrage was only one step toward political participation but did not provide labor rights or body agency. In this sense, disabled people have long struggled to gain political representation and citizenship recognition.

In modern western societies, disabled people have historically been restricted from civic participation from different stances. UNESCO, citing Baylis and Smith, defines citizenship as "the status of having the right to participate in and to be represented in politics" (n.d., para. 1); other sources such as encyclopedias and dictionaries similarly employ the word "status" to describe the term, evoking a position and referencing a privilege. This "status" is typically conceived under the scope of the liberal theory of citizenship, that envisions all citizens equal (Jones & Gaventa, 2002). Citizenship has historically favored specific bodies, classes, colors, and genders (Glenn, 2000). By restricting participation or delineating citizenship in rigorous standards, citizenship limits belonging and accentuates the notion of different classes of citizens (Glenn, 2000). These regulations of citizenship through administrative modes is what Foucault refers as—biopolitics[2]—.

Suffrage has long been considered the quintessential form of participation in politics and one of the most common and straightforward manners to disfranchise specific populations. Legislation, poverty, and accessibility have limited voting rights of disabled people. According

---

[2] Foucault's concept of biopolitics is deeply discussed in Chapter II.

to the National Archives, for almost a century, the right to vote in the United States was exclusive to white men with property ownership. When voting was extended to other populations, a poll tax was imposed and only abolished until 1964 (Randall, 2013), still relating the right to vote to a sense of wealth, or/and still restricting the vote to poor people.

The disfranchising of poor people is essential to understand because, in the first part of the twentieth century, there was no "official" or clinical difference between poor and disabled (Shweik, 2009; Davis, 2006). In what was an explicit form of biopolitics, during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century,—several municipalities[3]— decreed—"Ugly Laws,"[4]— which prevented disabled, ill, and deformed people from making public appearances (Shweik, 2009). Violators were likely to be sent to almshouses or poor farms. Legal rhetoric continues to be problematic (LaFortune, 2018). Kentucky, Mississippi, and Ohio still use inappropriate language in their constitution and deny "idiots" (meaning mentally disabled) the right to vote (BBC News, 2016; Vasilogambros, 2018).

To this day, legislation and accessibility still threaten the voting rights of disabled people. Only eleven states consent mentally disabled citizens to vote, and others restrict voting to disabled people when courts have—assigned legal guardians[5]— (Fessler, 2016). Other restrictions are caused by accessibility. About 60 percent of polling sites inspected on Election Day 2016, reported anomalies in terms of—accessibility[6]—, from wheelchair limited access, and equipment malfunctioning (Vasilogambros, 2018).

---

[3] San Francisco, New Orleans, Chicago, Denver, Lincoln, and Columbus, Ohio.

[4] It is word mentioning that these laws emerged in the post-Civil war era and often target black disabled veterans (Schweik, 2009), marginalizing and criminalizing disability, poverty, and blackness.

[5] This restriction is still problematic. In many cases, courts assigned legal guardians for episodic instability.

[6] The issues in the 137 inspected polling places included "the accessible voting machine wasn't set up and powered on, the earphones weren't functioning, the voting system wasn't wheelchair-accessible, or the voting system didn't provide the same privacy as standard voting stations" (Vasilogambros, 2018).

Participation is limited in representation, as well. Few disabled politicians hold or have held governmental office positions, and those who served in the last century tended to—"hide" their disability[7]— (Friedman & Scotch, 2017) (just as their disability agenda, if they have one). On a few occasions, the disability would be displayed and explained as a heroic emblem if it occurred in war (Friedman & Scotch, 2017). Few politicians have opted for more open disclosure. Double amputee Illinois representative, Tammy Duckworth, has been praised by some users of *Disabled Twitter* for her support to disabled veterans, or only by the—impact of representation[8]—. In contrast, wheelchair user and Texas governor, Greg Abbott, has not received the same support from—*Disabled Twitter*[9]—, making clear that representation alone does not make a difference when there is not a disability agenda in place. Furthermore, it could be argued that instead of using his disability as part of an advocacy point, it has been used as—a marketing tool.[10]—

---

[7] Friedman & Scotch (2017) recount how photographs of president Franklin Roosevelt tended to hide his wheelchair. Right before elections, few people in North Carolina knew senator John East had a disability. Senator Bob Doyle, injured in combat, was usually very private about his disability.

[8] Take for example @SFdirewolf tweet: "[…] If Sen. Tammy Duckworth was in office when I was growing up, I can only imagine the impact on my imagination of what's possible as a disabled Asian American girl FYI: https://bitchmedia.org/article/disability-visibility-tammy-duckworth… #AsianWomensHistory" (2019, March 20)

[9] @ColleenFlangan replying to @AndrewPulrang of whether Greg Abbott representation is beneficial for disability tweets: "Yes we need to elect more Disabled leaders. That's not Greg Abbott. He tries hard to hide his wheelchair & never displays disability pride, instead he shames his disability that's dangerous for disabled youth development. We need more disabled & proud elected #CripTheVote" (2018, November 6)

[10] As an example, Texan governor Greg Abbott, announcing his candidacy, used his disability as a campaign slogan: "You often hear politicians talk about having a spine of steel. I have a steel spine, and I will put that to work for you and for Texas families every single day" (Root, 2013). His opponent Wendy Davis also used Abbott's disability in her campaign ad denouncing the millions of dollars he claimed for lawsuits after the accident and the little support he offered to the disabled community as Attorney General (Vertuno, 2014). "It's her choice if she wants to attack a guy in a wheelchair," responded Abbott in an interview (Vertuno, 2014), again, using the disability as a point of discussion and condemning Davis' lack of "sensibility," intentionally or unintentionally, portraying himself as someone who deserves special considerations.

Citizenship is an unstable concept that continues to be theorized from different stances. As I will review, in our current era, citizenship values are determined by neoliberal ideals. The citizen is a proactive and productive individual, one who participates in its citizenship. The status is not only contended in a broader political framework, but also from an individual stance. In a media-driven era, political demands and participation expand to other forms of citizenship enabled by media.

Cultural and DIY Citizenship

Social media has enabled different dynamics in political relationships. Politicians make formal announcements, and any individual has the possibility to react publicly. Public and private entities have a social media account and are active users. On the other hand, other political and social claims are communicated in more mundane ways: memes, jokes, or hashtags reflect political attitudes. Our engagement with social media has the potential to be a citizenship claim.

The conventional idea of citizenship fails to acknowledge how politics is exercised from different perspectives since it tends to limit the notion of rights and belonging to the legal stipulations of the State. T. H. Marshall (1950/2016), in order to expand the definition of citizenship, recognized a social dimension of citizenship, which he related to a sense of community considering social welfare, including the rights to educational and social services. While Marshall's proposition advanced to broaden the term, social citizenship still implies restricted participation, is often dependent on legal conditions, and does not offer a framework to address social inequalities (Procacci, 2001). Moreover, in a neoliberal era, social welfare is no

longer seen as a mere "right"; rather, it is often seen as a—degradation of citizenship[11]— (Fraser & Gordon, 1994; Procacci, 2001), complicating Marshall's conception.

In a globalized and identity-focused era, it is inadequate to solely consider political participation to encompass a comprehensive definition of citizenship. In an attempt to address citizenship from a more inclusionary perspective, anthropologist scholar Renato Rosaldo (1994) introduced the term "cultural citizenship" and defined it in the following terms:

> [R]efers to the right to be different and to belong in a participatory democratic sense. It claims that in a democracy, social justice calls for equity among all citizens, even when differences as race, religion, class, gender, or sexual orientation potentially could be used to make certain people less equal or inferior to others (p. 402).

Cultural citizenship has been approached from different disciplines extending the interpretation of the concept. The term offered queer, cultural studies, and governmentality scholars a reflection of their continuous arguments: "cultural identities and practices are political in their own right, contributing to the maintenance and contestation of societal norms" (Pawley, 2008, p. 595). In a way, this position contrasts with Rosaldo's (1994) only claim of inclusion and equality. Cultural citizenship provides a solution to what Toby Miller (2007) refers to as a "crisis of belonging" and suggests a broader framework to observe how common cultural practices, production, consumption, and ordinary habits are intertwined with political means.

The conversations of culture, citizenship, and media have been constant since the early studies of mass media, primarily questioning its role in democracy, and how it hinders or

---

[11] This statement is ratified in the recent measures of the current administration. Officials recently announced that green cards or another legal status could be denied if applicants use, have used, or are "deemed likely" to use benefits such as food stamps or Medicaid (Shear & Sullivan, 2019, August 12). This move evidently favors the path to citizenship to the wealthier "productive" class.

promotes citizenry (Ouellette, 2015; McChesney, 2013; Jones, 2006). Mediated technologies have been observed as informative tools (Jones, 2006), and much attention has centered on the perception of journalism as a public good with the "watchdog" power to support democracy or to jeopardize it in a deregulated market (e.g., McChesney, 2013). In recent years, citizen journalism has aroused from the grassroots, through blogs, engaging in news sites, posting events, documenting offenses (e.g., see Gillmor, 2008). Certainly, media conforms an important foundation of these informed citizens; nonetheless, both concepts, citizenship, and media, encompass much more than news.

From an adjacent perspective, cultural studies scholars insist on a more elaborated relationship. Hartley (1999) asserts that "we are all 'citizens of media' in the sense that participation in public decision-making is primarily conducted through media" (p. 157). For Hartley (1999), television "gathers populations" in the form of audiences, and participation is enacted through consumption. While this relationship between media and audience might not be politically motivated, Hartley (1999) argues that "cultural and personal usages have themselves contributed to new forms of citizenship, thereby becoming political in unexpected ways" (p. 155). Jeffrey Jones (2006) elaborated on this idea, claiming that different media sources, interactions, and genres contribute to constructing more elaborated meanings and relationships, including our engagement with entertainment, which is usually assumed as apolitical. For example, comedies, drama, sitcoms, news, or blogs, introduce distinct narratives that are integrated into an assimilation process and contribute to defining our political expressions. In other words, cultural citizenship considers "how arenas other than the political are also relevant to people's formation of political opinion" (Rosenbaum, 2017, p. 15).

The introduction of digital technologies that foment participation has expanded, even more, the idea of cultural citizenship. Hartley (1999) proposes a "DIY (Do IT Yourself) citizen" —referred to as a "creative citizen" in a latter review (Hargreaves & Hartley, 2016)—. Hartley (1999) observes cultural citizenship from an identity politics position. DIY citizenship is concerned with semiotic identification, that is, "the practice of putting together an identity from the available choices, patterns and opportunities on offer in the semiosphere and the mediasphere" (Hartley, 1999, p. 178). DIY citizenship emerges "in a period of consumer choice, computer-aided interactivity and post-identity politics […] as a right" (Hartley, 1999, p. 181). Hartley (1999) asserts that while citizenship is moving toward DIY models, it is not uncommon to see cultural and DIY modes of citizenship participation at the same time, especially as cultural citizenship is often approached by those communities whose rights and identities struggle recognition.

Digital platforms typify the cultural and the DIY citizen effectively, especially as they encourage participation converging the public and the private (Rosenbaum, 2017), provide the affordances to craft identities, and to connect cultural identities (Marwick, 2013). The user's constant interaction with content evidences the interposing and meddling of narratives. For example, the—"clapping back" image[12]— of Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi is taken out of the political stage and used as a meme in any possible context. Similarly, other nonpolitical images acquire political connotations when text references are added. Social media affords to share any content (boyd, 2011) and to comment on others' posts. An advertisement appears in the user's feed as if it were one's friend, and everyday photos become statements. Activism, politics, entertainment, policy, advertisement, disciplining, are in a hodgepodge of cultural content.

---

[12] The image of Democrat Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, clapping to president Donald Trump in the 2019 State of the Union Address, became famous as the posture suggested "sarcastic" applause.

Cultural citizenship recognizes that any narrative has the potential to become a political claim and that politics comprehends a broader idea intertwined with one's identity.

From the perspective of cultural citizenship, any narrative can become (or is in essence) a political narrative. For instance, the ranting of everyday struggles of *Disabled Twitter* users are political complaints of the ableist structures that continuously oppress them. @MichaelBierbau1 posts:

> #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow After 2 years I finally got my scooter. It sits unused in my house as a place to pile stuff. I have no way to take it in my minivan. The only approved seller of lifts or ramps is 45 miles away. My abled Care Coordinator asked, 'Why is that a problem?' (2019, March 16).

@MichaelBierbau1 tweet attests to the lack of access and how able-bodied privilege distracts the understanding of the constant physical and social constraints. @MichaelBierbau1 participates in a digital media dynamic creating content, chooses to interact with a particular hashtag, and, simultaneously, the voicing of his frustration is a political and social complaint. Similarly, the tweets of disapproval from *Disabled Twitter* users for not renewing the TV show "One Day at a Time" back in 2019 are complaints against the poor representation of disabled people in media (and otherwise too).

While some political intensions may be implicit, other positions express unequivocal political attitudes; a clear example is the hashtag #CripTheVote. In the early social media age, Jones (2006) suggested that "daily citizen engagement with politics [was] more frequently textual than organizational or 'participatory' in any traditional sense" (p. 378), participation then occurred by "choosing, attending to, processing, and engaging […] media texts" (p. 378). This description is prevalent yet insufficient in a saturated social media era. It is not surprising the

capability of media to alter societies and politics; however, it is often unpredictable how these changes might occur and its broader consequences. The use of social media in social and political movements obliges to observe the user from other citizenship facets: the relationship with texts is in itself political manifestation.

Given the fact that the architectural design of social media fosters connections in a community-like fashion, cultural and DIY citizenship in online spaces involve, aside from content interaction, collective participation. Social media has proven its efficacy in organizing massive events (from flash mobs, to the coordination of revolution riots, or the assembly of supremacy meetups), in transcending hashtags to legal actions (e.g., #MeToo), in transforming public complaints to social movements (e.g., #BlackLivesMatter), in materializing manifestos to actions (e.g., mass shootings), and so on.

It is clear that the term of citizenship is not static, that participation occurs in different forms, and through different means. Connectivity or particular disabilities may obstruct participation online to many disabled people (Ellccessor, 2016). However, given the many physical barriers in offline spaces, for a segment of disabled people able to interact in social media, networking is particularly valuable. The online space is, for many disabled people, an open door for assembly.

This thesis observes how disabled media users decide to engage with specific hashtags in issues of sexuality, that is, how they manifest citizenship through Twitter. In a neoliberal scenario marked by a defined identity politics, sexuality is an essential element of citizenship. Some users' decision to post tweets related to sexuality in an open hashtag, such as #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow, deserves attention, mainly because the hashtag does not expressively invite a conversation on sexuality. On the other hand, while the hashtag

#DisabledPeopleAreHot appears to offer a straightforward invitation to post a selfie, the relationship of the user and the camera introduces new discourses. Furthermore, in the same way, that media users "choose" to engage with particular texts (Jones, 2006), social media users have the option to relate to other users. In that sense, the decision of connections may also be considered expressions of (cultural) citizenship, as the acquisition of specific social capital and the engagement in communities politicize one's identity.

As I will review in the following chapters, from a Foucauldian standpoint, citizenship is forged in a disciplining manner through different mechanisms. In online spaces, citizenship is disciplined by discourse and controlled by code (Lessig, 2006) and the affordances of the platform (Stanfill, 2015). The optimistic view that the internet would free societies has proven its limitations, from the market rationale in which it is grounded (McChesney, 2013) to its architectural design (Lessig, 2006; Stanfill, 2015). Twitter is a media corporation and responds to market interests and algorithmic coding. The notions of citizenship in media are thus intrinsically related to a neoliberal model, one in which identities are brands, and participation is a popularity rating. Media and citizens are submerged in a capitalist setting where economic interests take place and must be negotiated continuously (Miller, 2007); the neoliberal citizen is a consumer, and culture is a commodity.

Yet, some affordances offer the possibilities to contest dominant discourses (see Brock, 2012; Rosenbaum, 2017). In the last decade, online spaces have emerged as innovative and useful instruments that provide visibility and orchestrating possibilities for activist purposes. Social media platforms have become organizing tools and sites of political assembly (see Gerbaudo, 2012; Rosenbaum, 2017; Tufecki, 2017), evidencing how political discourse, citizenship, and media are interwoven.

Disability and Activism

Disability advocacy sprouted in the 1950s among different groups of disabled war veterans and disabled miners (Jennings, 2018). However, the Disability Rights movement began formally in the 1960s, along with Civil, Women's, and Lesbian and Gay Rights movements, sharing commonalities with each of its counterparts. For instance, black and disabled populations have historically been—segregated[13]— (Patterson, 2012). Physical spaces were restricted to black people by Jim Crow laws, and to disabled people, by inaccessibility, confinement in mental or health clinics, and legislation such as the—"Ugly Laws"[14]—. The Disability Rights movement and the Women's movement have contended similar causes, e.g., "parenting, reproductive choice, education, voting, and employment" (Blackell-Stratton, Breslin, Mayerson & Bailey, 1988, p. 329). In comparison to the battle against patriarchal models, hegemonic sexualities, and racism, stressed in Women's, LGB+ movements, and Civil rights movements, respectively, disability activists started articulating notions of oppressive ableism.

The relationships among different movements extended to strategies and cooperation. Disability Rights movement developed along, and often borrowing from other social movements, sometimes using similar tactics that were also passed on as activists collaborated in different causes (Nielsen, 2012). For example, anti-war and civil rights activist Kitty Cone and disabled Black Panthers, Brad Lomax and Chuck Jackson were part of the Disability Rights movement

---

[13] Disability was often framed in parallel with the Civil rights movement. Disabled student Fred Fey explicitly compared racial segregation with disabilities when he printed on Urbana-Champaign's newspaper a photo of "university administrators dressed as Ku Klux Klan members with signs that read, 'Disabled Keep Out'" (Patterson, 2012, p. 476-477). Public education, and transportation were among the common grounds both movements held together; disabled people seeking for accessibility and black population asking for desegregation. Paradoxically, even when fighting in common grounds, the Disability movement is constantly criticized for being "too white."

[14] Enforced in some states, Ugly Laws denied some disabled people be seen in public spaces, these laws were repealed until the 1970s.

(Nielsen, 2012, p. 156). The 25-day sit-in Disability movement demonstration outside a government building in San Francisco, was possible and successful thanks to the—Black Panther Party[15]—, which provided meals for all participants (Schweik, 2011). Although the intersections of race and disability have always been present, Disability studies and disability activism are often criticized for being "too white"[16]. These examples demonstrate how intersections add complexity to communities and introduce experiences and connections that contribute to innovative forms of collaboration.

Activism and mobilization have been compensatory in terms of legislation. Manifestations with public appearances, disobedience acts, and lawsuits against discrimination eventually set the ground for the Rehabilitation Act in 1973, and the American Disability Act (ADA) in—1990[17]— (Nielsen, 2012). Although the Disability Rights movement evolved along with LGB+ and feminist groups that drew on sexual-political frameworks, disability activists' claims of sexuality have been persistently muted in exchange for the visibility of more immediate concerns such as health, labor, and accessibility, even when sexuality is intertwined with these issues. The invisibility of sexuality is a lack of recognition of citizenship as it restricts participation. In this sense, I consider the conversations of sexuality from *Disabled Twitter* activist acts and citizenship claims.

---

[15] This support was motivated by the participation of Panthers Lomax and Jackson in the Disability Rights movement.

[16] The claim of movements being "too white" or discriminating against other minorities within the same movement is constant. Women of color have been underrepresented in feminist movements, and LGB+ movements often omit people of color and trans people. While this topic deserves more attention, one argument is that important wings of the Disability movement and leadership emerged from universities that were racially segregated. For example, one of the most prominent factions were "the rolling quads," a group of disabled students from UC Berkley advocating for accessibility and civil rights, who founded the Center for Independent Living, an essential arm in the movement (see Patterson, 2012).

[17] The ADA was later amendment in 2008.

Disability and Sexuality

The sexuality of disabled people is conflicted by abled-heteronormative ideas. Disability evokes what falls out of the norm. From a mainstream able-bodied perspective, the disabled body is constantly harassed by the—denial of sexuality[18]— (McRuer & Mollow, 2012; Shildrick, 2009; Siebers, 2012) having repercussions in other domains. Quoted by McRuer, Anne Finger asserts that "sexuality is often the source of our deepest oppression; it is also often the source of our deepest pain. It's easier to talk about and formulate strategies for changing discrimination in employment, education, and housing than it is to talk about our exclusion from sexuality and reproduction" (McRuer, 2011, p. 107). The invisibility of sexuality in disabled people is dangerous. It perpetuates the notions of sexual incompetence; incapability to make responsible choices regarding sexuality, or to be fitted parents (Olkin, 2018); continues to normalize the lack of sexual education among disabled adolescents (Nemeth, 2000), mutes sexual abuse, threatens relationships and standardizes eugenics. As feminists have long contested, bodies have not only an intimate domain but also political and social dimensions; thus, the invisibility of sexuality makes invisible social and political issues.

The intersections of disability and sexuality were first observed from a medical perspective, agreeing with the medical model of disability that focuses on impairments and cures (see Siebers, 2008). Springer edited the first *Journal of Sexuality and Disability* in 1978 (McRuer & Mallow, 2012), which became an important medium to comprise and divulge research and analysis. In its first years, the journal's articles focused on the physical, psychiatric, and psychological challenges and treatments. Early work on disability and sexuality published by the

---

[18] Kim (2011) argues that asexuality can be an identity or a stigma. In this case, I refer to the stigma of asexuality, an identity that the community does not claim, on the contrary, contests. It is worth to mention that some *Disabled Twitter* users identify as asexual in their bio.

journal pointed at performance, dysfunctions, and the impact of specific disabilities in sexuality. Aside from health matters, the following publications included other social issues such as sexual education, sexual abuse, and the challenges of romance. Since the mid-1990s, an increased number of studies have turned to observe the aspect of sexuality and gender from an identity standpoint (e.g., McRuer & Mallow, 2012; Shakespeare, 2000). The inclusion of this perspective responds to the emergence of disability studies as an academic discipline developed in close relationship with feminist and queer studies. On the one hand, feminist scholars drew on the vulnerabilities of the body (e.g., Fine & Asch, 1988; Garland-Thompson, 2001). On the other, queer scholars offered a framework to approach disability drawing away from normative perspectives.

Contextualizing the intersections of disability and feminism, in *Re-shaping, Re-thinking, Re-defining: Feminist Disability Studies*, Rosmarie Garland-Thompson (2001) sketched the strong resemblance of the women's body with the disabled body. While these associations had been previously noticed (e.g., Fine & Asch, 1988), Garland-Thompson does a more profound exploration of the body, identity, and activism. Both, disabled people and women have been "othered" and seen against the "norm"; not only the bodies have been seen as deviant, but their behavior and personalities have also been scrutinized and subject to medical interventions (Garland-Thompson, 2001). From this perspective, essential aspects of women's sexuality are regarded as causes of disabilities and subsequentially medicalized: premenstrual syndromes, menstruation, menopause, pregnancy, or giving birth.

While the connections between disability and women's body were drawn upon an "empathic" identification, the opposite logic succeeded when approaching men's bodies; the sole idea of disability violated the stereotypical image of masculinity (e.g., see Shuttleworth, 2004).

Scholarship approaching the disabled male body, explicitly from a gendered and political standpoint, emerged only following feminist approaches (Shuttleworth, Wedgwood, & Wilson, 2012). Disability has been seen as a threat to what Raewyn Connell (1987) refers to as hegemonic masculinity; thus, disabled men must either negotiate with the standard notions of masculinity or reconstruct it (Gerschick & Miller, 1996; Scott, 2014; Shuttleworth, 2004). Furthermore, disability in male bodies has been inevitably concentrated in phallocentric imagery, accentuating the anxieties of impotence that, although rarely affect disabled men, often haunts them.

Early approaches to gender enactment and disability were narrowed by cisgender standpoints (e.g., Gerschick, 2000). However, the conceptualizations of disability in opposition to normalcy, forced alternative framings aside from heteronormative perspectives (e.g., McRuer, 2003; Sandhal, 2003; Shakespeare, 2000). Coming from this position, Robert McRuer's (2006) crip theory suggests the term "compulsory abled-bodiedness" describes a neoliberal fixation in conceiving the body in abled and heteronormative precepts.

Disability and sexuality are, in many instances, dependent on one another, especially as non-masculine and non-hetero sexualities are observed as disabilities, and as disability is often perceived as queered and asexual. Passanante Elman (2014), drawing on McRuer's compulsory abled-bodiedness, compares youth disabled characters with the adolescence stage itself. The representation of teen sexuality in the televised series of "After School Specials" (1972-1994) is infantilized, queered, not fully matured, and in need to be instructed (or "rehabilitated") (Passanante Elman, 2014). If the idea of heterosexual and fully matured sexuality become equivalent to able-bodiedness (Passanante Elman, 2014; McRuer, 2006; Shakespeare, 2000), all other sexualities may be seen as opposed to normalcy, or simply as "sexual deviances."

Homosexuality and intersexuality are clear examples of how non-normative sexualities are seen as aberrant. For Freud, heterosexuality was the consummation of "psychosexual development" (Bayer, 1987, p. 21), and following these ideas, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) considered homosexuality a mental disorder until 1975. Yet, the concept of "reparative" therapy is still approached in some Christian communities. The medicalization of intersexuality correlates with the social emphasis in binary cisgender individuals. Hitherto, intersexuality is classified as a Disorder of Sex Development, and although activists advocate against surgical procedures, these practices are common (Domurat Dreger, 1998, 1999). In this same manner, sexual deviances contesting the morality cannons have been historically pathologized (De Block & Adriaens, 2013). Comparably, mental disabilities are often associated with lascivious behavior.

Sexuality and disability intersect in health issues, which in turn derive in other implications as health and State are inevitably related. McRuer (2011) recounts how Hennie van den Wittenboer, a disabled man from the Netherlands, won the case to receive state-funded sex surrogacy alleging health benefits. The scene becomes problematic when transfer to a country where paying for sex is not legal, as it is in the Netherlands. The sole contentious predicament of monetary remuneration in exchange for sex is a contested matter in most countries, especially when health is not necessarily at stake. Pleasure as a commodity conditions participation to capital, precisely what a neoliberal model poses. In a survey published in 2005 by the British magazine Disability Now, 37.6 percent of men and 16 percent of women with disabilities admitted considering paying for sex, and 22 percent of men and 1 percent of women paid for it (Quarmby, 2015). Wittenboer's case exposes the clear connection of a sexual act with State regulation through health services. Meanwhile, sex surrogacy is not legal in the United States,

and its health system is private. Even when the Netherlands apparently "solves" the problem of sex as part of well-being practice, the "solution" stresses the limitations of casual sex and disability (see Siebers, 2012).

The invisibility of sexuality of disabled people, especially women, extends to the lack of accommodations in gynecological offices, the absence of qualified doctors to treat, prescribe, or examine women with specific disabilities, and the presuppositions of their capacity as parents has the potential to interfere in referrals to fertility clinics (Silvers, Francis, & Badesch, 2016). Ignoring sexuality issues has social and political repercussions. While disabled communities in different instances have mobilized to demand participation in different ambits, sexuality has remained a claim that has not to gain enough attention.

Thesis Composition

In this chapter, I described key terminology that intersects with a disability and with the argument of this thesis. Disabled people have historically been relegated from a citizenship status. Fundamental political rights, participation, and accessibility have been systematically restricted through different means and structures (e.g., Carey, 2009; Meekosha & Dowse, 1997; Nielsen, 2012; Patterson, 2012). Similarly, the sexuality of disabled people has been ignored, obscuring issues of health, eugenics, abuse, and reproduction. (Nemeth, 2000; Olkin, 2018; Silvers, Francis, & Badesch, 2016). While activism has offered progress in different aspects, sexuality is still a needed conversation that is occurring in online spaces. As I explained in this chapter, citizenship is an unstable concept that must be continuously negotiated and seen from a broader spectrum. Cultural and DIY citizenship provides a framework to discuss how conversations of sexuality in social media are activist acts and citizenship demands.

In Chapter II, I explain the terms in which I conceive *Disabled Twitter* as a counterpublic. I also discuss the methodology I followed to gather information and provide a literature review. I draw on Foucauldian concepts of knowledge-power and biopower, feminist, and queer literature. Although there might be other forms of resistance, I analyze how the discourses of this counterpublic community converse within two forms of activism. In Chapter III, I observe tweets that seek the inclusion of disabled bodies into a neoliberal discourse. These tweets mostly address topics of sexual potency/identity and stress ideas of self-concept (shame/pride). In Chapter IV, I am interested in a queer/crip reading of tweets and in those tweets that attempt to challenge hegemonic ideas of normative abled sex, including the claiming of queer/crip identities and alternative forms of identifications. While I differentiate the conversations of inclusion versus desertion, they occur in the same space, within the same community, aiming to contest the norms while demanding participation. Finally, in Chapter V, I suggest that although contradictory, these discourses are starting points that participate in articulating power dynamics, and they both contribute to the formation of more elaborated discourses.

CHAPTER II

METHODS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The results and possibilities of any study are shaped by its approaches and its framing. In this chapter, I present the methods of this study, how Twitter's affordances participate in shaping this community, and the literature that supports this analysis. Since this thesis is concerned with counternarratives of *Disabled Twitter* about sexuality, and with two different readings of these conversations, I build on complementing literature to encompass the various intersecting subjects. In this vein, I explain the reasoning *Disabled Twitter* is framed as a counterpublic, and then I discuss how Foucauldian, feminist, queer, and disability literature are interwoven in this analysis.

Methodology

Computer-mediated analysis is an emerging approach in research. Internet scholars, acknowledging the challenges when studying online discourses, have advanced in elaborating more systematic methods that provide formality to this type of research (e.g., Brock, 2016; Androutsopoulos, 2008; Herring, 2004). The recent exploration in this field and the uniqueness of each research and interface still pose challenges. Although some methodologies provide solutions, they are often limited because they emerged from specific research (e.g., Brock, 2012; Androutsopoulos, 2008). While these methods are key to structure similar research, they only offer a foundation to ground other research.

In the broader sense, this is Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA), which refers to any type of discourse analysis occurring in an online setting. CMDA is considered "not a single method but rather a set of methods from which the researcher selects those best suited to

her data and research questions" (Herring, 2004, p. 342). CMDA suggests different forms to approach online communities considering linguistic readings and recognizing that some interactions "*may be, but is not inevitably, shaped by the technological features of computer-mediated communication systems*" (Herring, 2004, p. 343). CMDA considers observation of participants and roles, user dynamics, and coding.

Although CMDA's toolkit encapsulates the main ideas of online discourse analysis, it is very general and was conceived in a pre-social media era. In a more specific sense, I frame this study as a Critical Technolcultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA). CTDA is an interdisciplinary analysis that combines critical theory and discourse analysis to observe "technocultural digital practices" (Brock, 2016). In contrast with CMDA, Brock (2016) considers the architecture of the medium essential in the meaning process. CTDA observes the intersection of culture and technology and conceives the technological design and user's participation as texts. Brock's research is centered on the cultural practices of *Black Twitter*. Thus, CTDA observes how specific cultural habits are related to medium affordances, such as linguistic cues or technology usage.

Given the particularities of this research, I have adapted some of the main ideas from CTDA to my study. I consider the affordances of the medium essential in the congregation of this community, and I suggest that these affordances are crucial in the cultural practices of *Disabled Twitter*. In contrast with *Black Twitter, Disabled Twitter* does not necessarily have a distinct cultural identity in an offline setting. Instead, *Disabled Twitter* is creating and performing identity on Twitter. For this reason, some of the considerations of CTDA are unsuitable for this study. Lastly, the questions that drive this study are what ultimately guided some of the procedures to gather specific information. For example, I analyze the content of a

blog about sex shared among *Disabled Twitter* users, but I do not do this type of analysis for every piece of shared material. In essence, this study, just as CTDA, considers affordances semiotic units that converse along with linguistic expressions. Certainly, this methodology poses limitations and could be improved with more systematic approaches. However, as I explained, the novelty of this field, the continuous transformation of media technologies, the variety of research, along with the many pieces of information that participate in discourse, calls for adjustment and flexibility (and, of course, for more novel and adaptable method framing). In the following paragraphs, I describe the specific steps I followed to gather and analyze information during the period I observed *Disabled Twitter*.

On February 6, 2019, I started observing and gathering screenshots of tweets posted with the hashtag #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow, only a few weeks after the hashtag had sparked on Twitter. At the time, Imani Barbarin, the creator of the hashtag, had 19.3 thousand followers. Currently, she has 52.8 thousand—followers[19]—. I followed some of the most engaging participants that were as well following Barbarin, using the hashtag, and conversed with one another.

Currently, I follow 125 users that I conceive as part of *Disabled Twitter*. All of them claim to have at least one disability, and the types of disabilities encompass a wide range. These are some of the most prominent members, primarily because they continuously engage in different conversations, have strong relationships with other *Disabled Twitter* users, are continuously tagged, and introduce #hashtags or conversations. Some *Disabled Twitter* users claim to be disability activists only for their social media activity; others are activists in offline

---

[19] As of June 6, 2020

settings. The selection of these members was based on my observation, and some were suggested by Twitter's algorithms. Thus, it is likely that I omitted other prominent participants.

All 125 users are followed by at least eight members of *Disabled Twitter*. The total number of followers does not reflect status. Some users are youtubers or prominent in other groups and communities. For example, @stevieboebi, a Sex Ed youtuber has 188.6 thousand—followers[20]— and is followed by 25—members[21]— from *Disabled Twitter*; she shares tweets from other members but is not necessarily more influential than @4WheelWorkOut who has 9,347—followers[22]— and is followed by 66 members of *Disabled Twitter. *@4WheelWorkOut—describes herself[23]— in her profile as a Juris Doctorate, created the hashtag #disabledwomanism to converse about the intersection of disability, blackness, and womanhood, and many of her tweets are recurrently retweeted.

Additionally, status manifests as other members are able to identify leaders. Tweets from members of the community expressively thank and tag members of *Disabled Twitter* for their activism and contribution to hashtags, conversations, or news sharing. While leadership in online spaces tends to be fluid (see Gerbaudo, 2012), there are undoubtedly main characters. In the first weeks of April 2019, users of Twitter made their lists of their Marvel superheroes adjudicating a superhero name to someone from their group of friends. Several *Disabled Twitter* users participated in naming members of the community as Iron Man, Black Widow, Thor, Black Panther, Hulk, and other superheroes. While the lists varied, there was a consensus to include in various lists @Imani_Barbarin, @SFdirewolf, and @coffeespoonie. Similarly, in other instances,

---

[20] As of June 6, 2020

[21] I am considering as members of *Disabled Twitter the 125 users I follow.* This is an example of how status within this community should not be valued by the number of followers. Given the fluidity of online communities, it is likely that my appraisal is incorrect.

[22] As of June 6, 2020

[23] According to her bio on March 10, 2019.

members have pointed at other leaders such as @MortuaryReport, @EbThen,

@VilissaThomson, @alexhaagaard, @AaronLinguini, @JessicaOOTC, @annieelainey,

@RebeccaCokley, @karriehiggins @HijaDe2Madre, among others. These types of hints were

useful to identify influential members and key conversations.

Although Twitter allows us to observe the activity of a hashtag using the search bar, I

decided to follow frequent users in order to observe relationships, see trends, and catch

conversations that were omitting hashtags. This practice could be seen as an ethnographic

approach, limited and enriched by the affordances of Twitter. I logged into Twitter regularly.

From February 2019 to April 2019, I spent several hours a week. From May 2019 until June

2020, I logged into Twitter more sporadically, still at least once a week. Inevitably, the feed I see

is determined by algorithms and prioritizes certain users or topics, depending on my activity in

social media.

I collected a purposive sample of 188 tweets and comments concerning different aspects

of sexuality. Although there were more tweets about sexuality, I did not retrieve them, because

they did introduce different ideas. In the end, my approach is not quantitative. I included tweets

that explicitly mentioned sex, sexual preferences, identity, dating, marriage, reproduction, and

sexual abuse. I acknowledge that sexuality does not limit to intercourse, reproduction, gender,

love, or romance, but these subjects evidence the assumption of sexuality. Some of these tweets

were part of conversations, and many express similar opinions and concerns.

Additionally, in building the sample using an online snowball sampling approach, the

tweets with more than one hashtag introduced me to other conversations. Besides the main

sample of tweets, I gathered tweets that referred to activism, politics, news, and health, as they

come into conversation with the argument of this thesis. I used search bars to look for more

tweets with the same hashtags and with keywords, aiming to find clearer examples or alternative voices. Although not all tweets in this thesis use the hashtags #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow, #AbledsAreWeird, or #DisabledPeopleIsHot, every subject I approach in this thesis has been discussed, with different wording, tone, or phrasing, in the aforementioned hashtags.

Some tweets in this thesis do not have a hashtag at all, and some were threads from other popular hashtags such as #SayTheWord, #AbleistRapeCulture, #4outof5, to name a few. Some tweets participated in more than one conversation using several hashtags. Generally, each hashtag varies in tone and content. The tweets posted with the hashtag #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow are, in many cases, everyday struggles. #AbledsAreWeid retells awkward, uncomfortable encounters with ableism. #AblelistRapeCulture is a denounce against the large percentage of disabled people who are victims of sexual assault. #DisabledPeopleAreHot hashtag encourages disabled people to post selfies, some are conventional face or full-body photos, and others adopt provocative poses in lingerie, swimsuits, and partial nudity. Occasionally, if pertinent to my argument, I use examples from past dates, since these were the best example to make my point.

Twitter and Its Affordances

Social media encourages the dissemination of information. The DIY (Do It Yourself) features suppose an active user who is simultaneously an editor, a creator, and a gatekeeper. The self-production process tends to suggest a user in charge of its content. However, to a great extent, it is the medium, through its architecture, that dictates the possibilities (see Lessig, 2006; Stanfill, 2015).

Conversations and interaction in Twitter, as in any other social media sites, are shaped by its affordances. The concept of affordances was first used in the field of ecological psychology

by James Gibson to describe how environments offer particular possibilities of action while constraining others (Bucher & Helmond, 2017). The term was later adapted to design by Donald Norman (Bucher & Helmond, 2017) and is used to describe how design offers and restricts specific moves (Bucher & Helmond, 2017; Stanfill, 2015).

Twitter is a microblogging platform that allows users to post up to 280 characters in a tweet. The engagement in Twitter is completed by "following" users, an action that does not need to be reciprocated. The correspondence of a "following" establishes an equalitarian bonding, which, as I explained earlier, is common among *Disabled Twitter* users.

Hashtags are the most iconic affordance on Twitter. Hashtags function as conversational points of reunion as well as dissemination bits. First, because given the geographical dispersion and the limited access in the physical space, hashtags are assembly points. Second, because it is the—"scalability" affordance[24]— (see boyd, 2011) what enables the possibility of "trending topics." In 2008, Twitter initiated "trending topics," an affordance of visibility. According to rethinkmedia.org, "trending topics" are determined by algorithms based on "sharp spikes rather than gradual sustain growth." Therefore, it is the continuous posting of a hashtag in a short period that popularizes a topic.

As a community deeply invested in identity recognition, *Disabled Twitter* users regularly craft their identities in their bios using emojis. Emojis, unlike emoticons, not only express a mood and tone, they are ideograms, in a way, more closely related to kanji characters. While emojis were initially used as part of conversations, the practice of including these icons next to a username signals its capacity as signifiers. In 2015, emojis introduced five skin tone images,

---

[24] According to boyd (2011), "scalability" in networked publics is about the *possibility* of tremendous visibility, not the guarantee of it.

same-sex couples, and families, and a—wheelchair emoji[25]—. In 2019, there were 70

combinations of same-sex couples, more than a dozen of emojis representing disabilities, and the

inclusion of cultural objects. The increasing specificity of some disabilities, gender, and race are

additional tools that facilitate identity claims and participate in visual discourses.

    While *Twitter*'s affordances restrict *Disabled Twitter* users, it is also necessary to

acknowledge how users may take advantage or resist the conditions given by the architecture.

For example, although tweets are restricted to 280 characters, users, trying to make a point,

extend their text to several posts in their comments. Although branding specialists suggest using

the bio section as a self-promotion tool, *Disabled Twitter* uses this section as identity marks to

recognize other community members. Trending topics are often conceived as an ephemeral

reaction that occurs naturally; however, some trending hashtags from *Disabled Twitter* are

orchestrated by encouraging participation.

    Moreover, the affordances of Twitter have been crucial to mobilize in a digital space a

community often limited by physical architecture. The seclusion of disabled people in mental

and health institutions that prevailed as the norm during the Victorian Era, along with the

historical marginalization, have contributed to permeate the idea of isolation. In current times,

architecture and design impose physical barriers limiting their participation. Additionally, social

structures continue to conceal this population. The affordances of digital platforms have

congregated a community often limited by mobility.

Networked Counterpublics

    Disabled Twitter engages in conversations that question the system and categorically

reject ableism. *Disabled Twitter* is invested in activism by sharing, promoting, or repudiating

---

[25] According to Emojipedia.org, "Wheelchair Symbol was approved as part of Unicode 4.1 in 2005 and added to Emoji 1.0 in 2015." Unicode is an international encoding standard.

social and political motions that affect disabled people. *Disabled Twitter* is a community that challenges the establishment by participating in the production of counternarratives. Therefore, I frame this community as a counterpublic. In this section, I expand the notion of counterpublics.

Habermas ([1962], 1989), observing the rearrangement of society upon the emergence of capitalism, poses that salons and coffee houses served bourgeois men as public spaces to discuss private issues; he refers to these spaces as a public sphere. Nancy Fraser (1990) refutes Habermas' notions of public sphere and argues that Habermas' model is limited in its explanation because it leaves out other alternative spheres that emerge as a result of a dominant ideology. Fraser introduces the term "subaltern counterpublics" to describe the alternative groups that "emerge in response to exclusion within dominant publics" (Fraser, 1990, p. 67). Counterpublics represent a rejection of the establishment.

Counterpublics are arenas that offer contesting opportunities. Fraser (1990) considers two facets of counterpublics, "on one hand, they function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment; on the other hand, they also function as bases of training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics" (p. 68). In this respect, *Disabled Twitter* explicitly follows the "dual character" Fraser distinguishes. *Disabled Twitter* congregates a group of people that openly identify as disabled and continuously contrast their identity with ableism. Their tweets are not only meant to unify and integrate other members, but they also aim to contest discrimination and marginalization as an activist act in favor of the rest of the community.

Disabled Twitter users consider their participation and engagement with hashtags as activism. Moreover, for other users, participation occurs as an only alternative. @Imani_Barbari explains in a tweet that "for many disabled people, becoming a disability advocate is purely incidental" (2019, March 16). Barbari puts forward that "many disabled people" have to

continuously advocate for their rights, evidencing a public "formed under conditions of dominance and subordination" (Fraser, 1990, 70). Adding to Barbarin's argument, @cripplescholar (2019, March 18) stresses the need for confrontation:

> Agreeing to disagree on issues of oppression legitimizes that oppression and gives it space to grow[.] [A]ll opinions are not in fact equal & if you have an opinion you want other people to act on YOU DAMN WELL BE ABLE TO DEFEND IT (2019, March 18).

These assertions layout how *Disabled Twitter* users take a contesting approach against an oppressive system.

While these alternative arenas offer opportunities to articulate contrasting narratives, counterpublics are in a disadvantaged position when defining identities. Habermas' Public Sphere is a ground of deliberation for bourgeois men, where "the formation and enactment of social identities" occur as part of their participation (Fraser, 1991, p. 68). These identities are assumed and granted without further questioning. They emerge organically as part of dominant discourse; thus, they are accepted and presumed as normative. In parallel, counterpublics must negotiate an identity in relation to the dominant sphere. Fraser (1990) explains:

> Public spheres are not only arenas for the formation of discursive opinion; in addition, they are arenas for the formation and enactment of social identities. This means that participation is not simply a matter of being able to state propositional contents that are neutral with respect to form of expression. Rather [...] participation means being able to speak 'in one's own voice,' thereby simultaneously constructing and expressing one's cultural identity through idiom and style (Fraser, 1990, p. 68-69).

Counterpublics are, as subaltern groups, particularly troubled when defining the boundaries of public and private (Fraser, 1991), especially considering that limited public participation and mainstream discourses obscure the oppression of private experiences. Dominant identities are the standard even in private matters; for example, there is no such thing as "coming out" as heterosexual, it is already taken for granted. Although sexuality is considered a private issue, once it reaches a public stage, it is dominant sexualities that are acceptable in these settings. As a result, at times, counterpublic identities have used the voicing of private issues as tactics of resistance. As forms to make these issues visible and demand inclusion in the broader sphere, e.g., feminist or LGB+ movements drawing on body politics. While on one hand, these identities are productive to contest the dominant norms, on the other, they expose the vulnerabilities of intimacy, as this allows dominant groups to police, intrude, organize, classify, and discipline their privacy.

Two other notions of public sphere are useful when referencing new technologies: the public screen and the visual public sphere. Observing the media coverage of the World Trade Organization (WTO) events in Seattle in 1999, DeLuca and Peeples (2002) introduced the term "public screen." While "Habermas lamented the passing of the bourgeoisie public sphere and the rise of the mass media spectacle, a turn of events he [saw] as the disintegration or refeudalization of the public sphere" (DeLuca & Peeples, 2002, p. 128), DeLuca and Peeples (2002) claim that dissemination may as well take the form of political contestation. DeLuca and Peeples (2002) suggest that the televised and printed images of protest become forms of "participatory democracy" coexisting with other content in a "corporate-controlled" media. The protest scenes of Seattle obliged media coverage that was not planned and forced new conversations that have not taken place (DeLuca & Peeples, 2002). The idea of "public screen" emerges in the pre-social

media boom era of the Internet. Although this conceptualization encapsulates the essence of mass media, it failed to predict the potentiality of a space in which dissemination and deliberation co-occur.

In a more recent study, and incorporating social media in these conversations, Cram, Loehwing, and Lucaites (2016) reformulate the public sphere by including the spectator in a participatory process and assessing the impact of visual means, in this case, vernacular photography. They propose that "the visual public sphere is a reconsideration of civic spectatorship that takes into account changing modes of circulation" (Cram et al., 2016, p. 229). For Cram et al. (2016), "the camera-equipped spectators" from Occupy Wall Street protests become empowered as they participate in the physical setting, produce content, and have tools of dissemination, specifically, photographic—publicity[26]—.

Both the public screen and the visual public sphere use anti-establishment demonstrations as the main text of the analysis. Although these analyses abstain from speculating connections to Fraser's counterpublics, the sole distancing from mainstream publics, and the straightforward approach to participatory democracy, implies that relationships to counterpublics may be traced. Moreover, these two conceptualizations of public spheres may also be seen in connection with the ideas of cultural and DIY citizenship that I describe in Chapter I. Media spheres are spaces that facilitate citizenship participation and the congregation of counterpublics. This is particularly true for social media platforms that combine networking, production, and dissemination affordances.

Twitter is one of the platforms that more efficiently participates in the construction of counternarratives and the formation of counterpublics. Counterpublics have emerged from racial

---

[26] Adjacent to this subject, it has been a public claim that Twitter silenced the Occupy Wall Street manifestations. Twitter has categorically denied those accusations.

identification, such as #BlackTwitter (Graham & Smith, 2016); from feminist approaches by contrasting rhetoric from other hashtags, such as #YesAllWomen in response to #NotAllMen (Jackson & Banaszczyk, 2016); or by merely contradicting the purpose of a hashtag, as when New York Police Department encouraged Twitter users to post photos of police officers using the hashtag #myNYPD, and users responded with photos of police brutality (Jackson & Foucault Welles, 2015).

Disabled Twitter participates in new forms of interactions made possible by digital technologies. For Habermas, public spheres reconstruct the political structures. They do not replace the "existing decision-making mechanisms with a sort of popular referendum but instead to transform the nature of existing rule" (Cram, Loehwing, & Lucaites, 2016, p. 234). From a less conflicting position, counterpublics seek similar means. Understanding *Disabled Twitter* as a counterpublic recognizes activism and citizenship. The notions of public screen and visual public sphere offer considerations for more fluid interactions given by the platform's affordances.

As a counterpublic community that evolves online, *Disabled Twitter* embraces the potentialities and limitations this space offers. Communities online are formed as interpersonal networks rather than as group clusters (Chamber, 2013), resulting in prioritization of the individual. boyd (2011) defines these virtual communities as "networked publics," which are shaped by the media they emerge and depend on the affordances of these platforms. The importance of the individualization is stressed in the design of social media platforms that encourage a profile picture, a nickname, a brief biography, engagement with other users by "friending" or "following" them, and so on. The construction of an online identity depends on the characteristics a user wishes to project and forces them to build social capital. *Disabled Twitter* is a networked counterpublic community. As such, it depends on the medium's affordances to

determine the dynamics as a counterpublic, and also conditions the community connections and identities of its members.

A Foucauldian Approach

This thesis is concerned with conversations of disability, sexuality, neoliberalism, and queerness, inevitably connecting discussions of bodies, identity, normalcy, and intersectionality. Foucauldian literature provides the fundamental reasoning for this analysis, and Queer, Disability, and Feminist scholarship offer necessary complements to develop critical arguments. These disciplines and their literature are often in conversation with one another, coinciding with fundamental notions and negotiating others. Foucauldian concepts have influenced Feminist and Queer studies, and in turn, Disability studies emerged as a discipline influenced by Feminist and Queer studies.

Although elucidating, Foucauldian literature has been critiqued for having limitations, especially when observing activism and minorities. For some feminists, Foucault's approaches are problematic because they universalize a male experience (Mills, 2003). They are ineffective in observing oppression as they do not offer an appropriate conceptualization of empowerment (Deveaux, 1994). While Foucault acknowledges different bodies and sexual hierarchies, and some of his early work such as *Madness and Civilization* or *The Birth of the Clinic* points at the notion of "otherness," he does not deepen on how power functions in—minoritized populations[27]—. In this sense, it is essential to integrate critical terms that theorize oppression, or that observe specific power dynamics.

Although the social model of disability is a significant step toward understanding disability apart from medical conceptions, it still results in an insufficient framework in many

---

[27] In one of his last interviews, Foucault talks about resistance. In a broader term, discourse could be conceived as a form of resistance. However, resistance, as such, is omitted in most of his literature.

instances. The social model of disability was developed in the UK in the late 1970s by disability activists contesting the idea of the medical model (Shakespeare & Watson, 2002). The social model distinguishes impairment from disability, observing the first as a medical issue and the latter as a social construction (Adams, Reiss & Serlin, 2015). The social model argues that disability is the result of the social structures that restrict the body, placing disability as a social problem (Oliver, 1996). This approach "fails to recognize that *both* impairment and disability are social" (Kafer, 2013, p. 7) and occur simultaneously blurring the differentiation between one and the other (Tremain, 2005). Moreover, it ignores how some conditions have a disabling effect in the individual (Kafer, 2013), could be degenerative (Kafer 2013; Shakespeare & Watson, 2002), and excludes those interested in treatments and cures (Kafer, 2013).

In the compilation of essays *Foucault and the Government of Disability*, Shelley Tremain (2005) suggests a need to distance from the social model of disability. A Foucauldian approach, argues Tremain (2005), brings into discussion other aspects of disability and allows us to observe power structures often obviated. In other words, while social structures stress the notion of disability, other dynamics simultaneously determine the categorization of disability. For Foucault, the social model could be translated into a discourse, and discourses have further implications as they operate by other mechanisms. From my account, I consider a Foucauldian approach pertinent for the following reasons: 1) Foucault's ideas of discourse and power-knowledge are an approach to discuss the narratives occurring in Twitter as a counter-discourse and to frame constructed identities; and 2) The theorizations of biopolitics and disciplining concepts connect sexual bodies and State, offering a framework to analyze citizenship.

(Counter)Discourses and Power/Knowledge

At the core of Foucault's work is the notion of discourse and its relationship with power and knowledge. For Foucault, discourse is the attribution of meaning. Discourse is not limited to language; it includes practices, narratives, and structures, that, all together, produce knowledge (Mills, 2003). In turn, knowledge incites the exercise of power through "institutional apparatus and its technologies" (Hall, 1997, p. 47). Knowledge becomes a power mechanism.

The idea of discourses and construction of knowledge are key terms when observing resistance because they pose the possibility to construct counter-discourses. Therefore, to the extent that discourse can be consistently sustained, new forms of knowledge appear. For example, Fraser (1990) notes that some feminist discourses, "after sustained discursive contestation" (p. 73), become a "common concern." In this respect, *Disabled Twitter,* as a community that produces discourses, participates in the creation of knowledge.

Queering a Disabled Identity

The body's discursive attribute has become an appealing framing to observe and reconceptualize distressed bodies and sexualities. For Foucault, the body is a technology of power, "the body is produced within discourse" (Hall, 2001, p. 78). In Foucault's view, the bodies are discourses, and identities are constructed. This idea has influenced feminist theory, set the foundation for queer theory, and, subsequently, the more recent crip theory conceptualizations.

In particular, queerness represents an experimental conception in terms of identity as it draws away from lesbian and gay studies to contest—heteronormativity[28]— (see Cohen, 1997),

---

[28] Cohen (1997) defines heteronormativity as "those localized practices and those centralized institutions which legitimize and privilege heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships as fundamental and "natural within society" (p. 440). In this conception, homosexuality assimilated within these parameters is also heteronormativity that is family-oriented, homosexual practices may also be included in this definition.

offering an alternative ground, not only in terms of sexuality but also in terms of a political domain. Queer social movements, queer theory, and the word "queer" itself hold a strong connection with disability. Used as a synonym of "peculiar" or "odd," the word queer had a derogatory connotation often employed to describe people with supposedly deviant sexuality and people with a visible disability (Dean, 2015). The term was reclaimed in the 1990s primarily by Queer Nation, an organization founded by AIDS activists, demonstrating the potential to reframe discourses and, as other movements have shown, how the use of an identity is adopted as a "brand" of social cause. Moreover, as scholar Ellis Hanson has claimed, it was a disability - AIDS- that brought attention to advancing queer politics (Dean, 2015, see also Davidson, 2008).

In a parallel scenario, queerness was being imagined in scholarship. Ferdinand de Saussure introduced the linguistic notion of binary opposition to describe how meaning is constructed in terms of contrast with one another. Following Saussure, Derrida (1981 [1972]) argues that binary oppositions are not neutral; they exist in—hierarchical forms[29]—. Derrida (1981 [1972]) suggests a strategy of deconstruction:

> To do justice to this necessity is to recognize that in a classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a vis-a-vis, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand (p. 41).

The idea of deconstructionism acquires then political value and offers a framework to rethink power structures as it becomes a tool to overturn hierarchies (Jay, 1987).

---

[29] For example, the binary white-black, especially when it comes to race, is more complicated than simple antagonism.

Deconstructionism is essential to detach social meanings of sexuality and gender and to contest heteronormativity. Annamarie Jogose (2005) points at three prominent ideas that enabled the development of queer theory: Gayle Rubin's essay "Thinking Sex," Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the closet*, and Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*. According to Jagose (2005), Rubin took the first step separating the concepts of gender and sexuality and recognizing a political facet from these two ideas. Sedgwick, analyzing the AIDS epidemic, observed contradictions in language and suggested drawing apart from the binary of homo and hetero (Jogose, 2005). Moreover, a third pillar, strongly supported by Derrida's notion of deconstruction and Foucault's idea of the construction of identities, was Butler's conjecture that gender is performed (Jogose, 2005). The construction of queerness results from the deconstruction of sexuality. Although queerness rejects classification by (paradoxically) creating a new category, it illustrates the need to construct an identity in order to claim sexual agency and demand social and political representation. While Foucault had observed the construction of homosexuality in the first part of the twentieth century, queerness emerges, in a way, as a counter-discourse to respond to the idea of "category."

Using the same rationale, disability scholars, particularly those interested in sexuality, have approached queer frameworks to describe and explore disability and sexuality. The ideas of queering disability or disabling queerness have prompted the development of crip theory. Drawing from Eli Clare, Carrie Sandhal, Alison Kafer, Tom Shakespeare, and other disability scholars, Robert McRuer uses queer theory principles to introduce crip theory, expanding the discussion of sexuality, bodies, disability, and normalcy. McRuer (2006), drawing on Adrienne Rich's "compulsory heterosexuality," proposes the concept of "compulsory abled-bodiedness." McRuer (2006) argues that "compulsory able-bodiedness" and "compulsory heterosexuality" are

dependent on one another. Heterosexuality already takes for granted "able-bodiedness," and just as Butler supposes heterosexuality as an ongoing, never-ending, ideal project of identity, able-bodiedness is as well an aspirational project that must be continuously pursued and is never completely attained (McRuer, 2006). McRuer's term is conceived within the neoliberal ideals of self-improvement projects that are intrinsically heterosexual and able-bodied.

Queer and crip theory are supported by poststructuralist ideas: on one hand, Derrida's concept of deconstruction, and on the other, Foucault's acknowledgment of the possibilities to create "counter-discourses" and "counter-identifications." Further elaborating queerness and intersectionality, José Esteban Muñoz (1999) introduces disidentifications, "a third term that resists the binary of identification and counteridientification" (p. 97). Disidentification is a queer form of resistance that rejects dominant discourses and acknowledges the hybridity of multiple minoritarian identities. It is through—performance[30]— that Muñoz suggests a new site of negotiation of politics and identity, as a counterpublic.

Queerness offers disability a ground of deliberation in terms of identity, indeed, with its limitations. Cathy Cohen (1997) argues that while queer politics seemed promising and still offers potential, it emerged in a "dichotomy from heterosexuality" as a "homogenized" political identity and has obviated intersectionality not being able yet to challenge heteronormativity (p. 440). Cohen's argument questions the reconceptualization of queer politics, still positioning it in what Saussure would refer to as a binary opposition from heterosexuality. Similarly, crip discourses are prone to stagnate in its course, but we must admit that initial conceptualizations lay the ground for more inclusive adaptations. Although Cohen's recognition is necessary to

---

[30] It is worth noting that virtual platforms might facilitate the performance of intersectionality as they tend to stress on individuality, at times favoring visibility of (intentionally custom) intersections, such as sexuality, gender, and race (boyd, 2011).

advance towards more comprehensive approaches, queerness still offers an effective framework for recognizing and theorizing identities that conflict with the limited conceptualizations.

Disabled Knowledge

The self-identification as disabled in Twitter adjudicates an identity that conflicts with mainstream discourses; however, it simultaneously creates new forms of knowledge. In the United States, the "disabled identity" has become a contesting issue, starting from the fundamental point of linguistics (see Dunn & Erin, 2015). In the United Kingdom, disability scholars adopted from early on the term "disabled." In contrast, the United States opted for "people with disabilities," a language encouraged by scholars and legislation. In recent years, a growing number of activists and scholars prefer the use of "disabled people" because it claims an identity. "People with disabilities" is referred as "people first" language, and its defendants argue that a disability does not define the person. On the contrary, "identity-first" language defendants contend that disability is intertwined with their identity and that using a different language contributes to stigmatization; for example, we do not say "people with homosexuality" or "people with blackness." Similarly, disability activists categorically reject terminology such as "specially-abled," "differently-abled" and so forth, because "specially-sexed" or "differently-raced" would be stressing abnormality.

The recent development of new narratives of disabled people contributes to create discourses of identities that transgress the biomedical domain (Shakespeare, 1996; Tremain, 2005). Shakespeare points at two uses of identity, the first as a manner to make the "self" visible, what he relates with the "coming out" of non-heterosexual individuals, and the second is as a mode to associate to a broader group. Shakespeare (1996) posits that "the 'coming out' is the process of positive self-identification, rejecting the categorization of subjection, and affirming

subjectivity and collective power. It is about developing new definitions and new political

forms" (Shakespeare, 1996, para. 34). In other words, for Shakespeare, the sole claim of self-

identity enfranchises disabled people and allows the development of social and political

movements. Adding to Shakespeare, these forms of identity enactment contribute to the

production of knowledge.

If identity is constructed through discourse, social media seems to follow Foucault's

constructionism in the most literal expression. In this case, the deconstruction is already given by

the disembodiment of media. Social media encourages, with limited tools, the customization of

"virtual anatomy" and "public speech" through status updates, and social connection with other

users. Reminding us of Butler's idea of gender performance, social media encourages the

performance of an identity; in the end, we are encouraged to perform.

Digital platforms have the potential to amplify discourses, especially as they offer

connections to congregate communities and reinforce identities (boyd 2011; Chambers, 2013). In

this case, *Disabled Twitter* identifies as *disabled* in different manners: through hashtags, in each

user's bios, and comments and tweets. The hashtags #Things*Disabled*PeopleKnow and

#*Disabled*PeopleAreHot are claims of knowledge and thus constructions of true. Note that both

hashtags use the word *disabled.* Many other hashtags that emerge from this community use the

word *disabled* or *crip,* or they contrast with *ableds,* emphasizing, or contrasting identities. The

first hashtag avows a disabled identity, and positions disabled people as a "community of

knowledge," one that will reveal enlightenment. #*Disabled*PeopleAreHot attempts to reconstruct

the idea of "hotness," an adjective typically used to signify "sexiness." The use of "hotness" to

describe "disability" contests the invisibility of sexuality commonly attributed to disabled bodies.

The formation of identities, the claiming of agency, and the construction of counter-discourses

are, in essence, knowledge/power strategies. As much as these discourses (identities) are empowering, they engage in different power relations as these ideas coexist with dominant narratives.

In a broad spectrum, Twitter seems to be an ideal space to construct identities and counter-discourses. Nonetheless, these assertions must be stated with reservations. For example, Mintz (2015) questions the contradiction of demanding visibility when a historically disabled population has been "stared at" and hidden. On the other hand, while Twitter offers the capacity to reconstruct a disabled identity, up to what point does social media reproduce offline dynamics rather than contesting them? Or, up to what point one space intersects with the other offering a political voice outside of the virtual realm?

Disciplining the Disabled Body

Foucault developed much of his work by analyzing different forms of power. Throughout his *oeuvre*, Foucault introduced various concepts to describe distinct relations. For Foucault, power is productive; it is not exercised as a push-down force, or, contrasting with Marxists, it is not solely positioned in State apparatus. For Foucault, power is more a strategy than a possession that operates in a disciplining manner rather than in an oppressive form (Mills, 2003, p. 35).

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1977) suggests that society transitioned from a punishing to a disciplinary society. Foucault builds on the idea of the—panopticon[31]— to explain the self-regulation effect prompted by surveillance mechanisms. Foucault presumes that the impression of surveillance produces self-awareness and self-disciplining; thus, the control is exercised by the subject. The purpose of disciplinary methods is to create "docile bodies" that may be "used, transformed, and improved" (Foucault, 1977, p. 136). Earlier, in *The Birth of the*

---

[31] A Panopticon is an observation tower in the middle of the circular architecture of the XVIII century prisons.

Clinic, Foucault (1973) refers to the "medical gaze" and the bodies as sources of knowledge for the aim of truth: the ill-bodies are scrutinized and manipulated in order to be diagnosed, they become objects of knowledge. Both the docility of the body and the "medical gaze" play an important role when observing disabled bodies.

The disciplining of the body becomes especially visible when bodies are seen as improper or fall out of the norms. Feminists have long disputed the disciplining of their bodies (King, 2004; Deveaux, 1994) in terms of reproduction, sexuality, appearance, and so on. Similarly, all these concerns are shared by disabled people. Framing the Michelle Obama Let's Move! program under the Foucauldian perspective, Butler-Wall (2015) claims that the rise of obesity in the last decades has prompted anti-obesity campaigns not only encouraging stricter surveilling practices but stigmatizing fatness, especially when framed as an "epidemic." Additionally, she notes, the strategies to observe statistical data foster discrimination and further stigmatization against specific communities, as they tend to be classified according to race and class, portraying poor minorities as problematic.

Butler-Wall's analysis exemplifies several issues. First, it draws a clear connection of state-body through the implementation of a program that encourages self-surveillance. Second, it points out how certain bodies require stricter measures as they seem to fail to govern themselves; they are more "docile" bodies. Third, it exhibits how derivative discourses transpire. The stigmatization of fatness and the intensification of surveillance to poor minorities is justified by statistics that associate race and class to bodies.

In parallel, disabled people are subject to surveillance for different reasons and from different stances. The Trump administration is developing a proposal to increase surveillance of disabled people on social media with the intention to supposedly reduce Social Security fraud

(Pear, 2019). The proposition ignores the editing probabilities of social media and assumes that disabled people must "look" disabled, encouraging a prototype (a disciplining tactic) of how to look disabled. Moreover, the medicalization of disability subjects disabled people to the "medical gaze."

In the digital era, "self-monitoring" has become a market tool that evokes a distorted Orwellian story. The State is replaced by the market, evidencing the current politics: a market-driven regime. Recent approaches have used the term "dataveillance" to refer to body tracking digital technologies (e.g., Esmonde & Jette, 2018). This concept deserves special attention in an era in which digital tools are increasingly incorporated in both our private life and market interests. In 2018, a Vox article reported how menstruation apps represent a high-value market that may be exploitable for pharmaceutical companies (Tiffany, 2018). The use of data for marketing, and especially for medical purposes, raises ethical questions, especially for disabled people. For example, what happens when an insurance company knows beforehand that a client has a life-threatening disease? In 2018, *The Washington Post* reported the interest of insurance companies to encourage their clients with incentives to use Fitbit-similar devices, arguing that the surveillance mechanism prompts healthier habits (Ingraham, 2018). Nonetheless, the article does not speculate the token when "healthier" is not achievable or merely undesirable. In this trade-off, the benefit for disabled people is uncertain as they live a permanent struggle with insurance companies: 11.6% of disabled people and 11.1% of people with health conditions do not have—insurance[32]— (Pizer, Frakt, & Iezzoni, 2009).

---

[32] Adults, ages 25–61, 2000–2005 (Pizer, Frakt, & Iezzoni, 2009).

Biopower and Biopolitics

As noted in the previous section, different mechanisms intervene in self-disciplining. The limits to where one starts, and the one ends are blurred and often seen as the same. Biopower and biopolitics are indispensable concepts to understand the relationship of power within broader structures and are particularly relevant when observing citizenship. Although Foucault is not precisely interested in citizenship, these terms situate a political relationship between sexual bodies and the State.

In Foucault's conception, the body as a discourse implies that the body is a knowledge/power technology. In *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, Foucault (1978) attributes the conception of sexuality to the medicalization and politicization of the body that occurs in the Victorian Era. The gain of knowledge in the medical field, the new modes of production that improved living conditions, and the awareness of the body evidenced "[f]or the first time in history [that] [..] biological existence was reflected in political existence" (Foucault, 1978, p. 142). The regulations of the body appear along with its recognition. On one hand, the discipline of the body: "anatomo-politics of the human body," and on the other, the "regulatory controls: a biopolitics of the population" (Foucault, 1978, p. 139). The specific differences between these two terms are often vague and seem to overlap (Rabinow & Rose, 2006). Lazzarato's (2002) interpretation is that bio-power is concerned with the manipulation of biological features through self-disciplining and population regulation tactics, and biopolitics "is the strategic coordination of these power relations" (p. 103). Succinctly, one form of power is dependent on the other.

The individual becomes aware of its own body, and in response, the individual must control its body. Similarly, the State, aware of the productive capability of bodies, must discipline the bodies, in favor of its interests. The body is granted the power to self-discipline,

and the State regulates the body through different means (Foucault, 1978). Foucault observes the power relations that appeared from statistical knowledge. Demographic data of reproduction and death rates gathered in census along with issues such as public health, housing, and migration, evidenced the economic and political transcendence to control populations, especially as the body is an economic agent that populates but also "produces and consumes" (Foucault, 1978, p. 107).

Biopolitics operates through invisible mechanisms, often set by legal and administrative structures that restrict the participation of certain groups, stressing the notion of "proper" or "improper" citizens (Spade, 2011). For example, disabled people who claim Social Security benefits are at risk of losing part or all of their benefits when getting married or engaging in a domestic partnership (Stern, 2019). Similar situations occur with Medicaid or other insurances (Stern, 2019). Moreover, these benefits are subject to a very low income. These administrative programs implicitly suggest a form of eugenics (Stern, 2019) by limiting partnership and the possibilities of economic progress, either by subjecting the individual to a single, or a very low income, in return for needed benefits. Indeed, poor populations are more vulnerable to be disabled (Boat & Wu, ed. 2015) and *vice versa*, disabled people are more likely to become poor (Lusting & Strauser, 2007).

Reproduction is fundamental to the State as a mechanism to control populations (Foucault, 1978). Foucault (1978) remarks that the importance of blood in the aristocracy became the body for the bourgeoisie. In this new order, sexualities acquired a new value, and caste manners "reappeared […] in the guise of biological, medical, or eugenic precepts. […] The concern with genealogy became a preoccupation with heredity, but included in bourgeois marriages were not only economic imperatives and rules of social homogeneity, not only the

promises of inheritance but the menaces of heredity" (p. 124). Uncontrolled populations threaten the State, altering power structures and reproducing "unwanted" citizens. Thus, through discourse, self-policing, legislation, and administration, States maintain the status quo.

Eugenics is a repetitive discourse and a form of biopolitics. Sterilization of people with disabilities is still prevalent globally, including in US (Powell & Stein, 2016). While abortion should be understood as a right, the use of disabilities as justifications for terminating pregnancy opens the door to other forms of discrimination. It entangles eugenics into the notion of abortion. For example, in the United States, genetic screening tests are recommended to all pregnant women and habitual in those 35 or older. The positive results of specific disabilities justify the termination of pregnancy, even in states where abortion is banned, creating a contradictory narrative. In Iceland, almost 100 percent of positive Down Syndrome pregnancy screening tests result in abortions (Quinones & Lajka, 2017), marginalizing more the few people who are born with Down Syndrome. The narratives of eugenics continue to be prevalent in biotechnology and medicine. In 2018, Chinese biophysics researcher He Jiankui performed the first known gene editing to human embryos (Belluz, 2019; Marchione, 2018). Gene editing might appear as a promising mode to end diseases. However, it unfolds ethical dilemmas, especially as these techniques become economically unattainable for many, and particularly seductive to be used as more than a disease treatment.

The Incompatibility of Neoliberalism and Disability

In the previous sections, I explained how Foucault's ideas of "governability" and the "care of the self" are useful to explicate the power relations of the autonomous individual in a market politics, and how biopolitics offers an approach to observe citizenship. In this section, I

address how neoliberalism and its values conflict with disabled people by suggesting "improper citizens."

Neoliberalism is a political and economic model rooted in ideas of freedom and independence that proposes policies of market deregulation and privatization. Neoliberal ideas were laid out in the 1950s and became a solution to the economic crisis in the 1970s (Harvey, 2005). As a model that advocates for free markets and "proposes that human well-being can be best advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms" (Harvey, 2005, p. 2), neoliberalism encourages "active" citizens who are "givers, not takers" (Evans, 1993, p. 4). This position poses that those receiving benefits from the State are "lesser" of citizens, thus less entitled to participate.

It is no coincidence that from the 1970s to the 1980s, the social welfare rights "shifted away toward rights of an economic kind" (Evans, 1993, p. 3). The tendency to minimize State intervention persists. In 1996, Bill Clinton continued the anti-welfare rhetoric introducing *The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act,* that limited and conditioned assistance (Carcasson, 2006). The current administration has significantly reduced the 2020 budget for disability agencies, including the Office of Disability Employment Policy (Ridge, 2019). While the ADA was a much-needed reform to protect disabled population against discrimination, it is necessary to point out that the inclusion of disabled people into the private sector occurs precisely in the cusp of neoliberalism. Samuel Bagenstos (2003) suggests that the essence of the ADA was "a welfare reform," and the legislation was, in part, motivated for an interest to sway disabled people away from welfare benefits. As Fraser and Gordon (1992) highlight, receiving welfare rather than being a sign of belonging, is considered shameful.

Welfare beneficiaries attempt against the core values of neoliberalism and are seen as unproductive citizens.

Contrary to the suppositions, the ADA has not boosted employment. Some argue that employers do not hire disabled people because accommodations represent -or believe they represent- a higher cost (Maroto & Pettinicchio, 2015; Stein, 2003). In a marketplace, the cost is always a—reason[33]—, and a valid one. The failure of the ADA to integrate disabled people into a neoliberal model demonstrates the incompatibility of disability with neoliberalism, that legislation without structural changes is insufficient, and the erroneous assumption that an open door for a marginal population automatically enables participation and equality.

In this era, dependency denotes a lower-status citizen. Sick people, senior citizens, poor people, disabled people (the list goes on) are bodies with limited autonomy that under a neoliberal model fail to properly care or provide for themselves and often rely on institutions, medical authorities, government's welfare, etc. (Spade, 2011). In this sense, "disabled people have long struggled to take control of their bodies from medical authorities" (Siebers, 2012, p. 38), often rely on disability benefits, and have limited incomes. First restricting their body agency and then seen as financially incompetent.

The introduction of the disabled body in a neoliberalist era exposes its vulnerabilities, not necessarily intrinsic to the body, but heightened by the market-driven politics. Statistics stress the lower productivity of disabled people and perpetuate the ideas of an economically unproductive population. According to the 2010 US Census Bureau report, 19 percent of the

---

[33] I would also consider how the State benefits restrictions impact job searching, just as these benefits restrict partnership, they might be affecting job searching.

population has a disability. Disabled people are less likely to be—employed[34]— (41 percent)

compared to non-disabled people (79 percent). The monthly earnings average of a disabled

person is only slightly more than half of a non-disabled person, and disabled people are more

likely to experience poverty (US Census Bureau, 2010).

The emphasis on production is also an emphasis on market participation. Margaret

Thatcher described the citizen as the "consumer, the taxpayer, one of the British people (the

individual)" (Phillips, 1998, p. 852). Just as State or welfare dependency is stigmatized,

Thatcher, by pointing at the consumer and the taxpayer, introduces another market value to

citizenship, suggesting that lower-class citizens may be lower class citizens (because the lower

income limits consumerism). Market-politics integrate another layer of power dimension: the

neoliberal citizen is disciplined by the market, not only as an employee of the private sector but

also as a consumer.

Consumerism is a citizenship practice, and just as in a medical sense, there are bodies

more docile to the disciplining of the market than others. Being relegated as a consumer does not

necessarily alleviate conflict. Older population and disabled communities are usually not

assumed as consumers compromising their participation as a "consumer citizen." The invisibility

of sexuality and consumerism has other implications. For example, in the last years, there has

been a dramatic increase in HIV/AIDS cases in the older population (Prat et al., 2010). In part,

because neither condom companies nor health care providers consider this population sexually

active, and with no risk of pregnancy, they dismiss further precautions. Autostraddle blogger,

Carrie Wade writes in her column "Queering Disability" about her experience with sex toys.

---

[34] Although there is no statistic support, low employment data should take into consideration that the restrictions on Medicaid or Social Security force disabled people not to take jobs. Disabled people are at risk of losing benefits, and a full-time job is still insufficient to cover for medical and basic needs.

Arguing that sex toys are particularly beneficial for experimenting with bodies with different flexibilities, sensibilities, or dexterities, Wade insists that "every sex toy manufacturer should be courting disabled folks as customers" (Wade, 2017). Contrary, she complains, manufacturers lack instructions to adapt sex toys and warn disabled people against its use.

The idea of citizenship, mainly when observed from a neoliberal standpoint, complicates the disabled community. Shildrick (2013) claims that the current notion of "citizenship […] relies on a series of exclusions of those who do not or cannot fit, and amongst such groupings, the drive for citizenship is often unabated" (www.research.net), especially because citizenship has been theorized apart from the ideas of disability.

Foucault offers a framework to situate the vulnerable citizenship of disabled people, in which bodies and sexualities are means of production and consumption, disciplined by the State and the market, and subject to the medical gaze. Bodies and sexualities are political instruments, and identities are their emblems. Discourse, argues Foucault, is a mean of truth with the possibility to transform imaginations. In this sense, digital media offers the potential to become a political platform to introduce counter-discourses. The expression of sexuality from *Disabled Twitter* introduce alternative discourses and claim participation as citizens. As I attempted to illustrate, citizenship is not limited to participation in a political ground and the protection of fundamental rights. Instead, citizenship is a concept intertwined with other forms of participation, including market, technology, access, production, reproduction, consumption, and culture. In this section, I explained how neoliberalism places disability in a vulnerable position. In the next two chapters, I explore how *Disabled Twitter* negotiates from this vulnerable position.

CHAPTER III

A NEOLIBERAL READING

> But invisibility is a dangerous and painful condition, and lesbians are not the only people to know it. When those who have power to name and to socially construct reality, choose not to see you or hear you, whether you are dark-skinned, old, disabled, female, or speak with a different accent or dialect than theirs, when someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing (Rich, 1986, p. 199).

Being Included in a Neoliberal Model

In this chapter, I analyze tweets of *Disabled Twitter* users from a neoliberal perspective. I am interested in how these tweets participate in neoliberal narratives, that while they critique an oppressive system, they demand to be included in the same model they contest. These claims, I argue, do not result in radical change. Instead, it is an expansion of the model. After all, the success of neoliberalism is its flexibility and its capacity to incorporate any ideology into market terms. I argue that this community, as a networked counterpublic, utilizes visibility as an activist tactic. In parallel to LGB+ tactics, members of this community manifest the "coming out of the closet" as a needed first step of identity claiming. I then analyze tweets that claim inclusion, from those that insist disabled bodies as sexual bodies to the ones that suggest the extension of beauty cannons that often exclude them. I contend that these strategies might, at one end, be beneficial in opening doors for disabled people into broader conversations. However, on the other end, they are demanding participation in a neoliberal project that subjects them to new disciplining techniques, still positioning bodies in a lower hierarchy and risking the commodification of the movement.

Coming out of the "Disability Closet"

Gay and Lesbian movements popularized as an imperative that "coming out" is crucial to an emancipatory and activist project, in part as a confessional and self-liberating act (e.g., Phelan, 1990), and part assuming that visibility could derive in public acceptance or prompt— alliances[35]— (e.g., Esterberg, 1994). "Coming out" is framed as a courageous move, and campaigns such as National Coming Out Day (NCOD) encourage these practices. In a parallel manner, *Disabled Twitter* users have adopted a confessional tone to identify as disabled.

The self-identification as "disabled" was problematic in the United States, where the approach for many years was "people with disabilities" instead of "disabled people," arguing that a disability does not define an identity. In recent years, some activists have stressed the need to approach an identity-first language. This self-identification as disabled is perceived at times as a defining moment of accepting one's disability, equivalent to "a coming out of the disability— closet[36]—". This self-identification as disabled is essential in defining the character of *Disabled Twitter* as a counterpublic. Discussing the subject in a thread @depalm asserts: "[…] I spent over a century ashamed, denying my limp and pain, trying so hard not to be seen as disabled. Today, thanks to the support of my online disabled family, I'm proud to call myself a disabled senior. #DisabilitySwipesRight" (August 11, 2019). @depalm's tweet asserts belonging and pride. Moreover, @depalm recognizes that her "online disabled family" has played a key role in the acceptance of her identity, one that she had obscured.

---

[35] Kristin Esterberg (1994) analyzing the 1950s/1960s homophile publication of *Ladder* describes how articles encouraged lesbians to "come out." To these days, these narratives are seen as liberating and bravery acts.

[36] Approaching a similar concept, Tobin Siebers (2004) draws on Joan Riviere's essay "Womanlines as a Masquerade" to suggest the use of the word "masquerade" instead of 'closet' when approaching disability. In this case, my intension is a mere comparison to the act of coming out. For this purpose, I consider the term 'closet' appropriate.

The "coming out" conversations are complementary to the tweets phrased in didactic tone to inculcate an identity-first language. People supporting the use of "disabled" as an identity argue that disability shapes their lives, their disability influences their decisions and views, disability is inseparable from them: "I am very disabled and very proud. It's not negative, but an integral part of me. My disabilities affect every part of my life, so if you're uncomfortable with them for any reason, you're just uncomfortable with me. #SayTheWord" (@twitchyspoonie, 2019, April 3). Aside from tweets and hashtags, the "coming out" as disabled is explicit at first sight. Profiles, usernames, and bios from members of this community point to a disabled identity, often specifying a type of disability. Besides, many times they also identify their gender and sexual orientation. The following—bios[37]— illustrate this trend:

Steavie

@stevieboebi

Voted most likely to steal your girlfriend while redecorating your home. Queer & Disabled (she/her) ♿[Zebra emoji] Business Contact:

heystevieboebi@gmail.com

- , 'scarlett lauren' , -

@scallymac

♿[Women's symbol]

31 / F / Newcastle

#actuallyautistic [Love-you gesture] [Raised hand with part between middle and ring fingers]

---

37 These copy-pasted bios were retrieved on February 16, 2020.

Laura 🦽🏳️‍🌈🔵

@painandcats_

Angry cripple stream of consciousness. [she/her; agender] 🖤 Abolish and

prosecute ICE.   🦽🌵🦓 #ChronicPain #Accessibility #MentalHealth

Mx. Mik ☄️🦽⚧

@kim_from_kansas

#CripplePunk #Communist #Mom #CMT2A (neuropathy + muscular dystrophy).

All bodies are good bodies. Your worth is not determined by your health.

#Decolonize

These examples are common among *Disabled Twitter* users. Emojis of rainbows, gay

pride flags, gender, zebras (signs of rare diseases, typically used in Ehlers-Danlos syndrome),

mermaids (ambulatory wheelchair users), and wheelchairs are presentation cards displayed next

to usernames. They are signifiers. These identification marks are significant as they are both

identities and signs of belonging. While most of *Disabled Twitter* users tend to be political in

their postings, primarily because policies -especially related to health- have a direct impact on

their lives, @kim_from_kansas and @painandcats_ make some political views public in their

bios as well. Moreover, the shared implicit agreement to point at specific identity characteristics

become ritualistic practices that, as Parks (2010) notes, reinforce the community's identity.

On occasion, disabled identities are part of their usernames. While there are members that

use conventional names such as @dominicevans, @Tinu, @VilissaThomson, or

@kim_from_kansas, it is common to see other users identifying themselves as @crippledscholar,

@IrritatedCrip, @Tripping_Crutch, @coffeespoonie, @twitchyspoonie, @ANTI_ABLELISM, @sexAbled, @autistic_skitty, @painandcats, emphasizing their disabled identity or their opposition to ableism, or in the case of @sexAbled disputing stereotypes.

Platform affordances enable us to continually voice an identity in different forms, with a username, in a bio, with emojis, in posts, through hashtags, facilitating the "coming out" process. The multiple spaces and forms in which members of this community decide to "come out" reinforces group belonging, identity, and attempts to assure visibility. After all, Kohnen (2016) suggest that coming out of the closet should not be considered as "a singular moment of crossing-over from a state or a place that is "hidden" to one that is visible" (p. 14). Visibility requires constant negotiation and repetitiveness as it "exists in the tension between presence and perception, neither of which is a stable category" (Kohnen, 2016, p. 14), an instability that is even more prevalent in online spaces, where visibility depends on popularity and popularity could be ephemeral.

Our current notion of "coming out" is framed as an act of true to the self that will naturally result in liberation. This confessional endeavor, Foucault (1988) poses, is a technology of the self "which permit[s] individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conducts, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (p. 18). Especially in a neoliberal model that uses freedom and liberation as the ultimate achievement, "coming out" is an aspirational goal, seen as courageous and worthy. Contesting positions have raised the concern that "coming out" involves other complexities, including identity intersections and cultural locations (Ritchie, 2010; Rasmussen, 2004) and could pose physical, financial, and social risks (Mitchum, 2013). Scholars

such as Martin Manalansan observing Filipino gay men in New York City, Tom Boellstorff

studying Indonesian sexual identities, or Alan Sinfield pointing at how "the closet" may be

advantageous for lower-class rural gays, have challenged this notion (Binnie, 2004). These

claims evidence that western liberating ideals are not universal, that for some communities,

rather than being empowering tools, these practices may be threatening, and that intersectionality

and cultural context shape experiences differently. Certainly, the voicing of specific identities

does not necessarily result in enfranchisement. For instance, the voicing of a disabled identity for

some people could result in further stigmatization or evidence other vulnerabilities.

This continuous effort in voicing an identity mirrors the strategies of identity movements

that approached liberation through visibility and confessional practices, facing similar

limitations. Considering that power is more pervasive and oppressive when invisible, identity

politics contests dominant power that subjugates minorities by making it visible and reclaiming a

distinct identity that has been oppressed, "aim[ing] to repair internal self-dislocation by

contesting the dominant culture's demeaning picture of one's group" (Fraser, 2003, p. 24). While

identity movements do offer a starting point for developing language and frameworks to address

a conflict, disability scholars are ambivalent about whether identity is the best approach in

disability. On the one hand, identity offers a contextualizing framing (still categorizing and

hierarchizing). On the other, scholars suggest the need to move toward more "contemporary

theorization" (Mollow, 2004). Fraser (2003) sees two main conflicts when it comes to identity

movements. First, grounding the problematic only in discursive changes does not solve

institutionalized problems; second, the erroneous assumption that "maldistristribution" or

economic disparity in marginalized identities will be solved only by recognition. A more

prevalent critique of identity politics is that it creates divisiveness as it emphasizes differences

and is at risk of falling into essentialism, by prioritizing, generalizing, or omitting other experiences (Eisenberg, 2013; Davis, 2013). All critiques are indisputable. The latter, however, is a particular concern in Disability studies, because "disability is a category uniquely 'unstable'" (Mogk, 2014, p. 9), highly intersectional, and each disability can be an individual experience. The generalization or omission of experiences homogenizes the movement and still obscures the people in fewer privileged positions.

Identity movements emerged as strategic forms of emancipation in an increasingly self-centered society (Weeks, 1998; Evans, 1993). The social, political, and economic reorganization in a capitalist era introduced new tensions, in which the individual was forced to develop an identity based on a market-body relationship (Evans, 1993). The construction of an identity is, in Foucauldian terms, a discourse. In this case, *Disabled Twitter* introduces a counter-discourse by claiming an identity.

Pride and Abled Sex on Twitter

Disabled Twitter constructs an identity not solely as disabled but also as sexual. As in other body movements, and also considering that disability and body are inevitably dependent on one another, the intersectionality of disability and sexuality is necessary to demand bodily ownership rights. First, to state independence, a core neoliberal value that assumes that the worthiness of citizenship relies on the individual's self-sufficiency and productivity. And second, to denounce transgressions in terms of health, reproduction rights, rape, sexual consent, relationships; and third, just for the right to be acknowledged as sexual. As I noted in the previous segment, the voicing of gender or sexuality in bios is a customary practice. Complementary to that, are the tweets and conversations that point at sexuality.

At times in condescending tones and at times in instructive tones, *Disabled Twitter* uses Twitter as a platform to confront, discredit, and invalidate misconceived narratives, assuming a position of knowledge. The presumption of knowledge starts with hashtag labels. #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow asserts that disabled people possess unique knowledge and invites the community to disseminate that knowledge by participating in posting with the hashtag. #AbledsAreWeird and #DisabledPeopleAreHot invert the stereotyped notions. The first by reversing the idea of normalcy, and the latter by expanding or reimaging the meaning of sexiness, that tends to exclude bodies that fall out of the norm. The construction of knowledge continues with the adherence to recurrent narratives and the community efforts to spread in mainstream media by making key conversations trending topics, a feasible possibility foster by the affordances of the platform. Members of the community continuously encourage other members to participate. These actions have prompted the conversations of trending hashtags to transcend to mainstream media. For example, on January 25, 2019, after the hashtag #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow went viral, BBC disability podcast did an episode featuring Imani Barbarin, creator of the hashtag (see Rose, Tracey, & Hughes, 2019). Similarly, Imani's hashtag #AbledsAreWeird, became a story on NPR.org (Quraishi, 2019). Interviews with Andrew Gurza, creator of hashtag #DisabledPeopleAreHot, have been published by Huffpost.com (see Feldman, 2019), querty.com (see Galassi, 2019), and CBC Canada (see Vallis, 2019).

Phrased in different tones, different wording, or in a parallel context, many tweets from this community express similar experiences even when using different hashtags. Particularly intriguing is the fact that conversations on sexuality take place using broad titles such as #ThingDisabledPeopleKnow and #AbledsAreWeird. Some users share others' tweets stating that they have faced a similar situation, the likes of a particular tweet might also reflect the encounter

of a comparable episode, and other tweets are intensively commented sometimes in a serious tone; other times the initial sarcasm creates more elaborated jokes. In the period observing *Disabled Twitter*, among the most frequent tweets related to sexuality were those asserting sexual capability. While intercourse is a performative act that does not equate to sexuality, it is usually assumed by heteronormative discourse as the maximum sexual expression, thus the question of sexual incapability attempts against one's sexuality. Shildrick (2009) explains how the sexuality of disabled people is often conflicted:

> Given that the corporeality of the sexual relation is, in any case, a potential point of disturbance to western normativities, the manifestation of bodily difference in the context of sexuality appears especially anxiety-provoking and threatening. In consequence, there is an extraordinary reluctance to acknowledge that disabled people have any sexuality at all, with the result that their sexual expression is highly regulated, if not invalidated, or silence completely (Shildrick, 2009, p. 11).

In this case, social media functions as a dissemination channel to counter the constant silencing of disabled people, who decide to use this platform to contest the anxieties surrounding their sexuality. The unexpected chats about sexuality are exposed in blunt tweets using generic hashtags that do not explicitly call for sexual references. Very likely, in a similarly unforeseen fashion, the initial inquiries were posed in face-to-face situations. The following tweets are examples of how these assertions are stated.

> "#ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow not only do we have sex, we enjoy it"
>
> (@authoralicen, 2019, January 17).

> "Non disabled person: Can you have sex?

Me: Well golly gee whiz Persephone I donno, can you stop being an asshole?

#AbledsAreWeird" (@Tripping_Crutch, 2019, March 16).

"Got asked if I could still have sex? (The classic we all get) so I told him to ask

his dad. #DisabledSnark" (@SaraBTweet23, 2019, April 13).

All three tweets have a different tone. @authoralicen's tweet with the hashtag

#ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow is in an informative tone; @Tripping_Crutch's and

@SaraBTweet23's tweets have a sarcastic tone, although #AbledsAreWeird tends to use more

inflamed responses, particularly noted by the use of expletives. All three tweets were posted on

the day the hashtag started. Also, these statements are not isolated tweets; they are one of the

many examples of similar claims. The consistent emphasis on sexual capability reveals the need

to disseminate and reinforce a message: disabled people have sex.

The insistence in making sexuality visible does not only occur using hashtags. The

subject is also approached in spontaneous tweets stressing the need for attention: "Thinking

disabled people don't have sex is just another way of thinking YOU wouldn't have sex with a

disabled person" (@Somesaylezzels, 2019, February 20). This previous tweet without a hashtag

creates a distinct dynamic holding the reader accountable for his/her own perception. The

frequency of these statements reveals that being questioned about sexual capability is not an

isolated occurrence, which is also reinforced by @SaraBTweet23: "the classic we all get."

Furthermore, similar references to this conception are frequent in conversations that are not

necessarily related to sexuality. On one occasion, mocking the "ableist" design of a crutch that

could be submerged into water, user @HijaDe2Madre says: "no wonder they can't imagine how

I can possibly have sex… they think we use crutches in the pool" (2019, March 14).

@HijaDe2Madre's comment addresses ableds as "they," as outsiders, positions her community as the one of knowledge and insists on how sex is considered as inconceivable.

The voicing of sexuality is contradictory when the exposure of intimacy produces contrasting readings when seen in opposition to dominant narratives, stressing the status of specific groups. In a patriarchal model, expressions of sexual performance in heterosexual men are often celebrated as signs of masculinity, and the opposite judgment is attributed to non-dominant sexualities. As I mentioned earlier, confession has been used as a form of liberation, oppressed bodies have exposed their sexualities and reclaimed shame into—pride[38]—. The confession of sexuality may be seen incongruent as it is conceived as private and forbidden (Foucault, 1988), yet, it is this condition of "private" that enables abuse and maltreatment. As it occurs in any stratified organization, upper hierarchies take pride, and lower hierarchies are shamed. In this case, the disabled community on Twitter dismisses shame, taking pride in an unorthodox manner: evidencing ignorance, insulting the ineptitude of an inquirer, or defeating with an equally inappropriate answer. The narratives of worthiness take place in different forms, at times seeking for inclusion, at times negating or invalidating stereotypes and wrong conceptions, and at times voicing and reclaiming disability and sexuality, elaborating new cannons of self-concepts, as other identity movements have done, turning shame into pride.

---

[38] Psychoanalysts, among them Freud, traced the relationships between sexuality and shame to castration anxieties or women's "genital deficiency" (Balsam, 2009). These phallocentric notions resemble Aristotle's biology, who saw women as mutilated men. These theorizations are from a male perspective that already takes for granted women's inferiority, evidence that shame and pride are constructed positions, ignoring how other sexualities are shamed. These shame and pride ideas of sexuality have been particularly explicit in gay movements. While the main wings of Gay Pride movements have pushed toward heteronormative inclusion and legislation, radical queer, polyamorous, and other non-normative groups have, in recent years, organized as a Gay Shame movement to oppose the prevalent heteronormative Gay Pride ideas (Weiss, 2008).

The defiance to respond to an intimate question needs to be placed in perspective with the defiance of asking such a question. The intrusion of interrogating about intimate practices posits a status disparity. The inquirer asserts a superior hierarchy by putting into question the sexual capability of disabled people and dares to harass with a question unlikely posed to an able-bodied. The voicing of sexual potency positions the members of this community, as activists liberating the self from the constraints of stereotypes and false assumptions.

More than an absolute liberation, the recognition of sexuality is in Foucault's conception of a new disciplining technique, one that relies on the individual, which under a neoliberal narrative, although constraining, conforms an empowerment tool. The responsibility of self-disciplining becomes the resource to achieve independence, the ultimate neoliberal mantra. These tweets and conversations are forms to demand participation and attain body agency that has long been denied, or only partially granted, to disabled communities. Nonetheless, this inclusion in a model implies the constant participation and other disciplining techniques.

The Neoliberal Body

In the introduction of *Sex and Disability*, McRuer and Mollow (2012) ask: "But what if disability were sexy? And what if disabled people were understood to be both subjects and objects of a multiplicity of erotic desires and practices" (p. 1). In what seems to be a response to McRuer and Mollow, Andrew Gurza, host of Disability After Dark podcast, created the trending hashtag #DisabledPeopleAreHot on February 17, 2019. The hashtag reclaims the same idea of posting a photo initiated in 2017 by Keah Brown with the hashtag #DisabledAndCute. This time, Gurza explains, the language invites the sexualization of disabled people: "Sexuality is a human right and sexuality is something that we as disabled people deserve to fight for and deserve to have included in our lives. It's very valuable," Gurza told Advocate magazine (Broverman,

2019). Taking private matters out of the bedroom politicizes the bodies (Fraser, 1990). It forces a negotiation or confrontation with neoliberal discourse, one that is inexorably interwoven with the market, putting disabled bodies in precarity.

Visibility and sexuality with this hashtag are claimed mostly through images. The majority of photos posted with the hashtag are conventional selfies. Others include more provocative poses in swimsuits or lingerie; bodies come in all sizes and colors, and mobility aids, scars, and medical equipment are often visible. Gurza's photos are usually medium or medium close-up shots showing a nude torso with leather straps, on some occasions, part of his wheelchair is noticeable. While Gurza admits a few negative comments among hashtag users that he attributes to "public's discomfort with disabilities and sexuality," he asserts that the general response is very positive (Vallis, 2019). The hashtag was embraced by the community in different forms. The enthusiasm was general, but the reasons to participate varied from some who were eager to sexualize their bodies to others who admitted that they were participating mainly because they recognized the need to either make their body visible, or as a way to improve their self-confidence and accept their bodies. A few others used the hashtag to display their disability with an image. In any case, it appears to be the understanding that bodies, visibility, and self-confidence are essential to the movement.

Among the enthusiast, @cripqueer with legs crossed on a wheelchair and a polished casual look describes the photo posted on February 18, 2019: "old picture, but man oh man did I feel spicy. #DisabledPeopleAreHot". User @khiarial wearing a strapless bodysuit uses the hashtag to address her confidence even when she has faced negative comments, she posts three photos, two of them evidently with filters: "#DisabledPeopleAreHot just wanted to hop on this hashtag bc I literally had a guy tell me I'm too pretty to be in a wheelchair & that if it wasn't for

my chair he would date me. Anyways, here I am hot, disabled, & unbothered by ignorance" (@khiarial, 2019, February 18). @cripqueer and @khiarial state proudness, they both use full-body photos and, although they are in a wheelchair, they still, in a way, adhere to the standards of beauty and sexiness. Other users do not have the self-confidence of @cripqueer and @khiarial and assert they hesitated to participate in the hashtag because they particularly do not feel "hot." @cripcaro posted a collage of four photos, her face is visible in two of them: "I'll be real, it's an ongoing struggle to see myself as hot. We love ableist stereotypes of beauty! Here I am anyways, because #DisabledPeopleAreHot" (@cripcaro, 2019, February 19). These tweets evidence that the neoliberal sexual body is one that must be reconceptualized in terms of positive body image, and as these bodies insist in participating, they are simultaneously suggesting the expansion of the ideals of beauty and sexiness, while for some users the demand is easier, others face the dissonance of the repeated narratives that obey abled beauty standards.

The selfies posted with the hashtag #DisabledPeopleAreHot must also be seen from the perspective of representation. Instead of a photo, Alice Wong posts an illustration wearing a ventilator mask: "Representing all the folks who use BiPap, Cpap, or any kind of ventilation! Art by @Ogrefairy #DisabledPeopleAreHot" (@Sfdirewolf, 2019, February 18). The illustration, along with the text, demonstrates that @Sfdirewolf is not invested in exhibiting her own body, rather she is interested in displaying what her disability looks like. For her, the hashtag is an opportunity to make visible bodies and disabilities. Sexualization is embodiment. Other users seem to be moved by a similar logic and post a selfie describing their disability, or simply a hashtag without further explanation, and not precisely in a "sexy" pose.

The images of disabled bodies force visibility to confront the almost null and inaccurate representation in media and challenge the stereotypes of beauty and sexuality. Both through sexy

poses or displaying disabled bodies, these images participate in a public screen (see DeLuca & Peebles, 2002). These images are a political statement that in a visual public sphere (see Cram et al. 2016) claim, more than sexiness, existence. Nonetheless, there is still a dissonance in the online and offline spaces, as some of the online practices and achievements in the virtual space do not carry out to the face-to-face settings. @Wooden_MariaGO post is an example:

> "#ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow It doesn't matter how gorgeous you are. No matter how much you say #disabledpeoplearehot Ableist people will see your mobility equipment etc before they see you. Sometimes they don't even notice your age or sex, just the walker/chair etc. Bastards" (@Wooden_MariaGO, 2019, February 25).

@Wooden_MariaGO frustration proofs the discordance of the two spaces. For her, the visibility in one hashtag does not transgress to physical spaces, and the online photos do not solve the problem. Furthermore, and similar to what sometimes occurs with other minorities when they are sexualized, there is a potential risk to objectify their identities. @iwritefeminism stresses both points, the need to express "sexual agency" and the fear to be exploited as a fetish: "Friendly reminder that #DisabledPeopleAreHot is an opportunity for us to express the sexual agency so often stolen from us by ableist systems, not an opportunity for you to fetishize or otherwise sexually exploit our disabilities without our consent" (@iwritefeminism, 2019, April 10).

The emancipatory tactic through the body is often a double edge sword (Baer, 2016), while on one hand, it entitles participation; on the other, it engages in the same practices that classify them. The stress on identity in a neoliberal age, primarily when pointing at the body, is conflicting for minorities. Particularly for the disabled population, the exposure of sexuality has

the potential risk to be hypersexualized and again objectify. While some of the photos in #DisabledPeopleAreHot display physical presence simply by embodying disability and sexuality, other members choose to erotize their photos conveying with the same cannons in which "sexiness" has been represented. Moreover, the hashtag still imagines the *body* as central to the discussion of sexiness. The claim for inclusion suggests an expansion of beauty standards but still unchallenges categories and leaves disabled bodies exposed and vulnerable as they must "compete" towards abled-body ideals, which are already unachievable (because "we can always do better"). Finally, taking agency of the body does not only imply physical maintenance. A positive body image is elementary to expand the ideas of sexiness and beauty, which depends on self-confidence, another disciplining technique.

The Pursuit of the Neoliberal Project

Participation in neoliberalism involves a more extensive project that includes disciplining techniques not only for the physical but also for the emotional and mental self. The individual is in charge of his or her overall wellbeing; in this endless project, there are always market options available to accomplish achievement. The physical self-maintenance of the neoliberal body is supported by doctors, dietitians, personal trainers, Fitbits. On the other hand, psychotherapists, coaches, wellness counselors, inspirational motives are instrumental in completing one's achievements, especially as self-concept is essential in the promotion of the self (Sugarman, 2015). The increasing importance of self-concept has prompted psychologists and social scientists to explore the relationship of self-esteem in different ambits. The vulnerability of the body transcends to self-images that must continuously be challenged in order to reconstruct self-concepts that agree with the prevailing ideals. In this process, any antagonist self-image has the

potential to affect self-esteem. @a_h_reaume post reflects the struggle of dating and confronting a self-image:

> When it comes to #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow, one thing I'm realizing is just how cruel people are to disabled people when dating & that we're more vulnerable. So many people already tell us we are abject or burdens. And many of us internalize that – despite efforts to resist it (@a_h_reaume, 2019, January 27).

As I stated earlier, when observing @cripcaro's ambivalence in sharing a photo, self-confidence is a recurrent conflict. These anxieties are not exclusive in this community; this is a generalized issue; however, managing a positive self-image is more complicated when opposite accounts are prevalent.

In the last two decades, the term sexual self-esteem emerged from mental health disciplines, mainly concerned with the self-concept regarding appealing and competency (see Gaynor & Underwood, 1995). Low sexual self-esteem and disability have unsurprisingly continuously been related. While the sole idea of low sexual self-esteem has been directly compared to a disability (see Mayers, Heller, & Heller, 2003) –adding to the number of negative matters compared to disability-, Taleporos and McCabe (2002) found that sexual self-esteem, body esteem, and sexual satisfaction, are strong predictors of low self-esteem and depression. This same study showed disabled women more prone to be affected by body self-esteem and disabled men more affected by sexual self-esteem. The results of these studies along with the many tweets posing a similar opinion make @a_h_reaume's tweet be part of a common affliction. However, even more than that is the fact that these studies confirm how hegemonic ideals of bodies and sexuality are constructed in opposition to disability and, as Sugarman (2015)

asserts, the continuous stress of disciplines to measure these variables continue to normalize neoliberal ideals rather than question them.

Contrasting the previous tweet and still referencing a similar sentiment, @melissablake takes an apathetic approach to the intimidations: "Dear society: Why does our disability suddenly take away our sexuality as women? Is it because there's this societal perception that disability is ugly, grotesque and shameful? I'm definitely not here for any of that! #DisabilityRights #DisabledPeopleAreHot" (@melissablake, 2019, June 15). Although @melissablake is concerned and opposes societal impression of disability, it is obvious these perceptions have an effect on her and complicate her plan to reject that position. @melissablake and @a_h_reaume's tweets reflect the conflicts that obstruct the neoliberal project of self-esteem. The self-image of minoritarian identities are persistently damaged or at risk, and the effort to confront and reconstruct these images complicates the already difficult task of managing a positive self-assessment. In the same manner that the individual is given absolute credit for success -even when circumstances, privilege, and other people are involved-, the individual is also fully accountable for failure. In a market society, value is essential, and self-esteem is the initial asset.

The individual project is not a solitary and isolated path. Social relationships are essential to self-realization (Adams et al., 2019), and consequently, self-confidence is also built with respect to relational affects. Relationships are in Bourdieu's term, "social capital," but they are also part of a self-expression project. Adams et al. (2019) drawing on Aron et al. (1991, 2013) sustain that "neoliberal individualism constructs connection—whether mating/dating, friend or parent-child relations— as another site for self-expression, self-expansion and pursuit of personal fulfillment" (Adams et al., 2019, p. 205). In this dynamic in which relationships acquire a value,

disabled people are again relegated, even when presuming sexual. The assumption of sexuality does not grant equal participation. It incorporates sexual bodies in a hierarchical model in which there is still a notion of worthiness. It is the individual's responsibility to reassess this value. @sparkycamj complains the exclusion from the right of partnership as he is only perceived to "deserve" dating disabled women:

> I'm disabled, I'm all for dating a disabled woman or an abled woman. As long as we have connection. What bothers me: When someone suggests that I ONLY use a disabled dating website. Just reinforces that disabled people aren't good enough for abled people. #DisabledAndDating (@sparkycamj, 2019, March 21).

In a parallel case, @theproestdwarf complains:

> The number of abled people who have made it clear they think I should settle for the disgusting, dwarf-fetishizing semi-pedos who want me because I'm small and won't get anyone "normal" is still shocking to me. People who I thought were better than that (@theproestdwarf, 2019, March 23).

Both tweets refer to how they are perceived by others, although sexual, not worth having a relationship with able-bodied. @sparkycamj and @theproestdwarf categorically oppose this position. Still, these assumptions (by able-bodied) presume that disabled people should have limited options when it comes to love and romance. The narratives of "proper" and "improper" bodies are implicit and prevalent, evidencing how biopolitics in the form of eugenics is assumed as common sense. The "deployment of alliance" and the "deployment of sexuality," asserts Foucault (1978), function as techniques employed by societies to control the forbidden and unforbidden, the pleasurable, and the unappealing. Foucault (1978) references how in the rise of the bourgeoise marriages changed from alliances based on blood nobility to the interest on

"proper bodies." In other words, eugenics is the "blue blood" control in the capitalist era,
complicating sexuality, relationships, and marriage of disabled people and other "non-proper"
bodies.

These tweets expose different situations. First, an era of online dating introduces
affordances that complicate specific identities. The existence of exclusive dating sites for
disabled people is conflicting as it reflects the normalization of structural discrimination, and the
categorization of people by their bodies, classifications that also respond to market niches. While
some dating sites such as match.com or eharmony.com offer the alternative to disclose a
disability, disabled people claim that, in most cases, this statement reduces their possibility to
find a date. The process of online dating is likely more complicated for LGB+ and disabled
people, who claim to struggle being accepted in LGB+ groups as disabled. In a second instance,
the latter tweet responds to a similar issue: that as disabled people, the expectations should be
moderate: "there is only so much that disabled people deserve or can get." Responding to a
similar tweet, @HijaDe2Madre points at the danger of allowing this type of comments:

> Some interactions w/this tweet reminded me how low people's expectations are
> for Disabled people and dating. "Hey be happy they're not an asshole and stuck
> around!" That shit is harmful and actually allows abuse to happen. It is not
> courageous to date—us[39]— (@HijaDe2Madre, 2019, March 21).

@HijaDe2Madre puts forward a common complaint of how able-bodied are seen as "good
people" for the sole reason of dating disabled people, an idea that is emphasized by media
representations and everyday narratives. In an advice section, the dating site eHarmony.com

---

[39] These statements are common in tweets: "The harsh reality of disabled relationships: The hate for disabled people
runs so deep that no matter how horrible and abusive a disabled person's partner is, that partner will still be seen in a
positive light for "putting up with us." #DisabledTwitter #disabilityrights #StopDV" (@CodiCoday, 2019, February
23)

posted in its blog an article titled "Dating with a disability," the text emphasizes in a larger and bold font: "If "dating with disabilities" is a boundary you are ready to cross, here are three things to keep in mind." According to the article, the three things to keep in mind are: 1) disabled people have hearts, 2) be realistic of their limitations, and 3) communication is key. The framing of a "boundary" that one must be "ready to cross" is a warning rather than a piece of advice and hints that this "daredevil move" is not for everyone to try. The first suggestion to take into consideration —disabled people have feelings— is above all, insulting, the second advice is cautionary, and the third one, obvious and necessary in any other relationship.

The narratives of bodies, stereotypes, and dependency make it difficult for disabled people to engage in relationships (Hunt et al., 2018; Lu, 2016). Studies suggest that this deficiency of social relationships has a toll on emotional wellbeing, causing low self-esteem (Harris & Orth, 2019). In turn, self-esteem is related to notions of deservingness (Callan, Kay, & Dawtry, 2014). My point here is that the so-called "individual project" does not entirely rely on the individual. Although neoliberal ideas stress that self-esteem and self-confidence rely on the individual, and often see as pusillanimous or mediocre those who do not "work enough" to value themselves, these visions do not take into account that the individual project is in constant relationship with others and, as many of the examples demonstrate, coming into positive terms when the opposite narrative is being said becomes exhausting and sometimes unachievable for some identities.

Approaching a form of identity politics, this community is connected and constructed around the self-identification as disabled. The strategy itself departs from a neoliberal framing, considering that identity movements emerged from an emphasis on "privatized individualism" (see Weeks, 1998). Similarly, these strategies are enabled by the affordances of the medium that

encourage identity and visibility. It is necessary to note that affordances might shape identity politics differently within a networked counterpublic, partly solving some issues and complicating others. First, it allows the performance of multiple identities and simultaneous participation in different conversations by using more than one hashtag. Second, the congregation of multiple identities offers the possibility to theorize ableism from a broader stance. And finally, visibility within the medium depends on market logic, which allows some members to be more prominent; some voices become stronger than others resulting in some disabilities having more visibility and representation.

In this chapter, I have illustrated how *Disabled Twitter* states citizenship by demanding identity recognition and by voicing sexuality rhetorically and visually. I contend that these conversations are claims of inclusion into a neoliberal model that inevitably subject the body to other forms of disciplining. These forms of resistance are not necessarily unproductive. Sonia Kurks (2001) writes: "What makes identity politics a significant departure from earlier [movements] is its demand for recognition on the basis of the very grounds on which recognition has previously been denied: it is *qua* women, *qua* blacks, *qua* lesbians" (p. 85). Leonard Davis (2013), one of the academics who pushes toward the end of identity politics, also recognizes that identity is a useful strategy of visibility and, considering the recent inclusion of disability as a social and political category, the disability movement could be in its first or at best second— wave—.[40] Davis suggests that as movements evolve, other forms of resistance arise, and adding to this point, at times, different ways of resistance occur simultaneously. Following Davis, I proceed to the next chapter observing how *Disabled Twitter* approaches resistance from a different stance.

---

[40] This latter remark resonates with the comparison of Nancy Hirschmann (2012) of the current disability movement with the feminist movement of the 1970s and 1980s, calling disability "the new gender."

CHAPTER IV

QUEER READINGS OF DISABLED TWITTER

> Do we want to be normal? […] Are we trying to win access for disabled people to the mainstream of sexuality, or are we trying to challenge the ways in which sex and sexuality are conceived and expressed and limited in modern societies? (Shakespeare, 2000, p. 162-163).

Crip Discourses

The idea of contesting the normative notions of sexuality began echoing in Disability studies after the emergence of queer studies. After all, disability itself challenges normalcy and the discipline had been following the steps of feminist scholars. Strongly influenced by Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, feminist scholars suggested a reconceptualization of gender and sexuality. Derrida's deconstruction of binaries became an essential backbone for queer scholars to reject categorization, and queerness began to be positioned as an alternative idea to contest heteronormativity and the power structures that come with it.

The ideas of queering disabled sexualities began in early 2000 when scholars saw queerness as a viable approach to theorize disabled sexuality (e.g., Kafer, 2003; McRuer, 2003; Sandhal, 2003; Shakespeare, 2000; Tremain, 2000). In his essay, "Crips Strike Back: The Rise of Disability Studies," Leonnard Davis (1999) calls for a need of Disability studies to "shift from the ideology of normalcy, from the rule and hegemony of normates, to a vision of the body as changeable, unperfectable, unruly, and untidy" (p. 505). McRuer effectively conceptualizes the queering of disabled sexuality in what he coins as "crip theory," also reclaiming the term "crip"[41] just as the term "queer" did in the 1990s. McRuer (2006) uses Adrienne Rich's idea of

---

[41] In 1996, David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder released a documentary filmed in the University of Michigan's 1995 disability conference: "Vital Signs: Crip Culture Talks Back". The documentary portrays a disability culture elaborating more complex forms of identity, adjudicating crip identities, and rejecting the use of euphemisms and charity (see Mitchell & Sharon, 1998; also, the documentary uploaded by David Mitchell is available on youtube.com).

"compulsory heterosexuality" to claim a "compulsory able-bodiedness" that is also dependent on heterosexuality, especially because normative sexuality already takes for granted able-bodiedness.

In this chapter, I analyze tweets from a queer/crip stance. What I mean by a queer/crip stance is a rejection of binary oppositions. I am interested in contesting forms that, instead of claiming inclusion or suggesting antithetical position, invite to alternative forms of resistance. I am interested in how discipline, power, and compulsory able-bodiedness are contested.

These forms of contestation are not necessarily planned or orchestrated, they occur naturally, and on many occasions, some tweets participate in different narratives simultaneously, offering the possibility of contrasting readings. I analyze how *Disabled Twitter* addresses intersectionality. Drawing on Muñoz's term of disidentification, I suggest that these claims are necessary for queering and complicating discourses, demonstrating a heterogeneous and still challenging counterpublic community. From this "(dis)identiy" position, I observe how tweets attempt to rearrange categories, instead of assuming a lower hierarchy, some tweets suggest that disabled/crip sex, far from dull, incomplete, or unpleasant, is erotic and revolutionary, contesting what Foucault refers as "deployment of sexuality." Finally, I analyze how *Disabled Twitter* suggests alternative conversations from the #MeToo movement. While in the previous chapter, I analyzed tweets that call for inclusion into a neoliberal model, here I discuss how some tweets reject inclusion and normalcy.

Intersections and Disidentifications

Although disability is often represented with a wheelchair, disability is a broad concept and encompasses a vast range of experiences. Disability can be physical, neurological, mental,

cognitive, or developmental, and it can combine with other—disabilities[42]—, be visible or invisible, severe or minor, painful or painless. Aside from this, disability intersects any identity and can appear later in life or define a person from an early age. In any case, these intersections have a different effect on one's experience. In the previous chapter, I explained how this community self-identifies as disabled and sexual; I suggested that the "coming out" tweets were motivated by a neoliberal narrative, especially when framed as a liberatory confessional discourse. I do not intend to take back this position, the ideas of the liberating experience are certainly inspired by neoliberal ideals; however, I want to discuss in this section the ways in which similar conversations of voicing identity participate in creating new discourses. In other words, how the stress on an identity and the rejection of particular language to define it, along with the embracing of intersectional identities, intend to set alternative political grounds.

While some identity tweets claiming a disabled identity are expressed in self-liberating tones (as I claimed in the previous chapter), others adopt a confrontational approach making a point that is not necessarily a "coming out" conversation, but a need to move apart from condescending language. @LCarterLong started the hashtag #SayTheWord in 2016 (King, 2016) to encourage the use of the word "disabled." This hashtag is recurrently used to this day, along with other less popular hashtags such as #DisabledIsNotABadThing and #DisabledNotVoldemort. The same message has been spread using less-specific hashtags like #AbledsAreWeird, #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow, and #ApologizedLikeAnAbled, to name a few. Making this point, @annieelainey tweets: "Disabled isn't a bad word. It's what we are. #DisabledNotVoldermor #SayTheWord" (2019, May 30). Elaborating on the reason of preferring this term, @gendrfuck explains: "'differently abled' and 'diffabled' are patronizing,

---

[42] According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2011-15), "49% of persons with disabilities had multiple disability types" (Harrell, 2017, p. 5).

gross and factually wrong. I didn't gain any special abilities when I became disabled. Disabled is not a bad word, so #SayTheWord" (2019, January 10). Tweets instructing the use of the word "disabled" assume a position of knowledge and adopt a demanding tone.

From a Foucauldian standpoint, language creates knowledge. While this identification corresponds to another category that might be subject to new disciplining tactics, it is a category that confronts the ideas of welfare, otherness, —"inspiration porn [43]—," or denial of existence, that have long troubled disabled people. For example, defining someone as "specially-abled" or "special" is a euphemistic way to describe disability and to perpetuate charity and otherness, because "special people" deserve "special attention" and have "special needs," they are "different," but they are also "special" when they "inspire" the able-bodied. The preference of identifying as "disabled people" over "people with disability" claims the recognition of a particular way of experiencing life instead of a random characteristic. The use of words like disabled, cripple, or crip are being reclaimed by this community and discussed as the preferred language to describe themselves. Moreover, when sexuality is claimed along with a disabled/crip identity, the outcome is the cripping of sexuality. The outcome is the disruption of the prevailing ideas of normative sexuality. It is a contestation of the compulsory able-bodiedness. The performance of intersectional identities is not solely an act of visibility, it exposes uneven and fluid experiences, and it rejects a disabled identity as a binary opposition of ableness.

The claims of intersectional identities may be observed from the lens of disidentification. Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality to describe how race and gender

---

[43] *Disabled Twitter* recurrently used the hashtags #AbledsAreWeird and #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow to complain how disability is seen as "inspiration porn" @cripcaro tweets with the hashtag #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow: "Disabled people are more than just inspirational. We do not exist for abled people. I am not here to make you "thankful." I am not here for you to feel "inspired." I am myself. My disability is not nearly as difficult and awful as you think it is" (2019, March 12).

"interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's […] experiences" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1244). Crenshaw (1989) posits that Black women experience discrimination at times comparable to white women's, and at times to Black men's, and also in other circumstances in a unique manner as they are the intersection of two minorities. From the understanding that minorities' experiences are shaped and expressed in particular manners, José Esteban Muñoz uses the word "disidentification" to describe how identity is negotiated in queer minority groups. Muñoz (1999) argues that these identities, not represented in a dominant culture and that reject dominant identities, are queer identities and must redefine in their own terms. For Muñoz, disidentification is a form of resistance: "is a performative mode of tactical recognition that various minoritarian subjects employ to resist the oppressive and normalizing discourse of dominant ideology. Disidentification resists the interpellating call of ideology that fixes a subject within the state power apparatus" (Muñoz, 1999, p. 97). Following Muñoz, the voicing of intersectional identities in *Disabled Twitter* are modes of disidentification and contribute to shaping a heterogeneous counterpublic.

The—performance[44]— of intersectional identities, political views, non-normative bodies and minds are enabled by the platform affordances. These identities are in part crafted intentionally through media affordances, and through any other piece of digital information that can go from shares, likes, posts, photos, or any other interaction (Marwick, 2013). Online

---

[44] Muñoz sees disidentification from a performance stance. Comparably, social media presentations are often compared to Goffman's idea of theatrical performance (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006; Zhao et al. 2013) as these platforms are spaces of both, identity construction and identity negotiation. In turn, Goffman (1959) compares theatrical performance to social interactions. For him, public interactions are on-stage performances, and back-stage scenarios are those private moments with no audience. Goffman suggests the self is a versatile performant that acts and responds in accordance to an audience. In an approximate mode, identities online could be understood as performative acts.

identities have advanced to be more—sophisticated[45]— (Nakamura, 2008), and although some of these trends have not entirely changed, there is an increasing number of tools to customize identities, as I previously discussed. While the use of these tools is partly motivated by neoliberal principles of self-promotion and self-marketing, as I explained earlier, these hyper-identification tools are as well performative instruments that allow this community to reembody particular characteristics that altogether attempt to contest able-bodiedness.

As I pointed out in the previous chapter, members of this community use their bios and profile photos to depict disability, queerness, non-normative sexualities, race, and activism. I put forward some examples in bios from some regular participants in this community. It is particularly interesting that @Tripping_Crutch specifies he is cisgender, because although cis is considered a "norm," @Tripping_Crutch suggests that it should not be taken for granted, or simply assumes that in his community, there are no norms:

Eb

@EbThen

Accidental philosopher. Freelance educator. Autistic. Disabled. Bi. Grey-ace. Demi-aro. Filipino-USian. Designer. They/Them @sjwishlists/@modeldeviance

Annie Segarra

@annieelainey

Content Creator (YouTuber), Intersectional Activist, Queer, Disabled (Ehlers-Danlos & co), Latina/x (She/They) 🏳️‍🌈♿✊🏽 #TheFutureIsAccessible

---

[45] In the 1990s the default imagery of online users was white, male, heterosexual and there were rare instances to contest this tendency (Nakamura, 2008)

jewish fuckery

@coffeespoonie

Dovi's human | elephant-loving disabled jewess with ink-stained hands | they/she | learning/unlearning | staying חי |🏳️‍🌈| tip me: http://PayPal.me/coffeespoons

Lvl. 44 Incognegro ⚧♒

@Tripping_Crutch

Cis/He/Him, GT: Tripping Crutch PSN: Tripping_Crutch SW: 8025-0226-1145

http://amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls… http://cash.me/TrippinC

The previous bios describe racialized, sexualized, disabled, identities. While some of their characteristics still approach a self-promoting precept, the overall descriptions disassociate them with dominant identities. Along with these bios, conversations and tweets complement these identities. The embodiment of intersectional identities is not conflict-free, @Imani_Barbarin narrates the battle of coming into terms with her multiple intersections, especially her sexuality:

> I can't wait to come into my own this year as the vampy bi siren I've always wanted to be. Why'd take me so long? As a teen I mentioned to someone in my life that I was interested in the same sex and they said: "you're already disabled, black and a girl, do you really want to make life harder on yourself" I was already the only disabled black girl in my school of 1400 students. I really didn't. And we never spoke of it again (@Imani_Barbarin, 2019, January 3).

This tweet illustrates Barbarin as a disidentificatory character: she is "already the only disabled black girl." Certainly, her identity as black and disabled was impossible to conceal.

However, sexuality is considered to be the one identity that can be more easily obscured (and probably repressed, disciplined, abused). The intersectionality of queerness and disability is particularly conflicting as both terms are already conceived as "deviance," but when a queer recognition is accepted on top of a disability it "magnif [ies] or exacerbate[s] that deviance" (Kafer, 2003, p. 82). Navigating a space in which different minoritarian identities coexist and are acknowledged is a form of resistance. Imani's wish to voice bisexuality comes in a public tweet almost as a new year resolution (posted on January 3), and also in accordance with a decision of this new performance as a "vampy bi siren." Although this tweet is expressed in a liberating manner, it ultimately demonstrates the negotiation of various identities and the desire to perform according to all of them.

The performance of sexuality and disability is in itself disidentificatory. The fact that each disability compromises the body differently suggests that performance is never stable. While bodies are completely obvious in face-to-face interactions, the performing of bodies, erotism, and sexuality online occurs through photos and descriptive tweets, at times related to health issues, to everyday physical encounters expressed on posts, or simply just sharing a private or even public moments. For example, @Imani_Barbarin describes her body in a tweet in the following manner:

> The other day in my hotel room, I passed my mirror completely naked and grinned at myself. I like me with belly rolls, 22 surgical scars, the crutches, 12 tattoos, the marks on my face from when I was allergic to the sun... I love all of it!! (2019, March 29).

Imani's tweet is quite intimate and sensual. She invites the reader into a hotel room, describes her naked body, one full of scars, belly rolls, and marks, one that stands apart from the "standard" (if

there is such thing). These descriptive tweets about one's naked body, are not typically expected, but in this community, bodies, and embodiments are crucial. Bodies are described in terms of appearance, pain, or movement. Imani's tweet received 2.1K likes, and several members applauded the voicing of enjoyment of one's body. Adding to this conversation, it is pertinent to recall how some tweets with the hashtag #DisabledPeopleAreHot declined to make a statement of sexuality or a call for inclusion into beauty cannons; the intention was to embody disability and disidentify their sexuality.

Disidentification is a performance, and in an online setting, this performance occurs by posting and interacting in the medium. *Disabled Twitter* users embody disidentification by tweeting, sharing, and liking, and as members of this community have claimed, this performance results in accidental—activism[46]—. *Disabled Twitter* users are activists by enacting intersectional identities. As disidentificatory characters, they suggest alternative grounds in their conversations, views, and claims; in a way, they queer activism.

Challenging Sexual Hierarchies

The limited way in which sexuality is conceived obliges to rethink the coexistence of sexuality and disability outside the normative framework, that is, under a queer spectrum. Normative sexuality is limited. As Foucault (1978) insists, fantasies and possibilities are disciplined by morality and the ideas of physical and mental health; thus, the question of pleasure is not even posed outside the boundaries of normativity. Although these boundaries have been pushed by sex liberation movements and invited into neoliberal frameworks, borderlines still divide normative from non-normative through "deployments of sexuality." In this sense, it is a

---

[46] "I just want to let people know that for many disabled people becoming a disability advocate is purely incidental. We spend so much time advocating as to why we deserve a seat at the table, people often don't wonder what it is we want to do while there" (@Imani_Barbarin, 2019, March 16)

transgression to suggest that queerness offers any rewarding pleasure, and it is precisely in this context that members from this community tempt current discourses. @Sarah_L_Doherty demystifies pleasure and tweets: "Sick and crip sex can be messy, awkward, hilarious, and incredibly hot. #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow" (2019, January 19). Elaborating on the ideas of pleasure and suggesting that sex itself is, in a way, not normative, @astoldbykoats posts: "Here's your reminder today that: Queer sex is good sex and Adaptive sex is good sex (isn't good sex supposed to be adaptable to those having it regardless???) Also #DisabledPeopleAreHot #DisabledPeopleHaveSex –your local #CripQueer" (2019, April 11). @astoldbykoats invite us to think that framing sex as normative is nonsensical, as in all cases, bodies must adapt to other bodies, making it impossible to obey a norm. @astoldbykoats does not necessarily normalize queerness and disability, or disables and queers all sex, but simply puts forward how inefficient it is to frame sex as normative.

While @astoldbykoats states that "queer disabled sex" is good, other members of this community adopt a more radical position challenging the hierarchy of "disabled sex" by depreciating "normative sex" and evidencing its limiting imagination. An article published in the last days of March 2019 by the blog *Black Youth Project* titled "—Chills down my spinal degeneration: Why we need Black queer disabled kink—[47]" was broadly shared by several members of the community highlighting a part on the text that reads: "It was BlackQueerDisabledKink knowledge that taught me how revolutionary my bed could be". Jade T. Perry, author of the article, opens a bedroom space, first, to debunk the suppositions that deny sexual desires to disabled people, and then to explicate the richness of erotic wisdom that results from adapting sex. Perry describes the possibilities of disabled sex as one that at times may

---

[47] This article by Jade T. Perry was also featured in an episode of Inner Hoe Uprising podcast.

inevitably fall into a BDSM (light or hardcore, purposely or unintended) since pain and pleasure and dominant and submissive are in play, or one that at times may completely omit penetration and include heating pads. Perry also explains how consensual language is essential because, at all times, dexterity and capability must guide the bodies.

The adaptability @astoldbykoats claims as necessary becomes a source of lust in Perry's article, and as other users state, a key component of pleasure. Certainly, adaptability is a survival skill; nonetheless, in an able-bodied industrialized and tech-driven world, adaptability becomes less necessary as we tend to build and adapt the world to able-bodied necessities. On the other hand, disabled bodies must adapt to able-bodied standards and dodge ableist barriers; these adaptability skills evidently become useful in the bedroom. *Disabled Twitter* users' tweet how disability encourages erotic creativity: "You know you've fully accepted your limitations and disabilities when you figure out how a hoyer will fit with your kink. #cripsex #DisabledPeopleAreHot #spoonies4life" (@jillkessler, 2019, September 16). Similarly, trans, disabled user @dominickevans explains, "us crips got mad skills for making accommodations #DisablednDatinChat" (2019, March 6), pointing out how adaptability is used for the means of pleasure.

Although the idea of pleasure, especially when referring to sexual pleasure, had to work its way to break into the arenas of permissiveness and challenge the limits of obscenity, it may be stated that in the broader sense, pleasure has successfully been accepted in current society within a heteronormative framework, still leaving space for indecency, a space that is marginalized, invisible, not talked about, and not portrait in media. Unquestionably, the voicing of pleasure of non-normative sexualities challenges structures, and then again, this voicing must be vigilant, as it is always at risk of being disciplined, commodified, expropriated.

The anxieties of disciplining and commodification arise in random conversations and are expressed in jokes and sarcastic tones. Ridiculing the market-driven mind and body wellness lifestyle, @Imani_Barbarin, replying to @Eman_Rimawi tweets:

> If we told ableds we have sex, then they'll want to know how, and then they'll start buying all our accessible pillows and such talkin bout how they just saw gweneth (sic.) Paltrow advertise one. DON'T LET ABLEDS GENTRIFY OUR SEX LIVES (2018, May 17).

Barbarin's tweet again attests that adaptable sex is overly appealing and, by taunting the possible commercialization of her accessories, poses that adaptable sex possesses specific knowledge that normative sex lacks. Additionally, @Imani_Barbarin's tweet puts forward the imminent risk any idea suffers in the time of neoliberalism and entrepreneurship. Barbarin insists on not telling ableds about the use of adaptable accessories (obviously, this is partly a joke, as she is posting in a public forum), exposing the continuous contradictions of voicing, queering, and challenging. Barbarin's fear indicates the narrow lines of maneuver within a queer spectrum since gentrification would mean appropriation, rebranding/commodification, and displacement.

Barbarin's fear of having her sex life gentrified is legitimate, and it is an example of how minority, underground, or revolutionary practices are incorporated and sold to the mainstream consumer, forgetting its initial purpose. Challenging neoliberalism requires a constant reformulation because a market ideology is inclusive when profit is at stake. Challenging forces have been absorbed and integrated into the system they once contested. Social movements or artistic expressions are translated into commodities (Banet-Weiser, 2012). For example, environmental movements have been incorporated by corporations and "green marketing" is just another branding strategy that, instead of rejecting consumerism altogether and being an

alternative for indispensable needs, it is used as an opportunistic advertisement that keeps encouraging consumption (which the buyer welcomes with the satisfying sentiment of good citizenship). Similarly, subversive forms of objecting to the system, such as graffiti, jazz, or hip hop, become street art and studio-produced music.

Cripping #MeToo

Receiving the Sidney Peace Prize in 2004, Indian author Arundhati Roy rejected to be "the voice of 'the voiceless'" and said in her lecture: "There's really no such thing as 'the voiceless.' There are only the deliberately silenced or the preferably unheard." Roy's quote is accurate. The calls for social justice from different marginalized groups are systematically obscured. In a way, the broadcasting capability of social media offers, at instances, opportunities to amplify some voices.

The success of social movements and hashtag activism (see Rosenbaum, 2017; Gerbaudo, 2012) signals that social media counterpublics have the potential to influence a broader audience. For instance, #AbledsAreWeird, #DisabledPeopleAreHot, and #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow are hashtags that made headlines in mainstream media. As I discussed earlier, counternarratives are vulnerable to be shaped into market-friendly politics. While these claims may sometimes survive commodification and achieve mobilization, they are also subject to homogenization and "white-washing," obscuring other minority identities and oversimplifying the movement. In this case, social media is a space that offers everyone a voice, and as much as there is a tendency to homogenize movements, there are tools to contest this trend. In this section, I consider how the #Metoo movement failed to include disabled people in its claims, and how in response (or simply alternatively), this community has sustained conversations to make this subject visible.

Although sexual assault affects disabled people by an—abysmal proportion[48]—, the #MeToo movement is widely perceived as a women's movement, predominantly white, or in the best of the circumstances, homogeneous. The MeToo movement was created in 2006 by black activist Tarana Burke. It became a viral hashtag after American actress Alyssa Milano encouraged its hashtag use in the midst of Harvey Weinstein's sexual assault allegations. The movement accomplished—significant legal battles[49]— with the cases Larry Nassar and Harvey Weinstein, however, media coverage had centered in mostly—white victims[50]—, obscuring and ignoring the specific challenges of—race, class, power, and disability[51]—. Similarly, and pertinent to this topic is the absolute omission (or representation) of—disabled people[52]— in the #MeToo movement that continues to desexualize disabled people and masks consent.

Assuming homogeneity takes for granted that everyone is benefited equally while creating the impression that the problem is in a solving phase. The invisibility of class, disability, race, gender, and the apparent homogeneity impede to explore the relationship of consent,

---

[48] According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2011-2015), disabled people have twice more chances of being sexually assault/rape than non-disabled people. Some sites such as disabilityjustice.org state that 80 percent of disabled women are sexually assaulted, and 30% of men with developmental disabilities have been assaulted. I am unable to confirm this statistic with the original research.

[49] Still certain privilege groups are granted immunity, e.g., Donald Trump's and Brett Kavanaugh's accusations.

[50] Pointing to this argument, Leung, and Williams (2019) note that, although Bill Cosby's suits were already on course when the #MeToo movement gathered momentum, media reporting of Cosby's victims was centered in white women. Comparably, and also before the #MeToo viral era, R. Kelly's accusers, who were black young women, had poor coverage, and allegations were denied by Kelly and acquitted in court. It was after the #MeToo movement had boomed and the release of a documentary "Surviving R. Kelly" in January 2019 that more accusers came forward, and Kelly was charged (Salam, 2019, Leung & Williams, 2019). In parallel, the hashtag #MuteRKelly gained support on Twitter, demonstrating how social media is a site of protest.

[51] White victims of sexual assault are more likely to be credible, especially if the perpetrator is black; more white victims report rape, although black women are raped at a higher rate (Donovan, 2007). The sexualized images of colored women tend to attribute culpability to the victim, for example, "the racist stereotype is the Black woman "whore" who is incapable of being raped because she's always wanting, willing and able to have sex" (Tillet, Quinn & Simmons, 2007, p. 10).

[52] Also, muted from the movement are trans people, elders, prisoners, immigrants, etc.

discrimination, stereotypes, racism, and ableism when different identities are at play. In the end,

sexual abuse is an issue of power. The #MeToo movement (the one that plays in media) has

failed to pay enough attention to prisons, orphanages, elder and disability care facilities, —

immigration detention centers[53]—, —trans people[54]—, and identities or spaces in which power

disparity is more extreme. Certainly, some people are unable to tweet a hashtag #MeToo on

Twitter, however, creating a default identity, still mutes marginalized identities. In other words,

the original #MeToo movement that Burke started, the one deeply concerned with women of

color, has not really become viral, has not really permeated mainstream media.

Statistics repeatedly demonstrate that disabled people are at least twice more likely to be

affected by violence and sexual assaults, this number grows exponentially when observing—

intellectual disabilities[55]— (Basile, Breiding & Smith, 2016; Harrell, 2017). *Disabled Twitter*

discusses several factors that contribute to these alarming facts, starting from the reality that

disabled bodies are constantly subject to medical examinations and dependent to others' care; the

invisibility of disabled people's sexuality; the assumption that sexual education in disabled

people is needless; and how consent and sexuality are conceived within a heteronormative abled-

bodied framework. Although these discussions have not reached a wider public, I suggest that

some of these tweets not only begin a conversation that needs more attention but are also a

---

[53] The New York Times reported that from 2014 to 2018, there were more than 4,000 claims of sexual abuse or sexual harassment in children in immigration centers (Haag, 2019). Similarly, other media has denounced that women and gender non-conforming in ICE detention centers have been sexually abused (Vazquez, 2019a; Vazquez, 2019b).

[54] According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2011-12), 40% of trans people in federal prison reported sexual abuse (Beck, 2014).

[55] The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2011-2015) points that disabled people have twice more chances of being sexually assault/rape than non-disabled people, people with intellectual disabilities are seven times more likely to be sexually abused, women with intellectual disabilities are 12 times more likely to be sexually abused (Harrell, 2017; Shapiro, 2018). Harrell, author of this report, notes that the report underestimates the number of victims as it only accounts for people 12 years and older and does not consider people living in institutions (Shapiro, 2018).

starting point to articulate how sexuality and consent may be seen outside heteronormative conceptions.

The dependency on caregivers and health examinations subjects disabled bodies to constant scrutiny creating an ambivalent and confused notion of body agency. The relationship doctor-patient situates the body in a vulnerable position, one that accepts the manipulation of the body, consents at all times a power relationship and assumes the body as anomalous. Doctors and nurses, as the authority in charge, measure, touch, massage, and insert needles, intrude into the patient's body, all as part of their job. From a practical view, medical check-ups are necessary; however, a visit to the doctor presupposes the patient in a subordinated position. Additionally, disabled people often rely on more regular visits and the need for treatments outside the doctor's office, which normalizes the subjectification of the body. Responding to #DisablednDatinChat, @HijaDe2Madre tweets: "Hope there are more discussions about consent. And not ones based on shame but on body autonomy. This is crucial bc our bodies are constantly poked and prodded from young ages from doctors & it can be confusing. #DisablednDatinChat" (2018, January 23). @estarianne has a similar take:

> I find, as a sick adult, that having to give so many people access to my body makes me think less of it and myself. And looking forward to a probability of long-term care I realize that it makes others think less of people's autonomy too. #AbleistRapeCulture (@estarianne, 2019, March 28).

@HijaDe2Madre and @estarianne tweets expose how regular medical screenings affect the conceptions of body autonomy and rise importance to a subject that is typically not addressed. The threat of body autonomy becomes a more significant issue when framed in terms of consent and sexuality. The discussion of consent takes many forms. In terms of health

providers and caregivers, it results inevitable to avoid contact. The patient has little voice in care procedures. As @HijaDe2Madre notes, these relationships are dangerous because body examinations are normalized from early ages, and body interventions are encouraged to be consented.

Taking for granted consent could be risky inside or outside a care facility. On January 2019, several mainstream media outlets covered the news of a disabled woman who gave birth at a Phoenix care facility, the woman in a vegetative state had been raped by a caregiver (see Fieldstadt, 2019; Romo, 2019; Schwartz, 2019; Wootson Jr. & Brice-Saddler, 2019). While this news stood up as a rare occurrence, sexual abuse in care institutions or by care providers is highly prevalent (Shapiro, 2018), and given the mixed signals in these scenarios, abusive situations are blurred, ignored, or excused.

Although medical interventions are at times necessary, the insistence in the normalization of the body participates in this relationship. In the perpetual seek of normalization, the disabled body must be continuously disciplined. Foucault (1977) poses that in a similar way that the seventeenth century soldier is "something that can be made" through disciplining techniques (p. 135), the body must be docile to be "transformed and improved" in order to participate as a machinery in the modern economy (p. 136). The bodies that distance to the norm are not only in an inferior position but also need more strict or consistent disciplining (Foucault, 1977). The compulsory disciplining techniques are assumed as obligatory, leaving no room to challenge medical authorities.

Aside from health providers, consent is constantly at stake in disabled bodies. The assumption that disabled people are incapable of being independent is evident in the constant intrusion of able-bodied "with the best of intentions," insisting on providing "help" when not

needed or without asking, negating disabled people the right to make decisions. The complaints in *Disabled Twitter* of able-bodied holding someone or someone's mobility aid without permission are common: "This is your not so friendly reminder that if you grab anyone or their mobility devices without consent you are assaulting them and they have the right to defend themselves. Keep your hands to yourself. #AbledsAreWeird" (@chronicallysic, 2019, April 8). The well-intended actions are not welcomed and are seen as condescending and transgressive. @Cal__Montgomery puts forward a similar message: "'I was only trying to help!' means 'I don't care about your consent.' #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow" (2019, January 18).

While this type of consent seems trivial, especially when contrasting with sexual consent, and especially as it seems to be motivated by a humanitarian intension, it is evident by the tone both users adopt that the transgressions are severe. @chronicallysic uses the term "assaulting," meaning a severe violation and threats with action. Similarly, @Cal__Montgomery does not accept the good Samaritan excuse. The moral value of helping others is not put into question here. The issue is the assumption that disabled people are in persistent need, and able-bodied people claim credit as benefactors. Furthermore, similar attitudes could be replicated in romantic or sexual relationships with detrimental outcomes, such as when disabled people are considered beneficiaries when dating abled-bodied:

> The idea of disabled people being 'lucky' if an abled person finds them 'desirable' is so disgustingly prominent & has undoubtedly enabled my assaulters. it needs to be demolished and transformed with empathy and justice for victims and survivors. #AbleistRapeCulture (@babieautie, 2019, March 28).

These conversations stress the need to distance from the beneficiary-benefactor narratives that assume beneficiaries (disabled people) as having no alternatives to improve their condition,

and place abled-bodied as benefactors that should be valued for their generosity, completely invalidating consent.

Other situations that place disabled people in more vulnerable positions are motivated by how interactions are framed from an ableist standpoint, for example, the stress in inculcating the "proper" ("normal") way to do things. Again, drawing on "docile bodies," among the different disciplinary forms, Foucault (1977) describes disciplinary control as a type of regulation that instructs body gestures to coordinate with appropriate body positions, in other words, our behavior in social settings tends to follow this principle. As I have been arguing, the disciplining of disabled bodies is more rigorous as they are seen apart from the norm. A lucid example is the ceaseless instructing in how to participate in "normal"/(ableist) socialization. Different organizations promote social skill classes targeting primarily autistic or neurodivergent children in an endeavor to incorporate them into society, suggesting that they need to accommodate their disability in order to "fit in." Rabbi and disability advocate Ruti Regan points at how consent is obviated in these workshops: "#AbleistRapeCulture when autistic people get hours and hours and hours of therapy to teach them to sit still, make eye contact, and look attractive to others — and absolutely no support in learning how to negotiate consent" (@rsocialskills, 2018, January 29). From the other side, user @EbThen elaborating in toxic masculinity in Autistic men suggests that these social skill groups are embedded within culture's faults encouraging questionable behavior: "I hypothesize, is because non-Autistic people are so invested in teaching Autistic people how to socialize "like non-Autistics," they reinforce things like toxic masculinity while trying to get Autistic kids to be "normal." #AbleistRapeCulture" (2019, March 28).

The emphasis on normalizing disabled people's behavior makes invisible different forms of interactions. @LatinoSexuality tweets: "the way that we define consent is ableist. phrases like

"enthusiastic consent" are ableist as enthusiasm is performed and requires bodies, faces, others to read and translate. not all of us do that. legally defined consent is ableist. #AbleistRapeCulture", responding to this tweet she adds: "share your definition of consent that are not ableist! we need more radical examples of body autonomy and self-determination #AbleistRapeCulture (2019, March 28). Clearly, these disciplining techniques instruct able-bodiedness and heteronormativity as well, they are in McRuer's (2006) words, part of a discourse of compulsory able-bodiedness. These conversations question the risks of participating in the "normalization" of the body and advise that abled frameworks complicate disabled bodies in unpredictable ways.

As I have explained, sexual abuse implies a relation of power. From subjecting a body to treatment and care to the positioning of able-bodied as benefactors to the disciplining of socialization, all these examples have power in common and, therefore, hierarchy. @goodposting argues in her tweet that sexual abuse is more an issue of transgressing power than an issue of desire: "—#4OutOf5[56]— disabled women experience assault in their lifetime, but because our society conflates assault w/ desire rather than power & doesn't consider disabled bodies desirable, this is rarely acknowledged. how can we believe our pain matters when no one will even look at it?" (2018, September 28). Elaborating in @goodposting's idea of desirability let's remember how Donald Trump denied allegations of assault by implying that women making the accusations were not his taste: "believe me, she would not be my first choice, that I can tell you," he said in his 2016 presidential campaign. Responding to a different allegation, Trump said: "she is not my type" (Baker & Vigdor, 2019). —Media depictions[57]— of street harassment popularize

---

[56] The hashtag #4outof5 was created by Imani Barbarin with the purpose to denounce and make visible the high rate of sexual abuse in disabled population. Different sites, blogs, and even researches claim that 83% of the disabled population is sexually abused, while the statistic seems reasonable; I have not found the original research that corroborates this statistic.

[57] Media also suggests that males are only sexually assaulted in prisons and omits to portray assaults in military settings.

the false conception that only "attractive" bodies are harassed, or at least, that these are the bodies at most risk and obscure that the first premise is that assault perpetrators are in a situation of power when aggression occurs.

The conversations and tweets I refer in this section do not necessarily seek recognition as part of a #MeToo movement; rather, they attempt to elucidate the different forms in which disabled people experience abuse. Certainly, more layers complicate abuse such as—credibility[58]— and other—identities[59]—. These conversations challenge compulsory able-bodiedness by suggesting new forms of speaking about consent, rejecting being positioned in charitable manners, demanding consent even when it is a "supporting" situation, and by contesting disciplining social standards.

The hashtag #AbleistRapeCulture was used in—2018[60]— and came to life again in March 2019 when @SF_WAR, @SinsInvalid, and @DisVisibility used the hashtag in a Twitter chat. The sole wording of this hashtag accuses ableism directly and aims to encourage conversations to disentangle how rape is part of the culture. Comparably, we should question how interactions and relationships are conceived in ableist frameworks impeding us to see how sexualities, bodies, and minds have the potential to interact differently.

The Never-Ending Negotiation

While movements are susceptible to be homogenized obscuring the most marginalized voices, users disidentify themselves to make visible the complexity within their community, as

---

[58] @beckiechild tweets: "If you are disabled, then you lack credibility. The issue of credibility can look different depending on the type of disabilities you have. Police said a friend of mine wasn't a reliable witness. #AbleistRapeCulture" (2019, March 28)

[59] An example of how intersections have a different impact take, for instance, @sleepspoonie's tweet: "Add being disabled on top of my identity as a woman, and things get even more complicated and scary when it comes to dealing with assault. #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow" (@sleepspoonie, 2019, February 16).

[60] According to my own search on Twitter.

Muñoz poses "*disidentifications* is meant to offer a lens to elucidate minoritarian politics that is not monocausal or monothematic" (Muñoz, 1999, p. 8). I do not mean to suggest that this form of resistance is risk-free, because, like any other strategy, it is essential to continually negotiate any contesting position. However, the embodiment of these queer complex identities evidences how different systems of oppression impact disabled people. The distancing from normative stances enables this community to approach problematics from alternative approaches.

Queerness has been conceived as a promising solution to extend knowledge, to repurpose discourses, to refuse and contest disciplining structures, to change political agendas. Conversely, Cathy Cohen (1997) has argued that the queer approach has been insufficient: queerness is still framed in a dichotomous position with heterosexuality and unable to successfully achieve "genuine transformational politics" (p. 444). Cohen critiques are pertinent; however, the limited success of queerness is probably not only due to a limiting framework, but mostly because of the flexibility and adaptability of neoliberalism. In order for antagonist discourses to defy neoliberalism, they must continuously reformulate itself.

This relationship in which queerness is a contesting strategy that requires negotiation may be better understood in Gramsci's terms, first observing neoliberalism as a hegemonic power, and then seeing the confronting tweets as a form of war of position. —Hegemony[61]— explains Buttigieg (1995), "depends on consent," not to be mistaken with "'free choice,' consent is manufactured, albeit through extremely complex mediums, diverse institutions, and continually changing processes" (p. 7). As I observed in the previous chapter, some tweets willingly participate in neoliberal narratives as the ideology is inviting and flexible. Gramsci is aware of

---

[61] Gramsci uses the term cultural hegemony to conceptualize how a ruling class maintains control by instituting common sense; dominant ideologies are accepted voluntarily because they are perceived as logical.

the flexibility of hegemony, that protects the system from a frontal battle. Nonetheless, he is not completely pessimist and suggests that a strategy to contest hegemony is through a constant opposition that gradually gains influence; it is through a slow displacement that contesting forces succeed. This strategy is what he calls war of position.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In 2018, activist Alice Wong (@SFdirewolf), edited a compilation of essays inspired by the sense of despair that some disabled communities felt after the—2016 US presidential election[62]—. The book *Resistance & Hope: Crip Wisdom for the People* intended to respond to the political moment and to make a call to endure resistance and hope. Leah Piepzna-Samarasinha reviewing Wong's book writes: "This book will give you comrades reassurances that we are brilliant revolutionaries and a plethora of tools and visions for how we make the road by limping, crutching, rolling, signing and stimming" (Wong, 2018). Both, Wong's publication and Leah Piepzna-Samarasinha's quote illustrate and summarize how disabled communities are resourceful in their tactics, heterogeneous, enlightened by diversity, and continuously seeking for strategies that may come in different forms: from performance, to poems, to mobilizations, to music, and in this case, to tweets.

Several points arise from this thesis. First, the existence of a counterpublic disabled community on Twitter is remarkable. It is noteworthy how the affordances of a digital platform allow connectivity among a diverse group, geographically disperse, and limited by mobility. Additionally, how this group conceives itself as a community (*Disabled Twitter*), achieves strong bonding, and is able to organize and collaborate using hashtags and making those hashtags trending topics. Second, considering citizenship as an unstable category and drawing on the ideas of cultural and DIY citizenship (see Hartley, 1999), I suggest that the persistence on elaborating conversations of sexuality on Twitter is a claim of citizenship. Third, I analyze tweets of

---

[62] Donald Trump's attitudes and campaign promises anticipated difficult times for minority populations. One of the most straightforward offenses against disabled people was the mocking of a disabled reporter in his 2016 campaign.

sexuality from two perspectives: a neoliberal lens and a queer lens. I discuss how these may as well be seen as activist strategies; the former is a demand for inclusion, and the latter a conceptualization outside categorizations.

As I have argued earlier, citizenship, far from being an equally participatory right, is a contesting status that particularly troubles minority groups. Aside from the political conception of citizenship, scholars suggest a cultural notion that considers political participation intertwined with our relationship with media (see Hartley, 1999; Jones, 2006; Rosenbaum, 2017). From this perspective, social media interventions are political. Additionally, sexuality already has a political (and economic) dimension, mainly when observed from a neoliberalism stance as part of a productive body. The condition of minority already assumes an inferior citizenship; thus, subaltern counterpublics must constantly claim for citizenship and, depending on intersectionality, historical moment, and location, the demands for participation may vary. The recognition of sexual agency has long troubled disabled people, and the activism of sexuality and disability together is rare and often ignored because more immediate and basic rights are at stake. In this sense, the claims of sexuality on Twitter from this disabled community are revolutionary acts as they start conversations that rarely occur in other instances and spaces, or that simply, for different reasons, have not gained momentum.

The different perspectives from which the conversations of sexuality may be observed uncover other conflicts and incongruities. In this thesis, I argued that neoliberal and queer forms of contestation occur, at times, in parallel manners using the same hashtag, or unfolding from the same or similar ideas; and at times occur simultaneously, that is, one tweet may offer two very different readings. I argued that the claim for inclusion into a neoliberal model simply suggests the expansion of the same beliefs, still threatening the body as it participates in a categorical and

hierarchical model. Contrasting this position, I posed queerness is an alternative form to question and contest neoliberalism, as it rejects normalcy as a whole and introduces new conversations. While, in my view, a neoliberal posture does not offer a solution and still complicates the body, it may, on some occasions, be a starting point for gaining visibility or elaborate to further conversations.

Neoliberalism and Disability

Neoliberalism is flexible and inviting and has progressed to become a model that strengthens itself by including (or better said, by domesticating) challenging ideas. Neoliberalism welcomes dissidents as part of its mantra, but the conditions and restrictions of participation are often invisible. In its apparent benevolence of inclusion (Mitchell & Snyder, 2015), any questioning of the system seems nonsensical. Let us not forget that neoliberalism developed along with the Cold-War western narratives that insisted on freedom, free choice, and free-market as core values (Harvey, 2005). Within this framing, any challenging force is described as anti-democratic, or as a *threat* to freedom. Cammaerts (2015) argues that neoliberalism has dragged us to a post-hegemonic era. Neoliberalism "has managed to position itself as quintessentially anti-ideological, as a natural state of affairs, as invisible" (Cammaerts, 2015, p. 523), complicating all types of resistance. From this perspective, there is no apparent ideology to contest, and counter-hegemonic discourses are invited in as part of a neoliberal philosophy of "freedom."

Neoliberalism is, in essence, the epitome of ableism. The ideas of commodification, individualization, self-sufficiency, and self-empowerment are represented in able-bodied ideals. I am not implying with this that the disabled body is incapable of pursuing those ideals; on the contrary, neoliberal ideals are an inviting continuous project of self-improvement. Instead, I

suggest that the disabled body (as other marginalized bodies) is positioned in a disadvantaged situation when participating in a neoliberal regime. The neoliberal model offers endless possibilities of success and reimagining the self, creating the impression of fairness because the "opportunity" is given to anyone willing to "try," assuming adversities are necessary sacrifices for redemption and ignoring systemic restrictions. When challenged, neoliberalism responds with empowerment by inviting adherence into the model: welfare is no longer a charity; it is an incentive to get a job.

Similarly, the ADA includes disabled people into a market model, "granting" control and "liberating" disabled individuals from the welfare State. Neoliberalism solves moral frictions by approaching narratives of inclusion (Mitchell & Snyder, 2015). And if neoliberalism is "liberating," why would anyone dare to "liberate" outside this model? In this sense, the tools to contest marginalization are often given by the same oppressing model. Queer scholar Sara Ahmed (2012) argues that the claim for inclusion becomes another tactic of subjection:

> Inclusion could be read as a technology of governance: not only as a way of bringing those who have been recognized as strangers into the nation, but also of making strangers into subjects, those who in being included are also willing to consent in terms of inclusion –a way others as would-be citizens are asked to submit to and agree with the task of reproducing that nation (Ahmed, 2012, p. 163).

I want to be clear that neither tolerance nor inclusion is equivalent to fairness and justice. It is pertinent to remark that the need for rights and accessibility must never be in question. Instead, my critique of inclusion approaches relies on the limiting forms of participation. The claim for inclusion becomes the logical answer when we are used to thinking in terms of binary

oppositions: inclusion is a solution because exclusion is a problem. In this sense, it is necessary

to approximate more creative forms of approaching and contesting power.

Neoliberalism is Not Sexy, but…

In a Zoom conference of the Society for Disability Studies in April 2020, Leah Piepzna-Samarasinha, ambivalent about the use of legislation as a tactic in disability activism, said: "legislation is not sexy, but…", and continued to list some positive outcomes that arise from legislation. In the same tone, neoliberalism is not sexy, but… The inclusion in neoliberal citizenship provides collective knowledge and establishes rights that are useful in future battles. This is not to say that is the best approach, but that there could be some favorable (intentional or unintentional) outcomes and, potentially, these forms of participation could unfold other more productive tactics. For example, the ADA introduced indispensable legislation that could be seen as a claim of inclusion into a neoliberal citizenship if we argue that it is an initiative partly motivated to keep away disabled population from welfare programs and to incorporate them into the—workforce[63]—. The emphasis here in making disabled population economically independent from the government appears to be positive; however, it reinforces the idea that the reason for inclusion is an economic one, that value is given upon productivity, and mostly highlights the intention to reduce a population as state beneficiary. Notwithstanding, the ADA has not had the expected outcome in terms of unemployment. Employment among disabled people has decreased from 50 percent in 1988 to 20 percent in recent years (Maroto & Pettinicchio, 2015). Although different reports and researches coincide with the numbers, little effort has been put into changing this trend. The effort is still centered in dismantling—welfare

---

[63] The ADA is a broad piece of legislation not limited to employment, it also makes important improvements in education and Medicaid, among other subjects.

benefits[64]—, demonstrating that the interest in incorporating disabled people into a labor force is not necessarily inclined toward seeking the well-being of a vulnerable population. However, these exchanges are more complicated, because even when the ADA has not offered economic stability to disabled people, this legislation has been essential in terms of accessibility, education, and other forms of participation, providing visibility and initiating other conversations. Furthermore, it clearly states economic rights and establishes the possibility to contest injustice in courts.

The previous examples demonstrate that neoliberal participation could be dangerous but not necessarily a complete loss. In terms of sexuality, for example, the insistence on sexual potency, identity politics, and the expansion of beauty cannons should not be the final goal. However, they could be starting points for other conversations. Identity is a trap that often derives in homogeneity omitting threats or reducing complex issues to oversimplified versions; beauty is an anxiety-provoking ideal that requires endless maintenance; and, reducing sexuality to terms of sexual potency is itself an ableist construction; thus, adhering to these variables restricts the possible achievements and creates new tensions.

On the other hand, even when an inclusion position is limiting, these conversations are, although "unsophisticated" or "poorly elaborated," first reactions of contestations of power. They start developing a language; they raise awareness and make power visible. Racism, ableism, classism, misogynism, and other forms of discrimination are embedded within our culture that favors specific classes, races, genders, etc., and the identification of invisible manifestations of

---

[64] On January 2020, the Wall Street Journal reported that the current administration is seeking to tighten the eligibility of disability benefits, the article pointed that these measures especially targeted to affect older beneficiaries (Davidson, 2020); in different publications, the HuffPost has revealed other restrictions that the administrations are considering, including new categories, and redefining full-time workers with 30 hours a week instead of 40 (Delenay, 2020a; Delenay, 2020b).

oppression is essential in order to advance toward social justice. The questioning of sexual potency is a microaggression, that if left unchallenged, assumes the inquiry as pertinent. The identification and call outs of these "microaggressions" -as psychiatrist Chester Pierce defines these normalized subtle "put-downs" (Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000)- are an initial recognition of power, are attempts to articulate resistance, they evidence discrimination. These moves should not be considered absolute attainments, but, again, on occasions, they could provide a step forward toward identifying and defining aggressions.

Contrasting the tweets that call for neoliberal citizenship, I analyzed how this same community approaches more challenging strategies by claiming alternative forms of participation that contest limiting forms of existence (and resistance). Instead of suggesting the expansion of neoliberalist ideals, these tweets introduce new discourses refusing a neoliberal agenda. By disidentifying identities, reassessing disabled sex, and deconstructing sexual abuse in disabled population, these tweets present a heterogeneous community that defies norms and normalcy. These alternative positions result promising because of the acceptance of plurality and heterogeneity invalidate categories, defying hierarchies. Distancing from an ableist view of sex, they queer all sex and explore sex creativity. Finally, the framing of sexual abuse, not only centers in the aggressions and transgressions but elaborates on consent and how disability and an ableist culture play a role that includes the scrutiny of bodies and attitudes. These tweets pose productive propositions; however, I do not mean to suggest that this is a completely risk-free approach or the only viable alternative. As Cohen (1997) argues, queerness is at risk of being conceived as a binary opposition of normalcy,—without really becoming a challenging

force.[65]— My position is not necessarily pessimistic; it is cautious. Challenging forces must be flexible, cautious, and creative.

Contrasting Readings

While certainly, the contrasting readings of tweets I do in this thesis reflect incongruency and lack of coordination, I want to push these assumptions toward a different direction. I suggest that they are still valid resources and evidence of the myriad of tools that counterpublics utilize. Additionally, as I have discussed, inclusion is not a win but neither necessarily a complete loss. The claims for neoliberal inclusion are threatening, especially if they do not advance any further. My view is that many of these calls for inclusion are (or have the potential to be) initial attempts to elaborate more complex demands. They are part of a strategy rather than an ultimate goal, particularly when observing that these conversations are not static and are constantly elaborating.

Moreover, although a neoliberal and a queer position oppose one another creating a sense of contradiction, we must acknowledge that counterpublics are not stable communities, activism is a trial and error process, and participation, even when it does not challenge the system, is a first step for other moves. Foucault (1978) considers discourses polyvalent and constantly interacting with other discourses and even silences:

> Discourses are tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations; there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy; they can, on the contrary, circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy (Foucault, 1978, pp. 101-102).

---

[65] Mitchell and Snyder (2015) make a similar claim. They argue that the Disability Rights Movement has developed in a similar normative mode than the mainstream Gay and Lesbian movement. In this case, inclusion implies the participation in conversations that seek to normalize bodies and sexualities, or merely the broadening of the terms that define them.

Foucault's explanation is useful to frame how these juxtaposing conversations are also finding intersecting points and common purposes. In this case, the different discourses agree in intersecting sexuality and disability and making sexuality a main subject; however, they differ in how the body is positioned against a broader discourse. Certainly, aiming for inclusion in a neoliberal model does not provide a solution, and it does not offer equal citizenship, yet this participation could be used as another tool, as a tactic, as a form to introduce other conversations into mainstream publics.

Although dangerous, the inclusion into neoliberalism could provide some immediate and partial wins, such as visibility and limited participation, anticipating that these moves will never derive in systemic change. A queer position is an alternative to urge for transformation and resist inclusion and categorization. The occurrence of contrasting discourses does not necessarily invalidate the efforts and possibilities of achievements. After all, it is reasonable to have conflicting opinions within a community and absolutely expected to see them in a social media platform that encourages spontaneous conversations, and that functions as a negotiation setting. Foucault suggests that multiple discourses are in play with one another, and it is the interaction of these discourses what offers a meaning:

> We must conceive discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable. To be more precise, we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies. It is this distribution that we must reconstruct, with the things said and those concealed, the

enunciations required and those forbidden, that it comprises, with the variants and

different effects (Foucault, 1978, p. 100).

Following Foucault, the existence of various disputing discourses, either calling for an

expansion of normative sexuality or queering sexuality, ultimately questions the inadequacy of

normative standards. It is also as part of this instability that tweets may simultaneously

participate in very opposing conversations when observed through different lenses.

Twitter Citizenship

Additionally, while activism, citizenship, and communities are inherently fluid, social

media platforms aggregate instability to these discourses, subjecting users to its affordances and

market dynamics. The conversations that take place on Twitter are enabled and restricted by the

affordances of the platform (Bucher & Helmond, 2017; Stanfill, 2015), which are, in turn, part of

a commercial interest. As mentioned earlier, Twitter users depend on "trending topics" to

introduce conversations into a broader audience, and while the dissemination and DIY

production capability of social media make it an "ideal space for the creation of

counternarratives" (Rosenbaum, 2017, p. 14), dominant publics, typically outnumbered in

followers, are favored by visibility not only caused by shares and likes, also prompted by

algorithms and market value. Notwithstanding, this space of uneven competition offers tools to

contest disparity, all users have the possibility to participate in any conversation and to create

hashtags, which have the potential to become trending topics when used in a short period, this

could occur by chance or as a result of organized community support.

Twitter is a neoliberal media founded in marketing logic, catchy hashtags, and the

orchestration of rapid dissemination may offer more visibility. *Disabled Twitter* users habitually

encourage other users to use a hashtag to prompt visibility. In this respect, social media

embodies the paradox of free market and free speech: platforms encourage the voicing of marketable narratives. When new ideas surge from these appealing hashtags, it is a win-win situation. However, the central conflict with this posture is that some "catchy" and "market-friendly" hashtags could achieve popularity without necessarily contributing to productive conversations.

Even when media has had to negotiate its own complicated contradiction between public good and private interest, even when at times it serves the state as a propagandistic institution, we cannot deny its—impact[66]— on social movements, community gathering, citizenship, and resistance. Digital platforms enable participation and the voicing of counternarratives. While conversations occurring in digital media are spontaneous constructions of citizenship that inevitably result in contradictions, the affordances of the platform, such as "reply" or "share," allow, at times, more active discussions and prompt the elaboration of more complex arguments. The consistency of counternarratives suggests an agenda for activism. They become strategies that could engage in further action. Evidently, Twitter is not the ultimate or perfect form of citizenship, but it is an additional tool that provides discursive grounds.

The conversations of sexuality from *Disabled Twitter* as claims of citizenship are contestations of power, elaborate on how ableism affects private dimensions, and participate in activism. The different forms in which citizenship is claimed demonstrate how counterpublics navigate, negotiate, and dodge through the denial and invisibility of sexuality, commonly attributed to disabled people. Sexuality, although conceived as an intimate matter, is a public, social, and political issue: from health care to reproductive rights, to sexual assault, to body

---

[66] Media has long been a critical participant in activism and revolutions, from the print press in Luther's Reformation (see Edwards Jr., 1994) to Twitter in the Arab Spring (see Tufekci, 2017).

agency, to pleasure. Ignoring or denying sexual participation affects the many intersections of the body and citizenship.

This Project, Its Limitations, and the Future

The voicing of disabled sexuality forces us to rethink sexuality and the many ways in which ableism restricts citizenship, how digital platforms enable participation and resistance, and the creative use of digital tools in this endeavor. This thesis continues the conversations that sexuality needs to be conceived outside normalcy; it exemplifies how these discussions occur in online spaces and how these conversations meet and coexist with the problematic claims for inclusion. The different strategies utilized by this community exemplify the myriad possibilities to contest power and how, even when the disputing force is the same, the contestation forms may be stating contradicting positions.

This thesis poses new advancements for future research in terms of sexuality, citizenship, resistance, counterpublics, and disability, and suggests the need to dedicate more attention to the different discourses occurring in online platforms and by disabled users. It is not only mainstream narratives shaping broader discourses, contesting discourses introduce strategies and build ideas, sometimes emerging from spontaneous conversations. Disabled resistance is, as Alice Wong puts it, "crip wisdom" because it is at all times forced to seek creative alternatives to be heard and to contest ableism, to de-normalize and to decategorize. In this sense, discourses and strategies of disabled users are visionary as they are drawn on unconventional ideas and positions.

Certainly, this study has limitations. Although my approach was not quantitative, some more sophisticated and quantitative tools could be used to understand this community's expansion and reach, from hashtag dispersion, a more approximate number of participants in

these trends, and engagement. In this thesis, I was unable to approach other important subjects among *Disabled Twitter* users. I suggest a more profound analysis in subjects that derive in eugenics, for example, conversations about pro-choice, healthcare, abortion, and sterilization. Aside from sexuality, there are a plethora of subjects to be explored in the ambit of disabilities. As I mentioned earlier in this thesis, there are smaller communities of specific disabilities; future research could observe how these communities are similar or different from *Disabled Twitter,* how do different disabilities intersect differently with sexuality. Similarly, the perspectives and views of *Disabled Twitter* should be observed in contrast with other communities that might conceive disability in different terms.

Online Communities

I have always had an ambivalent relationship with social media. I have had a Twitter account since 2008, but I am not a Twitter user. I have never tweeted. I signed back in last year for the first time in more than a decade and realized that I have four followers (I am certain that three of them are unaware that they are following me). In part given my limited experience on Twitter, and mostly considering that the platform does not require reciprocity, I never imagined finding a community with such strong bonding in this platform.

When I first started observing this community, I had assumed the hashtag #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow was what held together this community; it was not. I was amazed to find authentic camaraderie, reciprocity, and cooperation. Particularly I was intrigued by how this very heterogeneous group, especially in terms of types of disability, was elaborating narratives of sexuality from broad perspectives, sometimes demanding sexuality by expanding cannons and sometimes challenging all previous schemes. I was fascinated to see a resisting movement that rarely gathers in physical spaces, crowding Twitter with trending topics, and

voicing sexuality aloud. Aside from the topic, the perspectives that *Disabled Twitter* has taken show how online spaces function as creative sites to redefine and complicate identities, narratives, and discourses, and to negotiate citizenship from different stances.

These new forms of citizenship and collaborative communities that emerge from online spaces are particularly evident in today's panorama. As I finish this thesis, the spread of COVID19, a new coronavirus, has caused the World Health Organization to declare a pandemic. The sales of toilet paper, hand sanitizer, guns, and liquor skyrocketed in the US. In my last quick visit to Target, the shelves with headphones, microphones, and other computer equipment were empty. Millions of people have been working from home and asked to restrict social gatherings. I am sure that the world will be different in many ways after this crisis. I am uncertain how.

In the last decades, we have increasingly relied on digital communication; in a matter of days, most of our "human" interactions have been enabled by internet connections. In this time of vulnerability and self-isolation, we have turned to digital communities. Some are our usual social circles, and some have emerged as forms of resilience, coping, and support. Our restricted mobility has prompted us to engage with others in creative ways; we have "mobilized" (or immobilized?) in front of our computer screens. This thesis should be a reminder that as online spaces become the only points of reunion, less privileged people, those who lack internet connections, or who do not know how to use these tools, are being excluded from these forms of citizenship.

Similarly, this crisis is a reminder that important conversations, activism, communities, and resistance, are happening online, with texts, hashtags, and tweets. This crisis revives the demands and claims long made by disabled communities: that distance working is a feasible accommodation -as all accommodations are-, the need for proper equipment in hospitals

(including ventilators), the need for a more solid health system (including insurance), the need

for state assistant when employment is limited. This crisis is a reminder that we are all a

vulnerable population.

REFERENCES

- , ' scarlett ' , - [@scallymac] (2020, February 14). These people are usually in twitter communities for their "setbacks" (otherwise known as disabilities for your future ref), we put. [Tweet replying to @Emmyjewel]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/scallymac/status/1228248775359111174

- , ' scarlett ' , - [@scallymac] [♿; Women's symbol] (n.d.). *Tweets.* Twitter Profile]. Retrieved June 23, 2020 from: https://twitter.com/scallymac

[@babieautie] (2019, March 28). The idea of disabled people being 'lucky' if an abled person finds them 'desirable' is so disgustingly prominent & has. [Tweet]. Twitter. Note: account suspended by Twitter.

[@HijaDe2Madre] (2018, January 23). Hope there are more discussions about consent. And not ones based on shame but body autonomy. This is crucial bc. [Tweet; retweet @Mae_DayJ]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/HijaDe2Madre/status/955983449222889472

[@HijaDe2Madre] (2019, March 14). No wonder they can't imagine how I can possibly have sex.... they think we use crutches in the pool. [Tweet; replying to @HijaDe2Madre]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/HijaDe2Madre/status/1106073344485384192

[@HijaDe2Madre] (2019, March 21). Some interactions w/this tweet reminded me how low people's expectations are for Disabled people and dating. "Hey be happy they're. [Tweet; replying to @HijaDe2Madre]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/HijaDe2Madre/status/1108760938226671616

[@SaraBTweet23] (2019, April 13). Got asked if I could still have sex? (The classic we all get) so I told him to ask his. [Tweet]. Twitter. Note: User account deleted.

[@sleepspoonie] (2019, February 16). Add being disabled on top of my identity as a woman, and things get even more complicated and scary when. [Tweet]. Twitter. Note: User account deleted.

[Unicorn face] Tori Ingram (Titanium Asexual Unicorn) [Unicorn face] [(@titaniumtori]. (2020, June 9). Hey #DisabledTwitter Should we get taught about disability in schools? [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/titaniumtori/status/1270411888359333900

[Wheelchair symbol; rainbow flag; exploding head; cat face; books; 👊🏻👊🏼👊🏽👊🏾👊🏿Extraterrestrial alien; 6k/80k] [@tmuauthor]. (2019, January 17). #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow not only do we have sex, we enjoy it. [Tweet]. Twitter.
https://twitter.com/tmuauthor/status/1086114039548256261

A. H. [@a_h_reaume]. (2019, January 27). When it comes to #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow one thing I'm realizing is just how cruel people are to disabled people when dating. [Tweet; replying to @a_h_reaume]. Twitter.
https://twitter.com/a_h_reaume/status/1089544980329197568

Adams, G., Estrada-Villalta, S., Sullivan, D., & Markus, H. R. (2019). The psychology of neoliberalism and the neoliberalism of psychology. *Journal of Social Issues*. 75(1), 189-216. https//doi.org/10.1111/josi.12305

Adams, R., Reiss, B., & Serlin, D. (Eds.). (2015). *Keywords for Disability Studies*. New York University Press.

Ahmed, S. (2012). *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Duke Press University.

Alice & Boogles Hunkering in the Bunkerlow [@Wooden_MariaGO] (2019, February 25). #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow It doesn't matter how gorgeous you are. No matter how

much you say #disabledpeoplearehot Ableist people will see your. [Tweet]. Twitter.

https://twitter.com/Wooden_MariaGO/status/1100140174997143552

Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* Verso.

Androutsopoulos, J. (2008). Potentials and limitations of Discourse-Centred Online Ethnography. Language@Internet, 5, article 8. https://www.languageatinternet.org/articles/2008/1610

Baer, H. (2016). Redoing feminism: digital activism, body politics, and neoliberalism. *Feminist Media Studies*. 16(1), 17-34. https//doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2015.1093070

Bagenstos, S. (2003). The Americans with Disabilities Act as Welfare Reform. *William & Mary Law Review.* 44(3), 921-1027.

https://scholarship.law.wm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1365&context=wmlr

Baker, P. & Vigdor, N. (2019, June 24). *'She's Not My Type': Accused Again of Sexual Assault, Trump Resorts to Old Insult.* The New York Times. Retrieved February 19, 2020 from: https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/24/us/politics/jean-carroll-trump.html

Banet-Wiser, S. (2012). *Authentic: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture.* New York University Press.

Basile, K. C., Breiding, M. J., & Smith, S. G. (2016). Disability and risk of recent sexual violence in the United States. *American Journal of Public Health*, 106(5), 928–933. https//doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2015.303004

Bayer, R. (1987). *Homosexuality and the American Psychiatry: The Politics of Diagnosis*. Princeton University Press.

BBC News. (2016, November 3). *US election: 10 US election oddities.* Retrieved August 9,

2019, from: https://www.bbc.com/news/election-us-2016-37851764

BBC News. (2020, March 6). *Blind man fails citizenship test after being denied Braille*. Retrieved

June 15, 2020 from: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-51760448

Beck, A. (2014). Sexual Victimization in Prisons and Jails Reported by Inmates, 2011–12. *U.S.

Department of Justice. Office of Justice Programs. Bureau of Justice Statistics*. Retrieved

from: https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/svpjri1112_st.pdf

Belluz, J. (2019, January 22). *Is the CRISPR baby controversy the start of a terrifying new

chapter in gene editing?* Vox. https://www.vox.com/science-and-

health/2018/11/30/18119589/crispr-gene-editing-he-jiankui

Bierbaum, M. [@MichaelBierbau1]. (2019, March 16). #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow After 2

years I finally got my scooter. It sits unused in my house as a place to pile. [Tweet].

Twitter. https://twitter.com/MichaelBierbau1/status/1107031767595257856

Binnie, J. (2004). *The Globalization of Sexuality.* Sage Publications.

BLACK LIVES MATTER✊🏾 [@khiarial] [2019, February 18). #DisabledPeopleAreHot just

wanted to hop on this hashtag bc i literally had a guy tell me i'm too pretty to. [Tweet;

photo]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/khiarial/status/1097681170731622401

Blackell-Stratton, M., Breslin, M. L., Mayerson, A.B., & Bailey, S. (1988). Smashing icons:

Disabled women and the Disability and Women's movements. In Fine, M., & Asch, A.

(Eds.) *Women with disabilities. Essays in Psychology, Culture and Politics*, (pp 307-

332.). Temple University Press.

Blake, M. [@melissablake]. (2019, June 15). Dear society: Why does our disability suddenly

    take away our sexuality as women? Is it because there's this societal perception. [Tweet].

    Twitter. https://twitter.com/melissablake/status/1139752751334862848

boyd, D. (2011). Social network sites as networked publics: Affordances, dynamics, and

    implications. In Papacharissi, Z. (Ed.) A *Networked Self: Identity, Community, and*

    Culture on Social Network Sites (pp. 39-58) Routledge.

Brock, A. (2012). From the Blackhand side: Twitter as a cultural conversation. *Journal of*

    Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 56(4), 529–549.

Brock, A. (2016) Critical technocultural discourse analysis. *New Media & Society,* 1–19,

    https//doi.org/10.1177/1461444816677532

Broverman, N. (2019, March 17). *Andrew Gurza's revolution: Declaring disabled people are*

    hot. Advocate Magazine. Retrieved April 10, 2019 from:

    https://www.advocate.com/love-and-sex/2019/3/17/andrew-gurzas-revolution-declaring-

    disabled-people-are-hot

Bucher, T. & Helmond, A. (2017). The Affordances of Social Media Platforms. In Burgess, J.,

    Poell, T., & Marwick, A. (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Social Media*. (pp. 233–253)

    Sage Publications Ltd.

Bureau of Labor Statistics. (ND) *U.S. Department of Labor. Released March 21, 2019.*

    Employment Stiuation of Veterans 2018. https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/vet.pdf

Butler-Wall, K. (2015). Risky measures: Digital technologies and the governance of child

    obesity. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 43(1 & 2), 228-245.

Buttigieg, J. (1995). Gramsci on Civil Society. *Boundary 2*, 22(3), 1-32.

    https//doi.org/10.2307/303721

Callan, M. J., Kay, A. C., & Dawtry, R. J. (2014). Making sense of misfortune: deservingness, self-esteem, and patterns of self-defeat. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 107(1), 142–162. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0036640

Cam J [@sparkycamj]. (2019, March 21). I'm disabled, I'm all for dating a disabled woman or an abled woman. As long as we have connection. What. [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/sparkycamj/status/1108986156840947714

Cammaerts, B. (2015). Neoliberalism and the post-hegemonic war of position: The dialectic between invisibility and visibilities. *European Journal of Communication*, 30(5), 522–538. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323115597847

Carcasson, M. (2006). Ending welfare as we know it: President Clinton and the rhetorical transformation of the anti-welfare culture. *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*. 9(4), 655-692.

Carey, A.C. (2009). *On the Margins of Citizenship: Intellectual Disability and Civil Rights in Twentieth-Century America.* Temple University Press.

Caro. [@cripcaro] (2019, March 12). Disabled people are more than just inspirational. We do not exist for abled people. I am not here to make you "thankful". I am not here for you to feel "inspired". I am myself. My disability is not nearly as difficult and awful as you think it is. [Tweet; replying to @cripcaro]. Twitter https://twitter.com/cripcaro/status/1105670026282106884

Caro. [@cripcaro]. (2019, February 19). I'll be real, it's an ongoing struggle to see myself as hot. We love ableist stereotypes of beauty! Here I. [Tweet; photo]. Twitter. Note: URL unavailable

Castells, M. (2010). *The Power of Identity*. (2nd ed.). Wiley Blackwell.

cb. [@goodposting] (2018, September 28) #4OutOf5 disabled women experience assault in their

    lifetime, but because our society conflates assault w/ desire rather than power &. [Tweet;

    replying @goodposting]. Twitter.

    https://twitter.com/goodposting/status/1045722216816627722

Chambers, D. (2013). *Social Media and Personal Relationships: Online Intimacies and*

    Networked Friendship. Palgrave-McMillan.

Child, B. [@beckiechild] (2019, March 28). If you are disabled, then you lack credibility. The

    issue of credibility can look different depending on the type of. [Tweet; replying to

    @DisVisibility]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/beckiechild/status/1111429841629241344

Coday, C. [@CodiCoday]. (2019, February 23). The harsh reality of disabled relationships: The

    hate for disabled people runs so deep that no matter how horrible and [Tweet]. Twitter.

    https://twitter.com/CodiCoday/status/1099527731383918594

Cohen, A. (1985). *Symbolic Construction of Community*. Ellis Horwood Ltd. and Tavistock.

Cohen, C. (1997). Punks, bulldaggers and welfare queens. The radical potential of queer politics?

    GLQ, (3), 437-465

Connell R. (1987). *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*. University of

    California Press.

Cram, E., Loehwing, M., & Lucaites, J. L., (2016). Civic Sights: Theorizing Deliberative and

    Photographic Publicity in the Visual Public Sphere. *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 49(3), 227-

    253.

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique

    of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *The University of*

Chicago Legal Forum, 139-168.

https://philpapers.org/archive/CREDTI.pdf?ncid=txtlnkusaolp00000603

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence

against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241-1299

Criptydqueer. [@cripqueer]. (2019, February 18) old picture, but man oh man did I feel spicy.

#DisabledPeopleAreHot. [Tweet; photo]. Twitter.

https://twitter.com/cripqueer/status/1097411079435702272

Crutches&Spice [Wheelchair symbol]: Rude For A Disabled Person. [@Imani_Barbarin] (2018,

May 17) If we told ableds we have sex, then they'll want to know how, and then they'll

start buying all our [Tweet; replying to @Eman_Rimawi]. Twitter.

https://twitter.com/Imani_Barbarin/status/997203399891406848

Crutches&Spice [Wheelchair symbol]: Rude For A Disabled Person. [@Imani_Barbarin]. (2019,

January 17). Make sure to look just disabled enough so that people believe you but not so

disabled that they think you're [Tweet]. Twitter.

https://twitter.com/Imani_Barbarin/status/1086066550770225152

Crutches&Spice [Wheelchair symbol]: Rude For A Disabled Person. [@Imani_Barbarin]. (2020,

May 23). My disabled friends mean so much to me... #disabledtwitter [Tweet; tik tok

video]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/Imani_Barbarin/status/1264236486284718080

Crutches&Spice [Wheelchair symbol]: Rude For A Disabled Person. [@Imani_Barbari]. (2019,

March 16). I just want to let people know that for many disabled people, becoming a

disability advocate is purely incidental. We. [Tweet]. Twitter.

https://twitter.com/Imani_Barbarin/status/1107042128092426241

Crutches&Spice [Wheelchair symbol]: Rude For A Disabled Person. [@Imani_Barbarin] (2019, January 3). I can't wait to come into my own this year as the vampy bi siren I've always wanted to be. [Tweet]. Twitter.

https://twitter.com/Imani_Barbarin/status/1080957787021152256

Crutches&Spice [Wheelchair symbol]: Rude For A Disabled Person. [@Imani_Barbarin] (2019, March 29). The other day in my hotel room, I passed my mirror completely naked and grinned at myself. I like me. [Tweet]. Twitter.

https://twitter.com/Imani_Barbarin/status/1111586737921376262

Daughtry, A. J. [🦽 ♒] [@Tripping_Crutch] (2019, March 16). Non disabled person: Can you have sex? Me: Well golly gee whiz Persephone I donno, can you stop being an. [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/Tripping_Crutch/status/1106941876312125446

Daughtry, A. J. 🦽 ♒ [@Tripping_Crutch] (n.d.). *Tweets*. [Twitter Profile]. Retrieved June 23, 2020 from:

https://twitter.com/Tripping_Crutch?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7C twgr%5Eauthor

Davidson, K. (2020, January 10). *Trump Administration weighs tighter requirements for disability payments.* The Wall Street Journal. Retrieved March 30 from:

https://www.wsj.com/articles/trump-administration-weighs-tighter-requirements-for-disability-payments-11578686424

Davidson, M. (2008). *Concerto for the left Hand: Disability and the Defamiliar Body.* The University of Michigan Press.

Davis, L. J. (2006). Constructing Normalcy. In Davis, L. J., (Ed.). *The Disability Studies Reader* (2th ed., pp. 3-16). New York: Routledge.

Davis, L. J. (2013). The end of identity politics: On disability as an unstable category. In Davis, L. J., (Ed.). *The Disability Studies Reader* (4th ed., pp. 263-277). New York: Routledge.

De Block, A., & Adriaens, P. R. (2013). Pathologizing sexual deviance: a history. *Journal of Sex Research,* 50(3-4), 276–298. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2012.738259

Dean, T. (2015). Queer. In Adams, R.; Reiss, B; & Serlin, D (Eds.), *Keywords for Disability Studies*, (pp. 143-145). New York University Press.

Delaney, A. (2020a, January 13). *Trump Administration quietly goes after disability benefits.* The HuffPost. Retrieved March 30 from: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/trump-disability-benefits_n_5e14b935c5b6c7b859d17b97

Delaney, A. (2020b, March 13). *New Trump rule would deny disability benefits to people who can't work full time*. The HuffPost. Retrieved March 30 from: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/trump-disability-cuts-social-security_n_5e6bb096c5b6bd8156f68c4d

DeLuca, K. & Peeples, J. (2002). From public sphere to public screen: Democracy, activism, and the "violence" of Seattle. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*. 19(2). 125-151.

Derrida, J. [1972] (1981). *Positions*. University of Chicago Press.

Deveaux, M. (1994). Feminism and empowerment: A critical reading of Foucault. *Feminist Studies*, 20(2), 223-247.

Doherty, S. L. [@Sarah_L_Doherty] (2019, January 19). Sick and crip sex can be messy, awkward, hilarious, and incredibly hot. #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow. [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/Sarah_L_Doherty/status/1086839029365116928

Domurat Dreger, A. (1998). *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex.* Harvard University Press.

Domurat Dreger, A. (1999). *Intersex in the Age of Ethics (Ethics in Clinical Medicine Series)*. University Publishing Group.

Donovan, R. A. (2007). To blame or not to blame: influences of target race and observer sex on rape blame attribution. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 22(6), 722–736. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260507300754

Dunn, D. & Erin, A. (2015). Person-first and identity-first language: Developing psychologists' cultural competence using disability language. *American Psychologist*, 70(3), 255-264

Eb Will Haunt You. [@EbThen] (2019, March 28). I hypothesize, is because non-Autistic people are so invested in teaching Autistic people how to socialize "like non-Autistics", they reinforce. [Tweet; replying to @EbThen]. Twitter.

https://twitter.com/EbThen/status/1111419983936937989

Eb Will Haunt You. [@EbThen] (n.d.). *Tweets*. [Twitter Profile]. Retrieved June 23, 2020 from: https://twitter.com/EbThen

Edwards, Jr., M. (1994). *Printing, Propaganda, and Martin Luther*. Fortress Press

Eisenberg A. (2013). Identity Politics and the Risks of Essentialism. In Balint, P., Latour, S. Guérard de, Guérard de Latour, Sophie (Eds.), *Liberal Multiculturalism and the Fair Terms of Integration*, (159-176). Palgrave Macmillan.

Ellcessor, E. (2016). *Restricted Access: Media, Disability, and the Politics of Participation.* New York University Press.

Ellis. [@gendrfuck]. (2019, January 10). "differently abled' and 'diffabled' are patronizing, gross and factually wrong. I didn't gain any special abilities when I became disabled. [Tweet; replying to @gendrfuck]. Twitter.

https://twitter.com/gendrfuck/status/1083450111047421958

Ellison, N., Heino, R., & Gibbs, J. (2006). Managing impressions online: Self-presentation

Processes in the online dating environment. *Journal of Computer-Mediated*

Communication. 11(2, 1), 415–441. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2006.00020.x

Esmonde, K. & Jette, S. (2018, September). *Assembling the 'Fitbit subject': A Foucauldian-*

sociomaterialist examination of social class, gender and self-surveillance on Fitbit

community message boards. Health.

https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1363459318800166#articleCitationDownlo

adContainer

Estarianne, Warrior Queen Of Antifa Woman supervillainPrincess [@estarianne] (2019, March

28). I find, as a sick adult, that having to give so many people access to my body makes

me think. [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/estarianne/status/1111407006877810691

Esterberg, K. (1994). From accommodation to liberation: A social movement analysis of lesbians

in the homophile movement. *Gender and Society*, 8(3), pp. 424-443

Evans, D. (1993). *Sexual Citizenship: The Material Construction of Sexualities*. Routledge:

London.

Evans, D. [@dominickevans] (2019, March 6). us crips got mad skills for making

accommodations #DisablednDatinChat. [Tweet; replying to @DisDatinChat]. Twitter.

https://twitter.com/dominickevans/status/1103482692715364352

Feldman, J. (2019, March 12). *This viral hashtag Lets people with disabilities show off their sexy*

side. The HuffPost. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/disabled-people-are-hot-

hashtag_n_5c869242e4b08d5b78641b90

Fessler, P. (2016, September 4). *Disabled and fighting for the right to vote.* NPR News.

https://www.npr.org/2016/09/04/492430780/disabled-and-fighting-for-the-right-to-vote

Fieldstadt, E. (2019, January 4). *Police investigating Arizona care facility after report that patient in vegetative state gave birth.* NBC News. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/police-investigating-arizona-care-facility-after-report-patient-vegetative-state-n954761

Fine, M. & Asch, A. (Eds.) (1988). *Women with disabilities. Essays in Psychology, Culture and Politics*. Temple University Press.

Flanagan, C. [@ColleenFlangan]. (2018, November 6). Yes we need to elect more Disabled leaders. That's not Greg Abbott. He tries hard to hide his wheelchair &. [Tweet replying to @AndrewPulrang]. Twitter.

https://twitter.com/ColleenFlangan/status/1059966357293490179

Florini, S. (2014). Tweets, tweeps, and signifyin': Communication and cultural performance on "Black Twitter." *Television & New Media*, 15(3), 223–237. https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476413480247

Foucault, M. (1964). *Madness and Civilization. A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Vintage Books.

Foucault, M. (1973). *The Birth of the Clinic. An Archeology of Medical Perception.* (Sheridan, A. M. Trans.) Routledge.

Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison.* (Sheridan, A. Trans.) Vintage.

Foucault, M. (1978). *The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An introduction. (*Hurley, R. Trans.). Pantheon Books.

Foucault, M. (1988). *Technologies of the Self.* In Marin, L. Gutman, H. Huutton, P (Eds.) *Technologies of the Self. A Seminar with Michel Foucault,* (pp. 16-49). University of Massachusetts Press.

Fraser, N. (1990). Rethinking the Public Sphere: A contribution to the critique of Actually existing democracy. *Social Text*, (25/26), 56-80. http://www.jstor.org/stable/466240

Fraser, N. (2003). Overcoming displacement and reification in cultural politics. In Hobson, B. (Ed.), *Recognition Struggles and Social Movements: Contested Identities, Agency and Power* (pp. 21-34). Cambridge Press.

Fraser, N. & Gordon, L. (1994). Civil citizenship against social citizenship? on the ideology of contract-versus-charity. In B. V. Steenbergen (Ed.), *The condition of citizenship* (pp. 90-107). Sage Publications Ltd. https//doi.org/10.4135/9781446250600.n8

Friedman, S. & Scotch, R. (2017, December 19). *Politicians with disabilities: Challenges and choices*. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics. Retrieved 10 August 2019, from https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-207.

Galassi, J. (2019, April 07). *I want to be… consumed as a sex object,' says #DisabledPeopleAreHot creator.* Queerty. Retrieved January 28, 2020 from: https://www.queerty.com/want-sexualized-consumed-sex-object-says-disabledpeoplearehot-creator-20190407

Garland-Thompson, R. (2001). Re-shaping, Re-thinking, Re-defining: Feminist Disability Studies. *Center for Women Policy Studies*. Washington D.C.

Gaynor, P. & Underwood, J. (1995). Conceptualizing and measuring sexual self-esteem. Shrout, P. &, Fiske, S. (Eds.), *Personality, Research, Methods and Theory. A Fetschrift Honoring Donald W. Fiske* (pp. 333-347). Psychology Press.

Gerbaudo, P. (2012). *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism.* Pluto Press.

Gerschick, T. (2000). Toward a theory of disability and gender. *Signs*, 25(4), 1263-1268.

Gerschick, T. & Miller, A. S. (1995). Coming to terms: Masculinity and physical disability. In Sabo, D. & Gordon, D. F. (Eds.) *Men's Health and Illness: Gender, Power, and the Body (*pp. 183-204)*.* http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781452243757.n9

Gershon, I. (2010). *The Breakup 2.0. Disconnecting over New Media.* Cornell University Press.

Gillmor, D. (2008). *We the Media: Grassroots Journalism by the People, for the People.* O'Reilly Media.

Glenn, E. (2000). Citizenship and inequality: historical and global perspectives. *Social Problems*, 47(1), 1-20. https//doi.org/10.2307/3097149.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life.* Anchor.

Graham, R. & Smith, S. (2016). The content of our #Characters: Black Twitter as counterpublic. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 2(4), 433–449. https://doi.org/10.1177/2332649216639067

Haag, M. (2019, February 27). *Thousands of immigrant children said they were sexually abused in U.S. Detention Centers, Report Says.* The New York Times. Retrieved February 6, 2020 from: https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/27/us/immigrant-children-sexual-abuse.html

Habermas, J. (1962/1989). *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere.* (Lawrence, T. B.

   Trans.). The MIT Press.

Hall, S. (1989). Cultural identity and cinematic representation. Framework. *The Journal of

   Cinema and Media.* 36, 68-81.

Hall, S. (Ed). (1997) *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices.* The

   Open University, Sage.

Hall, S. (2001). Foucault: Power Knowledge and Discourse. In Wetherell, M., Taylor, S.; Yates,

   S. J. (Eds.), *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader* (pp 72-81). Sage Publications.

Hargreaves, I. & Hartley, J. (Ed.). (2016). *The creative citizen unbound. How social media and

   DIY culture contribute to democracy, communities, and the creative economy.* Connected

   communities.

Harrell, E. (2017). Crime Against Persons with Disabilities, 2009-2015 - Statistical Tables. U.S.

   Department of Justice. Retrieved from:

   https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/capd0915st.pdf

Harris, M. A. & Orth, U. (2019, September 26). The Link Between Self-Esteem and Social

   Relationships: A Meta-Analysis of Longitudinal Studies. *Journal of Personality and

   Social Psychology.* Advance online publication. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000265.

Hartley, J. (1999). *Uses of Television*. Routledge.

Harvey, D. (2005). *A Brief History of Neoliberalism.* Oxford University Press.

Herring, S. (2004). Computer-mediated discourse analysis: An approach to researching online

   behavior. Barab, S. A., Kling, R., & Gray, J. H. (Eds.). *Designing for Virtual

   Communities in the Service of Learning* (pp. 338-376). Cambridge University Press.

Hirschmann, N. (2012). Disability as a New Frontier for Feminist Intersectionality Research. *Politics & Gender*, 8(3), 396-405.

Hunt, X; Swartz, L.; Thomas, M.; Hellum, S.; Chiwaula, M.; & Rohleder P. (2018). Dating persons with physical disabilities: the perceptions of South Africans without disabilities. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 20(2), 141-155. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2017.1334964

Ingraham, C. (September 25, 2018). *An insurance company wants you to hand over your Fitbit data so it can make more money. Should you?* The Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2018/09/25/an-insurance-company-wants-you-hand-over-your-fitbit-data-so-they-can-make-more-money-should-you/?utm_term=.0ff5a7e9170f

It's Andrew Gurza - I am DISABLED [Man in motorized wheelchair, rainbow flag]. [@ItsAndrewGurza]. (2019, March 6). fact: disabled people are hot.#DisabledPeopleAreHot . [Tweet; photo Andrew in a harness]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/ItsAndrewGurza/status/1103467696258236418

Jackson, S. & Banaszczyk, S. (2016). Digital standpoints: Debating gendered violence and racial exclusions in the feminist counterpublic. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*. 40(4) 391–407. https//doi.org/10.1177/0196859916667731

Jackson, S. J. & Foucault Welles, B. (2015). Hijacking #myNYPD: Social media dissent and networked counterpublics. *Journal of Communication*, 65(6), 932–952.

Jade, P. (2019, March 27). *Chills down my spinal degeneration: Why we need Black queer disabled kink*. Black Youth Project. Retrieved January 10, 2020 from:

http://blackyouthproject.com/chills-down-my-spinal-degeneration-why-we-need-black-queer-disabled-kink/

Jagose, A. (2005). Queer Theory. In M. C. Horowitz (Ed.), *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas,* (Vol. 5, pp. 1980-1985). Detroit, MI: Charles Scribner's Sons. Retrieved from https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX3424300651/GVRL?u=uiuc_uc&sid=GVRL&xid=01182e7b

Jay, G. (1987). Values and deconstructions: Derrida, Saussure, Marx. *Cultural Critique*, (8), 153-196. https//doi.org/10.2307/1354215

Jenkins, H. (2004). The cultural logic of media convergence. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*. 7 (1). 33-43. https//doi.org/10.1177/1367877904040603

Jennings, A. (2018). Disability in a post-World War II United States. In Rembis, M., Kudlick, C. & Nielsen, K. (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Disability History* (pp. 247-261). Oxford University Press.

Jewel, Emmy. [@Emmyjewel]. (2020, February, 12). 9 times out of 10 a bio with pronouns will also have identified every past ailment & setback. For instance. [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/Emmyjewel/status/1227543866116468736

Jones, E. & Gventa, J. (2002). *Concepts of Citizenship: a review.* Institute of Development Studies. Brighton, Sussex. https://www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/Db19.pdf

Jones, J. (2006). A cultural approach to the study of mediated citizenship. *Social Semiotics*, 16(2), 365–383. https://doi-org.proxy.lib.odu.edu/10.1080/10350330600664912

Kafer, A. (2003). Compulsory bodies: Reflections on heterosexuality and able-bodiedness. *Journal of Women's History*, 15(3), 77-89. https//doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2003.0071.

Kessler, J. [@jillkessler] (2019, September 16). You know you've fully accepted your limitations

    and disabilities when you figure out how a hoyer will fit with your. [Tweet]. Twitter.

    https://twitter.com/jillkessler/status/1173782740384342017

Kim, E. (2011). Asexuality in disability narratives. *Sexualities*. 14 (4), 479-493.

    https//doi.org/10.1177/1363460711406463

King, A. (2004). The prisoner of gender: Foucault and the disciplining of the female body.

    Journal of International Women's Studies, 5(2), 29-39. Retrieved from:

    https://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1532&context

    =jiws

King, B. (2016, February 25). *'Disabled'" Just #SayTheWord.* NPR WRVS.

    https://www.npr.org/sections/13.7/2016/02/25/468073722/disabled-just-saytheword

Koats of Rivia. [@astoldbykoats] (2019, April 11) Here's your reminder today that: Queer sex is

    good sex and Adaptive sex is good sex (isn't good sex supposed. [Tweet]. Twitter.

    https://twitter.com/astoldbykoats/status/1116309530848235521

Kohnen, M. (2016). *Queer Representation, Visibility, and Race in American Film and*

    Television: Screening the Closet. Routledge.

Kruks, S. (2001). *Retrieving Experience: Subjectivity and Recognition in Feminist Politics*.

    Cornell University Press.

LaFortune, K. (2018). Eliminating offensive legal language. *Judical Notebook APA*. 49, (5) 29.

    Retrieved un June 10, 2020 from: https://www.apa.org/monitor/2018/05/jn

Laura [♿🏳️‍🌈🔵] [@painandcats_]. (n.d.). *Tweets.* Twitter Profile]. Retrieved June 23, 2020 from

    https://twitter.com/painandcats_

Lazzarato, M. (2002) From biopower to biopolitics. (Ramirez, I. A. Trans.) *PLI* 13, 99-113.

Lessig, L. (2006). *Code*. Version 2.0. Basic Books.

Leung, R. & Williams, R. (2019). #MeToo and Intersectionality: An examination of the #MeToo movement through the R. Kelly scandal. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 43(4), 349–371. https://doi.org/10.1177/0196859919874138

Lu, W. (2016, December 8). *Dating with a disability*. The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/08/well/family/dating-with-a-disability.html

Lusting, D. & Strauser, D. (2007). Causal Relationships Between Poverty and Disability. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, 50(4), 194–202.

Marchione, M. (2018, November 26). *Chinese researcher claims first gene-edited babies.* The Associated Press. https://www.apnews.com/4997bb7aa36c45449b488e19ac83e86d

Maroto, M. & Pettinicchio, D. (2015). Twenty-five years after the ADA: Situating disability in America's system of stratification. *Disability Studies Quarterly,* 35 (3). Retrieved March 29 from: http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/4927/4024

Marshall, T. H. (2016). Class, citizenship and social development. In Blaug, R. & Schwartzmantel, J. (Eds.). *Democracy: A Reader*. (2nd ed., pp 203-205). Edinburgh University Press.

Marwick, A. (2013). Online Identity. In Hartley, J., Burgess, J. & Bruns, A. (Eds.), *Companion to New Media Dynamics. Blackwell Companions to Cultural Studies* (pp. 355-364). Blackwell.

Mayers, K. Heller, D. & Heller, J. (2003). Damaged Sexual Self-Esteem: A Kind of Disability. Sexuality and Disability 21, 269–282. https://doi.org/10.1023/B:SEDI.0000010069.08844.04

McChesney, R. (2013). *Digital Disconnect: How Capitalism is Turning the Internet Against Democracy.* The New Press.

McRuer, R. (2003). As good as it gets. Queer theory and critical disability. *GLQ* 9 (1–2).

McRuer, R. (2006). *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability.* New York University Press.

McRuer, R. (2011). Disabling sex: Notes for a Crip Theory of sexuality. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies.* 17, (1), 107-117.

McRuer, R. & Mollow, A. (2012). Sex and Disability. Duke University Press.

Meekosha, H. & Dowse, L. (1997). Enabling Citizenship: Gender, disability and citizenship in Australia. *Fem Rev* 57, 49–72. https://doi.org/10.1080/014177897339650

Mik, M. [♿ 🏳️‍⚧️ ⚦] [@kim_from_kansas]. (n.d.). *Tweets.* Twitter Profile]. Retrieved June 23, 2020 from https://twitter.com/kim_from_kansas

Miller, T. (2007). *Cultural Citizenship. Cosmopolitanism, Consumerism, and Television in a Neoliberal Age.* Temple University Press.

Mills, S. (2003). *Michel Foucault.* Routledge Critical Thinkers.

Mintz, S. B. (2015). Invisibility. In Adams, R., Reiss, B., & Serlin, D. (Eds). *Keywords for Disability Studies.* (pp. 113-114). New York University Press.

Mitchell, D. & Snyder, S. (2015). *Biopolitics of Disability: Neoliberalism, Ablenationalism, and Peripheral Embodiment*. University of Michigan Press Ann Arbor.

Mitchum, P. (2013, October 13). *On national coming out day, don't disparage the closet*. The Atlantic. Retrieved February 16, 2020 from: https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/10/on-national-coming-out-day-dont-disparage-the-closet/280469/

Mogk, M. E. (Ed.) (2013). *Different Bodies: Essays on Disability in Film and Television*. McFarland & Company Inc.

Mollow, A. (2004). Identity politics and disability studies: a critique of recent theory. *Michigan Quarterly Review,* 43 (2). Retrieved February 16, 2020 from: https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?cc=mqr;c=mqr;c=mqrarchive;idno=act2080.0043.218;g=mqrg;rgn=main;view=text;xc=1

Montgomery, C. [@Cal__Montgomery] (2019, January 18). I was only trying to help!' means 'I don't care about your consent.' #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow. [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/Cal__Montgomery/status/1086429613381832704

Muñoz, J. E. (1999). *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. University of Minnesota Press.

Nakamura, L., (2008). *Digitizing race: visual cultures of the Internet*. University of Minnesota Press.

Nao. [@chronicallysic] (2019, April 8). This is your not so friendly reminder that if you grab anyone or their mobility devices without consent you are. [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/chronicallysic/status/1115322295449456640

Nemeth, S. (2000). Society, sexuality, and disabled/ablebodied romantic relationships. In Braithwaite, D.O. & Thompson, T.L. (Eds.), *Handbook of communication and people with disabilities* (pp. 37-48). Lawrence Erlbaum.

Newman-Stille, Derek [Rainbow flag, Wheelchair symbol] [@DNewmanStille] (2020, January 26). I want to thank @Imani_Barbarin for the work of creating hashtags like

#UHateDisabledPeople. Disabled Twitter has been a powerful way. [Tweet]. Twitter.

https://twitter.com/DNewmanStille/status/1221655471913885697

Nielsen, K. (2012). *A Disability History of the United States.* Beacon Press

Oliver, M. (1996). *Understanding Disability. From Theory to Practice.* McMillan.

Olkin, R. (2018). Women with Disabilities. In. Chrisler, J. & Golden C. (Eds.), *Lectures on the Psychology of Women* (5th ed., pp. 31-48). Waveland Press

Ouellette, L. (2015) Citizenship. In Jonathan Gray, J.& Ouellette, L. (Eds.). *Keywords for Media Studies*. New York University Press.

Palmer, D. E. [wheelchair emoji]. [@depalm]. (2019, August 11). I absolutely identity with this, too! I spent over a century ashamed, denying my limp and my pain, trying so. [Tweet; replying to @BlondeHistorian]. Twitter.

https://twitter.com/depalm/status/1160578822762196993

Parks, M. (2010). Social Network Sites as Virtual Communities. In Papacharissi, Z. (Ed.) A *Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites* (pp. 105-123). Routledge.

Passante Elman, J. (2014). *Chronic Youth: Disability, Sexuality, and U.S. Media Cultures of Rehabilitation.* New York University Press.

Patterson, L. (2012). Points of access: Rehabilitation centers, summer camps, and student life in the making of disability activism, 1960-1973. *Journal of Social History.* 46 (2), 473–499.

Pawley, L. (2008). Cultural citizenship. *Sociology Compass* 2 (2), 594–608.

Pear, R. (March 10, 2019). *On disability and on Facebook? Uncle Sam wants to watch what you post.* The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/10/us/politics/social-

security-disability-trump-facebook.html?emc=edit_NN_p_20190311&nl=morning-

briefing&nlid=88189843ion%3DwhatElse&section=whatElse&te=1

Phelan, S. (1990). Foucault and feminism. *American Journal of Political Science*, 34(2), 421-

440.

Phillips, L. (1998). Hegemony and political discourse: the lasting impact of Thatcherism.

Sociology, 32 (4), 847-867.

Pizer, S. D., Frakt, A. B., & Iezzoni, L. (2009). Uninsured adults with chronic conditions or

disabilities: Gaps in public insurance programs. *Health Affairs.* 28(1), web exclusives.

https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.28.6.w1141

Powell, R. M. & Stein, M. A. (2016). Persons with disabilities and their sexual, reproductive, and

parenting rights: An international comparative analysis. *Frontiers of Law in China* 11(1),

53-85. https//doi.org/10.3868/s050-005-016-0005-6

Pratt, G., Gascoyne, K., Cunningham, K. & Tunbridge. A. (2010). Human immunodeficiency

virus (HIV) in older people. *Age and Ageing*, 39 (3), 289–294.

https://doi.org/10.1093/ageing/afq009

Pro-Intersectional Feminism. [@iwritefeminism] (2019, April 10). Friendly reminder that

#DisabledPeopleAreHot is an opportunity for us to express the sexual agency so often

stolen from us by. [Tweet]. Twitter.

https://twitter.com/iwritefeminism/status/1116007348592627715

Procacci, G. (2001). Poor citizens: social citizenship versus the individualization of welfare. In

Crouch, C; Eder, K; & Tambini, D. (Eds.), *Citizenship, Markets, and the State* (pp. 49-

68). Oxford University Press.

Puar, J. K. (2014). Disability. *Transgender Studies Quarterly*. 1(1-2), 77–81.

    https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-2399659

Quarmby, K. (2015, March 11). *Disabled and fighting for a sex life.* The Atlantic. Retrieved

    from: https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2015/03/sex-and-disability/386866/

Queer Nation NY History. Retrieved June 29, 2019 from: https://queernationny.org/history

Quinones, J., & Lajta, A. (2017, August 14) CBS News. "What kind of society do you want to

    live in?": Inside the country where Down syndrome is disappearing. CBS News.

    https://www.cbsnews.com/news/down-syndrome-iceland/

Quraishi, H. (2019, March 20). *#AbledsAreWeird: People with disabilities share uncomfortable*

    encounters. NPR. https://www.npr.org/2019/03/20/704956960/-abledsareweird-people-

    with-disabilities-share-uncomfortable-encounters

Rabinow, R. & Rose, N. (2006). Biopower today. *BioSocieties*, 1, 195–217

    https//doi.org/10.1017/S1745855206040014

Randall, E. (2013, July 08). *Lowering the voting age and the 26th Amendment.* History Free.

    Retrieved June 13, 2019 from: https://historyforfree.com/2013/07/08/a-brief-history-of-

    lowering-the-voting-age-and-the-26th-amendment/

Rasmussen, M. (2004). The problem of coming out. *Theory into Practice*, 43(2), 144-150.

RealSocialSkills. [@rsocialskills] (2018, January 29). #AbleistRapeCulture when autistic people

    get hours and hours and hours of therapy to teach them to sit still, make eye. [Tweet].

    Twitter. https://twitter.com/rsocialskills/status/958050715221544960

Rich, A. (1986). *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose, 1979-1985*. W. W. Norton.

Ritchie, J. (2010). How do you say "Come out of the closet" in arabic?: Queer activism and the politics of visibility in Israel-Palestine. GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies. 16(4): 557-575. https//doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2010-004

Romo, V. (2019, January 14). *Nursing home launches new investigation after woman in vegetative state gives birth*. NPR. Retrieved from: https://www.npr.org/2019/01/14/685377950/nursing-home-launches-new-investigation-after-woman-in-vegetative-state-gives-bi

Root, J. (2013, July 14). *In launching bid for governor, Abbott says he's ready to fight.* Texas Tribune. Retrieved August 10 from: https://www.texastribune.org/2013/07/14/greg-abbott-launches-campaign-governor/

Rosaldo, R. (1994). Cultural citizenship and educational democracy. *Cultural Anthropology*, 9 (3), 402-411.

Rose, D., Tracey, E., & Hughes, N. (2019, January 25). *Why the hashtag #ThingsDisabledPeopleKnow went viral.* BBC. https://www.bbc.com/news/av/disability-47000390/why-the-hashtag-thingsdisabledpeopleknow-went-viral

Rosenbaum, J. (2017). *Constructing Digital Cultures: Tweets, Trends, Race, and Gender*. Lexington Books.

Roy, A. (2004, November 4). *Roy's full speech.* The Sidney Morning Herald. https://www.smh.com.au/national/roys-full-speech-20041104-gdk1qn.html

Rubin, G. (1984). Thinking Sex. In Carole, V. (Ed.), *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*. (pp. 267-319). Routledge and Keagan Paul.

Salam, M. (2019, January 11). *R. Kelly: Why so many ignored the warning signs: The R&B star has enjoyed fame despite decades of claims that he's abused teenage girls. Why?* The

New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/11/arts/surviving-r-kelly-accusations.html

Sandahl, C. (2003). Queering the crip or cripping the queer? Intersections of Queer and Crip Identities in solo autobiographical performance. *GLQ* 9 (1-2). 25-56.

Santo, A. (2017). Fans and Merchandise. In. Click, M. A. & Scott, S. (Eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom*, (pp. 329-336). Routledge.

Saunder, K. #BlackDisabledLivesMatter. [@cripplescholar]. (2019, March 18) Agreeing to disagree on issues of oppression legitimizes that oppression and gives it space to grow all opinions are not. [Tweet; retweet of thread]. Twitter.

https://twitter.com/crippledscholar/status/1107782430977597442

Schwartz, D. (2019, February 5) *Arizona nurse pleads not guilty to raping disabled woman who gave birth.* Reuters. Retrieved March 10, 2019 from: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-arizona-crime/arizona-nurse-pleads-not-guilty-to-raping-disabled-woman-who-gave-birth-idUSKCN1PU13S

Schweik, S. (2009). *The Ugly Laws: Disability in Public (The History of Disability)*. New York University Press.

Schweik, S. (2011). Lomax's Matrix: Disability, solidarity, and the black power of 504. *Disability Studies Quarterly.* 31 (1). https://dsq-sds.org/article/view/1371/1539#endnoteref09

Scott, J. (2014). Illuminating the vulnerability of hegemonic masculinity through a performance analysis of physically disabled men's personal narratives. *Disability Studies Quarterly*. 34, (1). https://dsq-sds.org/article/view/3570/3526

Segarra, A. [Rainbow flag⬇️✊🏾] [@annieelainey]. (May 30, 2019). Disabled isn't a bad word. It's what we are. #DisabledNotVoldermor #SayTheWord. [Tweet; replying to @annieelainey]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/annieelainey/status/1134183880469168129

Segarra, A. [Rainbow flag⬇️✊🏾] [@annieelainey]. (n.d.). *Tweets*. [Twitter Profile]. Retrieved June 23, 2020 from: https://twitter.com/annieelainey

Segarra, A. [Rainbow flag⬇️✊🏾] [@annieelainey]. (n.d.). *Tweets*. [Twitter Profile]. Retrieved June 23, 2020 from: https://twitter.com/annieelainey

Shakespeare, T. (1996). Disability, identity, and difference. In Barnes, C. & Mercer, G. (Eds), *Exploring the Divide* (pp. 94 – 113). The Disability Press. https://disability-studies.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/library/Shakespeare-Chap6.pdf

Shakespeare, T. (2000). Disabled Sexuality: Toward Rights and Recognition. *Sexuality and Disability*, 18(3), 159-166.

Shakespeare, T. & Watson, N. (2002). The social model of disability: an outdated ideology? *Journal Research in Social Science and Disability,* 2, 9-28.

Shapiro, J. (2018, January 8). *The sexual assault epidemic no one talks about*. NPR News. https://www.npr.org/2018/01/08/570224090/the-sexual-assault-epidemic-no-one-talks-about

Shawna, B. [@theproestdwarf]. (2019, March 23). The number of abled people who have made it clear they think I should settle for the disgusting, dwarf-fetishizing semi-pedos. [Tweet; replying to @Imani_Barbarin]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/theproestdwarf/status/1109621839276343296

Shear, M. & Sullivan, E. (2019, August 12). *Trump policy favors wealthier immigrants for green cards.* The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/12/us/politics/trump-immigration-policy.html

Shildrick, M. (2009). *Dangerous Discourses of Disability, Subjectivity and Sexuality.* Palgrave McMillan.

Shildrick, M. (2013). Sexual citizenship, governance and disability: From Foucault to Deleuze. In Roseneil, S. (Ed.), *Beyond Citizenship? Feminism and the Transformation of Belonging* (pp. 138-158). Palgrave Macmillan.

Shuttleworth, R. (2004). Disabled masculinity. Expanding the masculine repertoire. In Smith, B. & Hutchison, B. (Eds.), *Gendering Disability,* (pp. 166-180). Rutgers University Press.

Shuttleworth, R., Wedgwood, N., & Wilson, N. J. (2012). The dilemma of disabled masculinity. *Men and Masculinities*. 15(2) 174-194. https//doi.org/10.1177/1097184X12439879

Siebers, T. (2004). Disability as Masquerade. *Literature and Medicine*. 23 (1), 1-22.

Siebers, T. (2008). *Disability Theory*. University of Michigan Press.

Siebers, T. (2012). A sexual culture for disabled people. In McRuer, R. & Mollow, A. (Eds.), *Sex and Disbility* (pp. 37-53). Duke University Press.

Silvers, A., Francis, L., & Badesch, B. (2016). Reproductive rights and access to reproductive services for women with disabilities. *AMA Journal of Ethics*. 18(4), 430-437.

Solorzano, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. *Journal of Negro Education*, 69(1/2), 60.

Spade, D. (2011) *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, & the Limits of the Law*. Duke University Press.

Stanfill, M. (2015). The interface as discourse: The production of norms through web design. *New Media & Society*. 17(7) 1059–1074.

Steavie [@stevieboebi] (n.d.). *Tweets.* Twitter Profile]. Retrieved June 23, 2020 from: https://twitter.com/stevieboebi

Stern, C. (2019, April 24). *Forced to divorce: Americans with disabilities must pick marriage or health care*. OZY A Modern Media Company. Retrieved June 10, 2020 from: https://www.ozy.com/the-new-and-the-next/forced-to-divorce-americans-with-disabilities-must-pick-marriage-or-health-care/92284/

Sugarman, J. (2015). Neoliberalism and psychological ethics. *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*. 35 (2), 103–116.

Taleporos, G. & McCabe M. P. (2002). The impact of sexual esteem, body esteem, and sexual satisfaction on psychological well-being in people with physical disability. *Sexuality and Disability*, 20, 177–183.

Templeton, L. [@Somesaylezzels] (2019, February 20). Thinking disabled people don't have sex is just another way of thinking YOU wouldn't have sex with a disabled person. [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/Somesaylezzels/status/1098346942038446081

TheDisabilityEnthusiast. [@twitchyspoonie] (2019, April 3). I am very disabled and very proud. It's not negative, but an integral part of me. My disabilities affect every [Tweet; retweet @dominickevans]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/twitchyspoonie/status/1113626408406765569

Tiffany, K. (Nov 16, 2018). *Period-tracking apps are not for women: The golden age of menstrual surveillance is great for men, marketers, and medical companies*. Vox.

https://www.vox.com/the-goods/2018/11/13/18079458/menstrual-tracking-surveillance-glow-clue-apple-health

Tillet, S., Quinn, R., & Simmons, A. (2007). *Unveiling the silence: The NO! rape documentary study guide.* AfroLez. http://www.newsreel.org/guides/NO/noguide1.pdf

Tremain, S. (2000). Queering disabled sexuality studies. *Sexuality and Disability,* 18 (4), 291-299.

Tremain, S. (Ed.) (2005). *Foucault and the Government of Disability.* University of Michigan Press.

Tufeksi, Z. (2017). *Twitter and Tear Gas. The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*. Yale University Press.

Tuff Prophet, PhD h.c., MAx2, CSES. [@LatinoSexuality] (2019, March 28) the way that we define consent is ableist. phrases like "enthusiastic consent" are ableist as enthusiasm is performed and requires. [Tweet]. Twitter.

https://twitter.com/LatinoSexuality/status/1111434028966506498

Tuff Prophet, PhD h.c., MAx2, CSES. [@LatinoSexuality] (2019, March 28) share your definition of consent that are not ableist! we need more radical examples of body autonomy and self-determination #AbleistRapeCulture. [Tweet; replying @LatinoSexuality]. Twitter.

https://twitter.com/LatinoSexuality/status/1111434211951468544

U.S. Census Bureau Report. (2010).

https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/miscellaneous/cb12-134.html

UNESCO (n.d.) *Social and Human Sciences: Citizenship*. https://wayback.archive-
it.org/10611/20171126022407/http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-
sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/citizenship/

Vallis, J. (2019, March 8). *#DisabledPeopleAreHot: Viral hashtag sparks conversation about sexuality and disability*. CBC. https://www.cbc.ca/radio/noworneverhow-do-you-feel-about-your-body-1.5042773/disabledpeoplearehot-viral-hashtag-sparks-conversation-about-sexuality-and-disability-1.5042776

Vasilogambros, M. (2018, February 1). *How voters with disabilities are blocked from the ballot box.* Pew. Retrieved from: https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2018/02/01/how-voters-with-disabilities-are-blocked-from-the-ballot-box

Vazquez, T. (2019a, March 8). *In search of safety: An investigation of abuse at an immigration facility*. Rewire News. Retrieved February 6, 2020 from: https://rewire.news/article/2019/03/08/search-safety-investigation-abuse-immigration-facility/

Vazquez, T. (2019b, July 2). *Reporting a rape in immigration jail: One asylum seeker's fight for justice (updated)*. Rewire News. Retrieved February 6, 2020 from: https://rewire.news/article/2019/07/02/reporting-a-rape-in-immigration-jail-one-asylum-seekers-fight-for-justice/

Vertuno, J. (2014, October 10). *Wendy Davis political ad focuses on opponent's use of a wheelchair.* The Associated Press. Retrieved August 10 from: https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/wendy-davis-political-ad-focuses-opponents-use-wheelchair-record

Wade, C. (2017, April 3). Ohoops, sex toy user manuals are really ableist. Autostraddle.

Retrieved June 18, 2019 from: https://www.autostraddle.com/sex-toy-user-manuals-ableist-374520/

Weeks, J. (1998). The sexual citizen. *Theory, Culture & Society*. 15(3-4), 35-52.

Wong, A. (2018). *Resistance and Hope: Essays by Disabled People*. Disability Visibility Project.

Wong, A. [@SFdirewolf]. (2019, March 20). A4 Visibility can be fraught but it truly does mean a lot. If Sen. Tammy Duckworth was in office when. [Tweet; thumbnail link to article]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/SFdirewolf/status/1108448623426240512

Wong, A. [@SFdirewolf]. (2019, February 18). Representing all the folks who use BiPap, CPap, or any kind of ventilation! Art by @Ogrefairy #DisabledPeopleAreHot. [Tweet; illustration]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/SFdirewolf/status/1097479191073701889

Wootson Jr., C. R. & Brice-Saddler, M. (2019, January 23). *Nurse charged with sexual assault after woman in incapacitated state gave birth.* The Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/01/23/nurse-charged-with-sexual-assault-after-incapacitated-woman-gave-birth-health-care-facility/

zipporah [@coffeespoonie] (n.d.). *Tweets*. [Twitter Profile]. Retrieved June 23, 2020 from: https://twitter.com/coffeespoonie

VITA

CLAUDIA GARCIA MENDOZA
Department of Communication
Old Dominion University
5115 Hampton Boulevard
Norfolk, VA 23529

Educational Background

M.A. Lifespan and Digital Communication, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA. Fall 2020.

B.A. Media Studies and Journalism, Tecnológico de Monterrey, Campus Guadalajara. Fall 2003.

Professional Experience

2018 - present.   Spanish Instructor, Varsity Tutors.

Fall 2020.   Graduate Teaching Assistant Instructor, ODU, Department of Communication & Theater Arts

Spring 2019.   Research Assistant, ODU, Department of Communication & Theater Arts.

Fall 2018.   Teaching Assistant, ODU, Department of Communication & Theater Arts.

2007-2008.   Editor, De Shopping en el Valle.

2005-2007   HR Administrator, Beachmold Services.

2004-2005   Media Planner Executive, AAABC.

2003-2004   Freelance, editorial.

2001-2003   News writer and reporter, Público.

Continuing Education

2010 – 2011   Creative Writing (Spanish), Escritores.org

Summer 2002   Journalism for Radio, Universidad de Guadalajara

Conference Papers

Garcia Mendoza, C. & Socha, T. (2019). *Romantic Relationships of Characters with Disabilities in Film: A Content Analysis*. Presented at Baltimore, MA at the National Communication Association 105th Annual Convention: Communication for Survival.