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Sexual Subjectivities within Neoliberalism: Can Queer and Crip Engagements Offer an Alternative Praxis?

By Robyn Long¹

Abstract

Neoliberal processes have been wrought on the body, and have formed an effective oppression against 'deviant' bodies that do not, or cannot, maintain the idealised, heterosexual and able-bodied, neoliberal figure. By engaging with feminist, queer, and crip theoretical framings of the body, and the impact of neoliberal governmentality on non-normative sexuality, I find varied sites where queer, crip, or crip-queer bodies can challenge dominant discourses of heteronormativity and compulsory able-bodiedness. These challenges are crucial to creating counter-publics and counter-discourses to undermine the neoliberal-neoconservative complex. Exploring theorisings of the body and agency further, I look toward a crip/queer alterity, suggesting areas for further research, collaborating with postcolonial theories to examine the neoliberal body in globalised contexts.

Keywords: neoliberalism, queer theory, crip theory

Introduction

By understanding the body as a site of oppression, it may also be conceived as a site of resistance. This article explores how Foucauldian notions of governmentality have regulated the non-normative body, and have sought to manage and normalise 'deviant' populations. Neoliberalism has become a hegemonic frame within Western democracies, seeking to control and regulate populations through processes of governmentality (Harvey, 2005). These processes have been wrought on the body, and have formed an effective oppression against bodies that do not, or cannot, maintain the idealised, heterosexual and able-bodied, neoliberal figure (Phipps, 2014). This article begins by exploring the relationship between neoliberalism and the body. I then go on to analyse the ways that queer and/or crip bodies are managed and regulated by neoliberal imperatives, and explore some avenues and opportunities for resistance to the corporeal regulation, namely through dissident sexuality. These challenges are crucial to creating counter-publics and counter-discourses to undermine the neoliberal-neoconservative complex. Bringing these conversations back to the theoretical discourse, this article then elaborates on a crip/queer alterity, and the possibilities imaginable through more intersectional analyses, suggesting areas for further research collaborating with postcolonial theories to examine the neoliberal body in a globalised context.

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Corporeal Regulation under Neoliberalism

Neoliberal economics promote self-regulating markets and liberty for individuals to pursue wealth (Harvey, 2005). States should refrain from ‘interfering’ with the economic activities of self-interested citizens and instead use its power to guarantee open economic exchange (Harvey, 2007). Transgressing economic domains, and understanding all economics as moral philosophy, neoliberalism has become a cultural project, through which market rationalities are deployed and become embodied by self-regulating and self-responsibilised subjects² (Foucault, 1980). Subjects are constructed as atomised individuals, presumed autonomous, entrepreneurial, and free, unfettered by increasingly disassembled social relations and community identities (Bauman, 2000). Neoliberalism is now a contested concept: lacking conceptual clarity, it is argued that it stands for both everything and nothing (Clarke, 2008). However, despite this opacity, neoliberalism retains material resonances, rhetorically (re)produces a regulated, diminished citizenship, and has been “incorporated into the common sense way many of us live in, interpret and understand the world” (Harvey, 2005:3).

Foucault (1988) identified this shifting understanding of the self and the social as a process of governmentality: states are able to govern populations through techniques, mentalities, and rationalities of control, and in societies members must play an active role in their own self-governance, regulated from the ‘inside’. Here, power can be understood as social control, administered both through disciplinary institutions (e.g. educational systems, the family, the mass media) and manifested through knowledge production and discourse. This Foucauldian *apparatus* is the nexus of “discourses, institutions, spatial forms, regulatory frames, legal and administrative practices, as well as modes of conduct, affect, and desire” (Posocco, 2014:73). As a technology of power, governmentality is constitutive of regulation through technologies of the market and technologies of the self (Lemke, 2011), notions that, experientially, are rarely distinct. Technologies of the self compel individuals to renovate themselves, their bodies, minds, and lifestyles, to attain a state-approved version of happiness through processes of responsabilisation and normalisation (Dean, 2009:67). Social control becomes individually internalised, constructed as auto-regulated and auto-correcting selves. This relies on notions of expertise and authority, resulting in the market becoming a metaphor to guide human relations and conduct. As Wendy Brown skilfully demonstrates, neoliberalism saturates the state and the social by “*extending and disseminating market values to all institutions and social action*”, (2005:40, emphasis in original). Thus, following Ringrose & Walkerdine (2008), if the hero of neoliberalism is the entrepreneur, then we are all becoming increasingly relied on to be entrepreneurs of the self.

The body becomes a site for continual modification and regulation. Foucault understood this regulation as “biopower”. A technology of power for managing populations, biopower is a force constituting the materiality of any subject – it forms, secures, and normalises subjects through processes of subjugation (1980). This process of normalisation through subjugation is closely related to the ‘docile body’: which may be “subjected, used, transformed, and improved” (Foucault 1977:135-136). The docile body has been *created* through processes of discipline acting upon the body, including “a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour” (*ibid.*:138). Foucault’s exploration of biopower and docile bodies suggests the use of control, discipline, and governmentality through self-regulation, to provide, or create, efficient and socially useful bodies, aligned to neoliberal imperatives of healthy and productive populations, intertwined

² Responsibilisation is the process by which states compel citizens to become responsible for their own health, and thus liable for their own risks. It encourages people to take desirable courses of action or behaviour: e.g. the nudge agenda in behavioural economics (Brown & Baker, 2013; Thaler & Sunstein, 2009).

with neoliberal institutions, such as the family, the military, and the market. It is where bodies fall outside of this ideal that they become subject to structures of power, such as institutionalisation, rehabilitation, and normalisation (Garland-Thomson, 1997). Neoliberalism has remained hegemonic as a normative ideological apparatus, however, it may be seen as a process of “creative destruction” (Harvey, 2007). This Marxist critique highlights the ways working class people are managed by neoliberalism, and this may be extended to understand the ways in which neoliberalism privileges some bodies over others, namely the white, Western, cisgendered³ able-bodied, heterosexual, middle-class male.

Bad Bodies and Critical Interventions

Everyone is familiar with the ‘bad’ body: too short or tall, too fat or thin, not masculine or feminine enough, not enough or too much hair on the head or other parts of the body, penis or breasts too small or (except the penis) too big. Furthermore, each individual assigns good and bad labels to body parts – good: hair face, lips, eyes, hands; bad: sexual organs, excretory organs, underarms (Davis, 1997:169).

Neoliberal market rationalities privilege some bodies over others, and use the body as a basic metaphor for cultural and socio-political values (Hughes, 2009). The ageing and/or disabled body, specifically, is a great source of anxiety: “[s]uffering caused by the body, and the inability to control the body, are despised, pitied, and above all, feared. This fear, experienced individually, is also deeply embedded in our culture” (Wendell, 1997:267). The idealisation of bodies with a specific shape and capacity, and the celebration of ‘able-bodied’ norms and values, denigrates weak and ‘ungainly’ forms, effectively devaluing the disabled body as that which “does not function ‘normally’ or appear ‘normal’...is both visually and conceptually out of place” (Lupton, 1994:38). But, the disabled body is not merely ‘out of place’, it is a threat to the Western ideal of an enlightened, stable self; seeing “the self gone out of control” reminds us that the cultural ‘Other’ is buried within this self, and may at any time appear to destabilise it (Garland-Thomson 1997:43; Meyer, 2002). Indeed, queer bodies marked by a heteronormative⁴ framing also threaten this ideal self. Neoliberal capitalism requires a populace of able-bodied workers *and* the continual reproduction of this workforce in order to ensure its future power: non-reproductive queer bodies threaten this reproductive futurity, and must be disciplined (Edelman, 2004). Thus, bodily repression and stigmatisation rest in the corporeal ‘otherness’ represented by ‘extraordinary’ bodies, particularly those that do not conform to the self-governing, standardised individualism defined as normative (Garland-Thomson, 1997).

Understanding abjection as the processual creation of borders between the ‘I’ and the ‘Other’ (Ringrose & Walkerdine, 2008), the object, disabled and/or queer body is “uninhabitable”, represents a risk of contagion, and elicits shame and disgust (Butler, 1990:170; Sherry, 2007; Shildrick, 2009). This hierarchical orthodoxy declares some minds and bodies abnormal and

³ Cisgender refers to those who are not transgender, without relying on words like ‘biological’ or ‘regular’, or implying gender expressions of people who do not identify as transgender are more authentic than, or preferable to, gender expressions of people who identify as transgender (Marinucci, 2010).

⁴ Heteronormativity creates a social standard for sexual mores, desires, and behaviours, and is seen as *the* basic principle of social unions, i.e. male-female, monogamous coupledness. These prescribed norms are socially constructed and embedded throughout a range of discourses, including education, the media, and the family.

inferior, standardises physical and mental health, and interweaves this with a moral soundness, conversely associating 'defective' bodies with degeneracy (Young, 1990). Puar's (2012) cogent analysis of the juncture between homonationalism⁵ and disabled bodies explores calls to 'get better', situating them within the neoliberal frame of responsabilisation and continual self-improvement. Analogising this to the American Dream motto 'pull yourself up by your bootstraps', Puar makes explicit the connections between neoliberal capital and cultural presumptions about capacity and debility. If we return to Harvey's "creative destruction", I suggest calls to 'get better' are emblematic of the ways in which neoliberalism privileges those able and willing to engage in the pursuit of capital accumulation, by placing the responsibility, and thus 'blame' for non-productive bodies upon the 'defective' individual, and further 'Othering' them through processes of stigmatisation, surveillance, and/or silence.

During the 1990s, feminist and post-structural approaches challenged the homogeneity of disabled people and their subjugations, presumed by the then-dominant Neo-Marxist and materialist models. Critical theorists moved beyond materialist accounts, toward a more nuanced focus on culture, language and discourse (Garland-Thomson, 1996, 1997; Linton, 1998). Feminism, queer theory, and postcolonial studies transformed critical and cultural theory by requiring theorists to account for the experiences of different identities. Feminist disability studies provide a theoretical framework for expanding an understanding of historical and ideological connections between marginalised embodiments (Hall, 2002). Questions emerged regarding the specific circumstances of various sub-groups of disabled people, including women, LGBT persons, and members of minority ethnic groups. However, simplistic additive responses can embolden constructions of misleading 'league tables' of oppressions encountered by various sub-groups: the "double oppression" of being a disabled woman, for example, yields to the "triple oppression of being a black disabled woman [experiencing] racism, sexism, and handicapism" (Begum, 1992:71). These dimensions are interlocking and provide a complex experience of "simultaneous", rather than separate, oppressions, as beautifully illustrated by Clare:

Gender reaches into disability; disability wraps around class; class strains against abuse; abuse snarls into sexuality; sexuality folds on top of race... everything finally piling into a single human body. To write about any aspect of identity, any aspect of the body, means writing about this entire maze. This I know, and yet the question remains, where to start? (1999:123)

Clare explores intricate webs of embodied identities and oppressions, understanding queer bodies as "pathologized and medicalized...queer people have been told for centuries by church, state, and science that our bodies are abnormal" (1999:96). To be a "crip"⁶ and involved with the queer

⁵ Homonationalism refers to the conjunction of liberal gay rights discourses and imperialist agendas. Rights discourse are deployed to cast states/religions that don't recognise these rights as 'backwards' and threatening to literal (white) LGBT rights-holders; thus enabling, or encouraging, threats of military action in the name of queer communities (Puar, 2007).

⁶ 'Crip' is an identity category, reclaimed from the derogatory term 'cripple', it highlights the limitations of the term 'disabled' in forging positive identities and representations. Crip is not currently widely embraced or accepted by disabled communities, and much like its queer counterpart can carry memories of trauma. I use crip to undo the assumptions that a 'disabled' framing of the body makes both in discourse and lived experience, namely the disabled body, by its mere name must already be defined as lacking, as un-. As such, I hope the ways I deploy *crip* will enable an analysis of the crip (and queer) body as more than simply a lacking counterpart to the able (or straight) body.

community is often to be exposed to both the exclusionary norms of society in general, and to have to cope with the specific contradictory conceptions attached to disability and queerness (Meyers, 2002). Indeed, queer and crip bodies often share similar trajectories of stigmatisation and isolation as “they are rarely born into queer or crip families, much less communities” (Sandahl, 2003:36). In fact, the disabled body has been relied upon to visually underscore the devaluation of various marginalised, stigmatised identities (e.g. gender, class, nationality, or ‘race’). In the US, discrimination against people of colour, women, and immigrants has been justified by representing them as disabled (Baynton, 2001). However, despite advances towards intersectional, or simultaneous, analyses of these complex identities, there remains a hierarchical understanding, as illustrated by Davis: “Whenever race and disability come together...ethnicity tends to be considered so much the ‘stronger’ category that disability disappears altogether” (2002:147).

Jarman counters this hierarchical approach, seeing race and disability as interrelated, “not equal or competing, but dynamic social and discursive processes that inform each another...inextricable from the deeply enmeshed histories of racist and ableist violence” (2012:89-91). This interrelatedness is most evident in the mid twentieth-century eugenicist movement, which was often imbued with an important sexual dimension (Barlow, 2005; Sherry, 2007). The racist construction of black male sexuality as animalistic, sub-human, and dangerous, is tied to figurations of the hypersexual or “sexually aggressive ‘moron’” as “unpredictable, foreign, and sexually dangerous” (Jarman, 2012:97). These figurations, both distinct and combined, present tangible threats to the Western notion of the self, and must be neutralised or eliminated, through processes of medicalisation, institutionalisation and pathologisation. Indeed, for much of the twentieth century, homosexuality was defined as a psychiatric condition, and currently, in the US and UK, Gender Identity Disorder, or Gender Dysphoria, is still a required diagnosis for Trans* people to get access to hormones or medical treatment (Hirschmann, 2013).

Understanding the disabled, queer, and/or ethnic body as bound together can help to explore the multiple ways these bodies are regulated by neoliberal ideology. According to Tremain (2005), the importance of Foucauldian notions of biopower and governmentality cannot be overstated in the analysis of disability; I argue this is true in examining any non-normative bodies. Until recently, non-normative sexual subjectivities have rarely been centred in postcolonial efforts to elaborate “the workings of biopolitics [and have been] elided or deemed irrelevant despite the demarcation of perversion and deviance that is a key component of the very establishment of norms that drive biopolitical interests” (Puar, 2007:34-35). Thinking through non-normative crip and queer bodies, and the ways in which they are repressed, contained, and managed, collaborations between feminist theory and disability studies can be complementary; indeed, both perspectives “resist interpretations of certain bodily configurations and functionings as deviant; both question the ways that differences are invested with meaning; both examine the enforcement of universalising norms; both interrogate the politics of appearance; both explore the politics of naming; both forge positive identities” (Garland-Thomson, 1997:22).

Siebers’ notion of the “ideology of ability” (2008:33) aligns with neoliberal imperatives for able, productive bodies, which in turn produces a fear of disability and the non-normate. These queer or disabled identities present a critical framework that disturbs and critiques the ideology of ability that seeks to exclude them, demanding political change. Butler’s notion of the abject body, that which is not yet a subject, but forms “the constitutive outside to the domain of subject” (1993:xi), can help us to think through non-normative bodies as inhabiting a borderland between the acceptable and unacceptable (Hall, 2015). If “disability is the unorthodox made flesh... refusing

to be normalized, neutralized, or homogenized” (Garland-Thomson, 1997:23), we can see spaces for a resistance to the neoliberal governmentality previously discussed.

Neoliberal governmentality casts these bodies as monstrous, essentially dangerous, and in need of control, but as Puar and Rai (2002:118) importantly make explicit: “monsters and abnormal have always also been sexual deviants”. Foucault (1976) analysed the imbrications between monstrosity and sexuality, through the regulation of ‘proper’ desire and taxonomising sexual acts. His genealogy of the abnormal ‘monster’, distinguishes between human monsters and individuals to be corrected (1997). These are not entirely distinct categories, as the monster is not simply an Other; it is a cultural and political category through which power can operate. The twentieth century saw disparate figures of ‘monsters’ become “case studies, objects of ethnographies, and interesting psychological cases of degeneracy. The same Western, colonial modernity that created the psyche created the racial and sexual monster” (Puar & Rai, 2002:124). Indeed, whether gendered, sexualised, racialised, or disabled, the figure of the monster epitomises the threat of the Other body: “whether gaping in awe, delight, terror, or knowledge, the monstrous emerges from culture-bound expectations even as it violates them” (Garland-Thomson, 1996:3). Despite colonial, male, and able-bodied gazes, non-normative bodies can present a challenge to bounded, normative, and masculine identities (Shildrick, 2015).

In theorising crip⁷, McRuer (2006) explores the compulsory character of able-bodiedness, aligning it to Rich’s (1980) concept of “compulsory heterosexuality”.⁸ These conditions are entwined, each dictating the most desirable way of being, and heterosexuality can only be achieved through the precondition of able-bodiedness. Exploring the gay bodybuilding subculture in the 1990s, Klein (1993) found the hyper-muscularisation of gay men was a backlash to the HIV/AIDS crisis; previously the ideal gay male body had been thin, however once associated with disease, disability, and contagion, gay men turned to bodybuilding as a way to appear healthy and heterosexual. The anti-disability positioning of gay men forced a positionality of passing or the adoption of homonormative⁹ practices (Drummond, 2005; Duggan, 2003). This illustrates the complex ways the heterosexual, able, and white body are bound together, and resultantly so too are the crip and queer and the racialised, and the ways in which bodies seeking to resist one frame of regulation may assimilate or coalesce into another.

⁷ Crip theory is a post-structuralist approach to disability, and seeks to illuminate, challenge, and disrupt the able-bodied privilege and ableism that orders the social world. In contrast to Disability Studies, which focuses on distinctions between the medical versus social model of disability, crip theory is less interested in piecemeal approaches to rights acquisition, or indeed a framework in which if all oppression were removed, the disability should become invisible. Rather, crip theory attempts to destabilise the ‘negative-by-default’ positioning of disability, and instead imagine truly ‘inclusive’ lifeworlds. Crip theory has not yet been embraced by classic disability studies (see Sherry, 2013, for a broad critique), however I argue while anti-crip disability scholars are well-intentioned, the multiple and overlapping oppressions wrought on the body cannot simply be undone within a liberal rights framework. A growing body of crip scholarship is forging connections beyond the disciplinary boundaries of disability studies, attempting to explore many of these overlaps.

⁸ Compulsory heterosexuality is a system by which sexual identity is regulated by individuals and enforced by institutions. This notion went on to influence the queer theorists of the 1990s.

⁹ Homonormativity is the incorporation of heteronormative ideals and constructs into LGBTQ culture. It manifests through notions of the ‘pink pound’ and ‘gay marriage’, in which proponents seem eager to emulate heterosexuals, appearing normal and ‘just like everyone else’. This frame is often critiqued for simply coalescing into heteronormative orders, rather than challenging the underlying inequality.

Crip/Queer Sex

Neoliberalism requires the regulation of sexuality to ensure a healthy and (re)productive workforce, built on the foundation of the stable, nuclear family. There are close connections between the workings of heteronormativity and able-bodied hegemony under neoliberalism, where the body becomes a site for self-regulation and self-correction to align with these neoliberal imperatives. McRuer (2010b:171) positions this within a theory of “uneven biopolitical incorporation”, in which the incorporation of some bodies, but not others, into the state must be integrated into feminist, queer, and crip discussions of sexuality. Bodies that do not conform to these frames are seen as problematic and in need of intervention. Indeed, where there has been attention paid to the relationships between sex and disability it has often been addressed within a heteronormative framework and a healthism narrative¹⁰ focused on positive health outcomes involved in sexuality (Drummond and Brotman, 2014). Here, heterosexuality becomes the ‘adult’ or ‘normal’ sphere (Beckett, 2004), and sexual and gender non-normates with disabilities are doubly invisible, doubly Othered, and doubly perverse (Shakespeare, Gillespie-Sells, and Davis, 1996). Thus to be LGBT/queer *and* disabled seems beyond the realm of what culture deems possible, let alone desirable (Inckle, 2014; Siebers, 2012).

Sexuality becomes figured as the domain of the (hetero)normatively embodied, the possibility of gender or sexuality for people with disabilities is unacknowledged, instead we become “monstrous abnormalities, children in deformed adult bodies, who either have no sexuality at all, or if/when we do, we are irrevocably perverse”, (Inckle, 2014:392) possessing a sense of “embodiment conceived of as either lack or excess” (Garland-Thomson, 2002:7; Hirschmann, 2013). Memmi (1967) demonstrates the ways that the Other is always already seen as lacking, as “void” of some culturally valued quality, whatever that may be. This relationship between lack and excess in the Other cuts across categorisations of queer, crip, and ethnic subjectivities. This ‘crip excess’ frames people with developmental disabilities as hypersexual, and in some cases as predators, partly due to perceptions that, like queers, and indeed racialised subjects, they are all too capable of being sexual creatures (Wilkerson, 2002). Thus lies the contradiction of hetero-ableist conceptions of crip/queer sexuality: disabled people are conceived as docile and asexual, while queers are presumed a hypersexual threat. Consequently, Samuels has highlighted; if being queer is about sex and being disabled is seen as nonsexual, how can you even be queer? (cited in Meyers, 2002:171). Wilkerson (2002) addresses this in her analysis of the ways disabled people are denied sexual agency and power. As sexual agency is central to political agency, denying it is a central feature of oppression (Hall, 2002), as evidenced by the treatment of gay men in the 1980s under the administrations of Thatcher and Reagan¹¹.

Various queer and crip theorists have explored experiences of living simultaneously as disabled *and* sexual, positioning these embodiments as full of transgressive potential. Indeed, “paraplegics and quadriplegics have revolutionary [and queer] things to teach about the possibilities of sexuality which contradict patriarchal culture’s obsession with genitals” (Wendell, 1997:274), and this transgressive sexual potential allows for possibilities outside “heterocentric and phallogocentric norms” (Wilkerson, 2002:51). The heteronormative model of sex, focusing on tessellating ‘male’ and ‘female’ genitalia for reproduction, further relies on ableist assumptions.

¹⁰ Healthism is a cultural and political preoccupation with health and well-being, which has markedly increased under neoliberal responsabilisation (*nl*) and positions individuals as responsible for their own health, disease or disability.

¹¹ Margaret Thatcher was the Conservative Prime Minister of the U.K. from 1979-1990. Ronald Reagan was the Republican President of the U.S.A. from 1981-1989. Both put forth neoliberal economic and social policies in domestic and foreign policy.

The normative primacy placed on genitalia and breasts as the *only*, or at least *most significant* erotic zones negates attention to the multiple and various sites of eroticisation throughout the body (Schriempf, 2001).

Increasingly, disabled people are engaging sex workers for “sex surrogacy” or “facilitated sex” with third parties (McRuer, 2010a:112). These practices are certainly not without criticism, especially from radical feminists (Jeffreys, 2008). Such criticisms highlight patriarchal oppression against women and are aligned with neoconservative protectionist anxieties and moralities about the treatment of women and sex. De Boer (2015) addresses Jeffreys’ critique of disabled men as clients of sex workers/surrogates, illuminating the assumptions about masculinity and disability, arguing Jeffreys misunderstands how disabled men are positioned in relation to hegemonic masculinity. She contends justice for disabled people must include sexual access, where sex work and sex surrogacy can play a vital role. Indeed, through in-depth personal accounts, Andrew Morrisson-Gurza (2015) depicts some everyday experiences of crip/queer sexuality, challenges to access he faces, the complexities of using sex workers, the emotionality of transactional sex, and the tension between the bought versus the “authentic”. These experiences illuminate the difficulties of thinking through neoliberal processes of governmentality alongside an emancipatory agenda advocated by sex-positive feminists and queer theorists.

DeGenevieve sees porn as a “site of resistance to cultural restrictions on pleasure” (2014:194). Crip/queer engagements with porn reveal the intricacy and positioning within neoliberal and neoconservative agendas. Hall describes the 1985 decision by the US Congress to remove funding for the Library of Congress to provide *Playboy* magazine in Braille, arguing that taxpayers’ money should not be used to support obscene materials (2002). Though subsequently lifted, the ban demonstrates how non-normative sexualities are censored by neoconservative moralities and rendered invisible. Recently, YouTube removed an advert by Come4.org, for the Asta Philpot Foundation, for breaching its “community standards” (Stone, 2013). This depicted male wheelchair user, Asta Philpot, visiting a brothel, and discussing his sexual proclivities to raise awareness of sexual rights for people with disabilities. Conversely, the Netherlands policy of government-subsidised sex workers for people with disabilities (Couldrick, 2009) can be criticised for encouraging a condescending charitable model, reinforcing pity and paternalism.

The oft-cited example of Ellen Stohl (Garland-Thomson, 1997; Richardson, 2010; Schriempf, 2001; Siebers, 2008), a paraplegic woman who posed for *Playboy* in 1987, offers a mediated soft-porn representation of disability. Whilst she posed provocatively, her disability was always out of sight, censored. Pictures of her ‘everyday life’ were juxtaposed against sexual imagery, to distance sexuality from the distinctly disabled body, suggesting, or ensuring, that to sexualise a disabled body would be an act of perversion, and imply a perversion to any (presumably heterosexual and able-bodied) male gaze (Garland-Thomson, 1997). Long Jeanne Silver, an amputee porn actress, became famous in the 1970s for using the stump of her amputated leg for penetration (Saint Thomas, 2015). The tension of the explicit sexualisation and/or sexiness of the stump, found disability and deviance were at once desired and disavowed. This ambivalence positions female vulnerability and powerlessness as simultaneously desirable and requiring remedy: “devotees can be interpreted as fetishizing that partner’s disempowerment” (Richardson, 2010:256), which in turn serves to further taboo disabled women’s sexuality. Indeed, Kafer’s (2012) exploration of cultures of “devoteeism” depicts the ways in which people who are attracted to disability are deemed perverse, disgusting or reprehensible, arguing this is built on the understanding of the disabled body as disgusting, and those attracted to it are in need of

pathologisation. This is illustrative of a wider neoliberal governmentality, where the ability to diagnose and pathologise both disability and sexuality sustains power imbalances.

In the UK, the ban on producing erotic material which includes fisting, facesitting, and penetration by objects that could be used for violence (Gayle, 2016) not only limits depictions of various pleasures but importantly the kinds of bodies and sex acts deemed appropriate for erotic consumption. The new UK regulator for pornography, the BBFC, states its guiding principle as “protection of children...and other vulnerable people”, and will not certificate any ‘obscene’ material (British Board of Film Classification, 2014). This invisibilising of the crip/queer body within pornography has regulatory effects, rendering ‘bad bodies’ as private problems to be contained. While heterosexist norms, and their ableist consequences, are in operation, no amount of politicising impairment issues will undermine these norms unless we alter our paradigms, because the social model is only about challenging *public* notions of access and disability strictly as social constructions (Schriempf, 2001). However, the disabled body that is able to resist stigma and claim power for itself is a destabilising force (Hirschmann, 2013), and interventions from feminist, queer and crip theorists and activists are challenging neoliberal governmentality.

A Crip/Queer Alterity¹²?

Recent disciplinary coalitions and entanglements between feminism, queer and crip theory, and postcolonial theory, have been especially dynamic in imagining new possibilities for thinking at their frontiers sexuality, subjectivity and corporeality (Cohen, 2015; Garland-Thomson, 2002). While there is much to be gained from working across disciplines and borders, we must be cautious about the fallacies inherent in any global idea of disability (Gorman, 2016). While this article has drawn from Foucault’s theorisations on biopower and governmentality, important critiques must be addressed, specifically his self-contained and “scrupulously ethnocentric” analyses (Clifford, 1988:265). Ann Laura Stoler (2000) sees the colonies as practice sites for what Foucault posits as biopower in Europe. Her discussion of biopolitics and colonialism critiques Foucault for failing to acknowledge how categories of sexuality, and concepts such as gender and race, emerged in the context of empire, and how these imperialist processes were integral to the history of sexuality. Indeed, as Kupar argues:

In the arena of sexuality, where pleasure, desire and agency are assumed to be associated with the West, while the third world gendered and sexual subject is constructed almost exclusively through the lens of violence, victimization, impoverishment and cultural barbarism, these binaries are particularly acute (2010:37)

Seuffert (2010) draws on histories of British colonialism to explore how state power regulated, controlled, and managed sexual acts and gender expressions in service of empire-building and containing the sexual excess and licentiousness of colonised peoples. In empire-building, identity formation was not singular: official categorisations of gender, race, ethnicity, class and disability

¹²Alterity, or otherness, is the state of being radically alien to the conscious self or a particular cultural orientation. This has been used heavily in postcolonial studies, and often to think through constructions of ‘Others’ as mutually contingent (i.e. the coloniser and the colonised). Skorkin-Kapov (2015) marks alterity as otherness, tinged with newness or surprise. I am bridging these understandings, to think it through alongside queer and crip interventions on the body, to allow radical space to think about the complexities of othering, and multiple layering of identities.

marked certain bodies and minds as marginal and dispossessed. Indeed, notions of 'defectiveness and sub-normality' were deployed to legitimate the subjugation of the colonised subject (Grech, 2012:54; McClintock, 1995; Mohanty, 2003; Parekh, 2007).

These intersectional interventions have been crucial, but it is important not to suggest that these categories can be collapsed or coalesced in any simplistic sense. Indeed, Tremain (2000), Sandahl (2003) and McRuer's (2006) approaches draw on queer theory, though crippling is not a simple parallel to queering. The two represent different processes, sharing many common points so we might think of them as two strands, twisted together, unified, but also distinguishable (Price, 2015). This issue with analogising and conflating concepts, often through the use of metaphor, has been explored with regards to sexuality and disability (Samuels, 2003), disability and postcolonial theory (Ghai, 2012; Sherry, 2007) and postcolonial work on sexuality (Johnson, 2001), each highlighting how vital it is to understand that while heteronormative, racist, and ableist assumptions and oppressions may be similar, they are not identical. There needs to be more coalitional work and intersectional analyses of the variants of oppression on multiple subjectivities, and how these are further implicated in broader neoliberal politics. Feminism, queer theory, and crip disability studies must collaborate in challenging the power relations grounded in the cultural constructs of bodily representations (Meyer, 2002), providing a full-inclusion politics that does not assume a centre to which other elements are peripheral. Indeed, "feminist theory and activism are more process than object: more non-linear than progressive; more multiple than singular; more contingent than fixed; and more discontinuous than ordered... a theory and praxis that considers disability subjectivities and knowledges in fluid relationships to all other forms of subjectivity and knowledge" (Rohrer, 2005:35).

Following McRuer's call for crip to take a sledgehammer to that which has been "concretized" (2006:35), contemporary feminist, queer, and crip scholarship has also turned to the role of neoliberal global capitalism in producing disability (e.g. Erevelles, 2011); providing a potentiality and flexibility; an effort to occupy a more "contestatory" space that merges activist and academic work; as well as hope for coalition across disability categories (Kafer, 2013:15-16). Responding to Duggan's (2009) call for new concepts, a feminist crip/queer ethos or praxis can facilitate politics and practices where disabled embodiment becomes a radical challenge to normativity in all its aspects, and a vehicle through which to move beyond such restrictive frameworks (Inckle, 2014:388). Johnson and McRuer's (2014a) 'cripistemologies'¹³ may provide a way; a fundamental shift in ways of knowing, conceiving, understanding, and scrutinising the social world, taking the able-body as the primary analysis. Moreover, global cripistemological analyses may offer new and unique ways of conceptualising the body and agency (Baril, 2015; Hall, 2015).

Kupar uses the 'sexual subaltern'¹⁴ to demonstrate the "complex layering of sexual subjectivities in post-colonial contexts that are not captured in a straightforward 'lesbian' or 'gay'

¹³ Cripistemologies is a new approach to epistemological concerns and knowledges, primarily analysing the able-body, in spaces where feminist, queer, trans*, crip, and postcolonial/decolonial epistemologies converge. Johnson and McRuer (2014b) questioned the ways neoliberalism contains the body, the ways we might *crip* containment strategies, and relationships between queer antisociality and feminist disability studies work on interdependence. There seems hopefulness about pushing theoretical boundaries and disciplinary entanglements, beyond disparate precarities towards solidarity.

¹⁴ The sexual subaltern captures the extraordinary range of counter-heteronormative sexualities, particularly in the Global South, that cannot be captured by simple 'LGBT' readings. Includes: kush, queer, hijra, kothis, panthis people. It also refers to various sexual practices, including premarital, extra-marital, non-marital, auto-erotic/masturbatory, promiscuous, and paid-for sex, and MSM (men who have sex with men) (Kupar, 2010:39).

reading” (2010:38). Postcolonial theorists deploy this peripheral subject to challenge and unmask the dominant cultural, gendered, sexual and religious assumptions about the Other. This allows for new possibilities for excluded or marginalised subjects. However, the subaltern, whether sexualised, racialised, or disabled, cannot be meaningfully distinguished in the context of colonisation (Meekosha, 2011); indeed Parekh (2007) argues that there are both solidarities and competitions between marginalised groups. Bringing queer theory into conversation with these efforts to overcome or resist neoliberal tendencies, Munoz suggests that: “holding queerness, in a sort of ontologically humble state, under a conceptual grid wherein we do not claim to always already know queerness in the world, potentially staves off the ossifying effects of neoliberal ideology” (2007:454). If we are able to step beyond our own disciplinary and epistemological knowledge claims and constructions, we may be able to forge new understandings and solidarities against the numerous oppressions wrought on the non-normative body. However, as Ghai (2012:284) reminds us, this is not easy:

Perhaps the greatest challenge is to comprehend that we have consciously or unconsciously oppressed each other. It is only when we create intersections that we attack social apartheid which places limits on human beings, both disabled and non-disabled.

Coda, or what next?

Whilst I have sought to illuminate the benefits for thinking through crip and queer subjectivities together, I have inevitably omitted various strands of thinking and potential areas for further research, not least deeper explorations at the intersection of post-colonial theory, and furthermore conversations *with*, not *across*, trans* theory. These areas can offer insights and questions to be unpicked and probed much further than is possible here. Foucauldian notions of governmentality have regulated the normate body and sought to manage and normalise ‘deviant’ embodied populations. Exploring feminist, queer, and crip theoretical interventions in the framing of the body in a market and moral rationality, and the impact of neoliberal governmentality on non-normative sexuality, this article has found varied sites where the queer, crip, or crip-queer body can challenge the dominant discourses of heteronormativity and compulsory able-bodiedness outlined in both queer and crip theory. These challenges are crucial to creating counter-publics and counter-discourses, which may undermine the neoliberal-neoconservative complex. While the issues touched upon have outlined various strategies of resistance to the normalising hetero-abled neoliberal frame, they are not ‘consistent’, nor are they monolithic or unidirectional. Embodied resistances and neoliberal governmentality are complex areas, and a cripistemological framework is ripe for further development to explore these issues.

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