

Samantha Lori Walsh - Disability and Consumption: Re-thinking Social Movements

This paper sought to explore connections between consumer identity and disability experiences, asking how disability animates consumer identity, and how this shapes, grounds and differentiates various disability movements. The author opened the paper by grounding herself in her own experience of disability, and then used narrative to express how she comes to be allied with or to understand various movements. The various disability rights or access movements (such as the independent living movement, the community living movement, the mad movement, the psychiatric survivor movement, and the psychiatric consumer movement) each arose in specific contexts, and differ with respect to their locations, histories, methods, and philosophies. Moreover, each movement subscribes to a distinct philosophy of how one should go about socially positioning and repositioning disability. To explore this I used the works of but not limited to (Scull: 1977, Michalko 2002, Shakespeare 1999, Zola 1977, Titchkosky 2007). The work acknowledged all of these histories, methods, and philosophies are in conversation with each other: The notion of what it means to be human, questions about the division between public and private space, and issues concerning and civic interactions continue to punctuate the conversations taking place within and between movements. It is this conversation and its punctuation this paper sought to explore. The questions that animate this exploration were: How are these movements woven together and torn apart by Western capitalism? How, as activists, can we take up equity in a way that creates coalitions rather than individual movements?