RONNIE THIBAULT GENERAL EXAMS FIELD STATEMENT

Introduction:

My scholarship addresses questions of power, representation, and the cultural production of identities of difference with a more recent emphasis on postcolonial approaches to the geopolitics of disability, and intellectual and developmental disabilities in particular. My work responds to an absence of developmental and intellectual disability histories and topics in global development studies, cultural geography, feminist and additional critical scholarship, and in political and public discourse. Institutions in the United States have largely ignored the efforts of disability scholars and activist to document the wide-spread abuse, neglect and marginalization of those categorized as intellectually and developmentally disabled. Furthermore, the recent rise of nationalist ideologies and U.S. protectionist policies have converged with a historical disinterest in the geopolitics of disability and the local, national, and transnational apparatuses that leverage disability as a mechanism of exploitation and exclusion. This disregard for the significance of disability politics has repeatedly placed immigrant populations, identities of difference, and the nation's geopolitical relationships in jeopardy.

In my response to these critical absences and erasures I take an interdisciplinary approach that draws productive connections between theories of cultural representation, feminist and postcolonial disability studies, relational and cultural geographies, and epistemologies in U.S. nationalism. In preparation for my qualifying written exam scheduled for May 1-8 and my oral defense on May 18, I offer the following review of scholarly literature to demonstrate how my academic focus reflects and responds to these interdisciplinary interests. The following field statement will define my areas of expertise, attend to some of the more pressing debates within and between disciplines, and demonstrate how I apply these epistemologies in my dissertation research and in my scholarship and teaching endeavors.

Section One: Culture, Representation, and Difference

I begin with a review of scholarship that is interested in explaining the relationship between discourse, power, cultural representation, and the construction and reproduction of individual and spatial identities of difference. These authors address what culture is and what it does, how power operates within a discourse, the politics and practices of representation, the various mechanisms and strategies that are leveraged in cultural constructions of the 'Other,' and critical research methods for recognizing and analyzing these systematic and circulatory processes. Questioning the role of culture in representational processes and understanding why particular ways of constructing difference are so readily accepted and

reinforced by society is a central concern in my scholarship and teaching projects. I have an intense curiosity about the historical resonances that seem to haunt current day cultural practices and these theorists provide essential frameworks for exploring how and why cultural representation is such a powerfully stubborn—and seemingly more often than not—divisive force.

Section Two: Disability Studies Frameworks

This section traces the primary theoretical genealogies of disability studies scholarship, addresses continuities and debates within the field, and attends to theories that speak to limited interdisciplinary interest in disability studies perspectives. After providing a brief summary of the American social, medical, and deficit models of disability I review some of the ongoing debates in feminist and disability studies and introduce ontologies in postcolonial and transnational disability studies. In many ways, developmental and intellectual disability histories and experiences remain culturally invisible, socially ignored, and radically unnoticed by academic and activist circles that endeavor to promote social, racial, sexual, ethnic, religious, gender, and global justice. Most of the scholars that I review in this section situate their own experiences and theories along multiple intersections of marginalization, including disability. Developmental and intellectual disabilities maintain a tertiary role within these discussions; however, these scholars do productively address how the dominant globally northern systems that represent, treat, produce, mark, and inscribe the disabled body have engendered violent and dangerous assumptions about disabled lives.

Section Three: Cultural and Relational Geographies

The post-structural scholarship in this section engages in the relational politics of space, place, scale, and the relational formation of identities. The authors explore the "intellectual traffic between geography and cultural studies" (D. Mitchell 2008, 64) to explain the circulatory *cultural* and *geographic* systems that are involved in the construction of borders, boundaries, landscapes, and the formation of both spatial and human identities. For cultural geographers, "culture *is* spatial" (272) and the formation of the social and cultural identity of a place, like the identity of a nation, always involves political struggles over what *types* of cultural and individual identities can claim the right to that particular space. These epistemologies push against the notion that space is strictly immobile, flat, distinctly final, or materially and temporally grounded. For relational geographers, space is generated through the multiple relationships and the ongoing interactions that unfold within it. This approach opens up multiple ways to trace the enduring historical and material mechanisms, social relationships, and political interactions that characterize the identity of a region or place and for exploring how these characterizations come to depend upon pejorative descriptions of difference to reaffirm their own dominant identity within and across spatial locations.

Section Four: U.S. Nationalism Theories and Epistemologies

The scholars that I outline in the final section explain and approach nationalism as a discursive and relational process, as both ideological and material, and, as an "organizing and energizing force" (D. Mitchell, 272) that situates particular individuals and groups into categories of belonging and of not belonging. Before I summarize some of the more specific epistemologies on the histories and politics of U.S. nationalism I briefly address the various disciplinary definitions of nationalism, the cultural and social influences on national identity formation and the broader politics of nation building. Cultural geographers question the material and relational conditions that make national identities meaningful in regional, national, and global contexts. The theorists in this section strongly emphasize that powerful political interests and heads of state are key nation building agents, however, they also underscore the primary role that history, mass culture, news media, cultural industries and consumers, and representational politics perform in the construction and maintenance of a national identity.

Section One: Culture, Representation, and Difference

"If you work on culture, or if you've tried to work on some other really important things and you find yourself driven back to culture, if culture happens to be what seizes hold of your soul, you have to recognize that you will always be working in an area of displacement"

(S. Hall, Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies 2007, 40)

Cultural Theory:

Cultural geographer Don Mitchell has argued that "no decent cultural analysis (geographic or otherwise) can draw on culture *itself* as a source of explanation; rather culture is always something to be *explained* as it is socially produced through myriad struggles over and in spaces, scales, and landscapes" (2008, xvi). Mitchell's relational approach to geography, culture, representation, and the production of difference is a guiding force in much of my work. In the following passage, Mitchell draws on cultural theorist Fred Inglis to clarify what culture is and to pinpoint precisely why culture matters in social, spatial, historical, and political contexts:

> For cultural theorist Fred Inglis (1993: 38), culture "simply *is* the system of humanly expressive practices by which values are renewed, created, and contested." And in turn, "value" is "the name given to those fierce little concentrations of meaning in an action or state of affairs which fix them as good or important" (1993:11). The "relatively simple starting point" is therefore one of locating, naming, and describing the *conditions* under which "fierce little concentrations of

> meaning" are fixed as "good and important"; and that starting point must always be followed by the obvious question" "Good and important *for whom"* (2008, 71).

I have cited the above passage at length because Mitchell's attention to economic *value,* cultural *values* and the cultural conditions that fix meanings as good or important underlie much of my academic work and provide a durable template for critical analyses across multiple topics and disciplines. Whether questioning essentialized notions of disability, exploring the construction of national landscapes and identities of difference, or navigating the geopolitics of global development, the relative (and I would argue *not* so simple) starting point is to understand how particular structural and cultural conditions remain meaningful and why. Edward Said made an important observation about the relational dispersion of power in social systems where "culture… is to be found operating within civil society, where the influence of ideas, of institutions, and of other persons works not through domination but by what Gramsci calls consent" (1979, 7). Cultural geographer Pamela Shurmer-Smith has briefly summarized Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony as "the situation in which people subscribe to knowledge systems which are actually to the advantage of people with superior power and wealth, rather than striving for their own interest," (2002, 32). Simon During emphasized that hegemony is always unsettled and in his relational interpretation of Gramsci he argued that forces of hegemony "alter their content as social and cultural conditions change: they are improvised and negotiable, so that counter-hegemonic strategies must also be constantly revised" (During 1993, 5). Gramsci's theories of cultural hegemony and consent are critical to cultural studies projects because they destabilize and complicate where power is located in any given cultural or discursive production.

Gramsci reasoned that prevailing hegemonic structures do not coerce or force people to submit to dominant value systems, but rather those existing systems actively engage the spaces of culture to persuade society to consent and accept the status quo as a natural 'common sense' state of affairs. Foucault also believed power is not a strict top-down endeavor and according to Stuart Hall, Foucault in fact theorized power "circulates… it is deployed and exercised through a net-like organization… we are all, to some degree, caught up in its circulation" (2013, 34-35). If we then engage the theoretical perspective that we are all caught up in the circulation of power we have to also consider how as individuals we are implicated in cultural processes and practices. James Lull has situated mass-media as a key apparatus leveraged by the dominant class to "popularize [sic] their own philosophy, culture and morality" and he stressed that "mass-mediated ideologies are corroborated and strengthened by… taken for granted social practices that permeate every aspect of social life" (2011, 33). Stuart Hall also situated media as central sites where dominant (hegemonic) ideological meanings he defined as "representations of the social world, images, descriptions, explanations, and frames for understanding how the world is and why it works" (2011, 82) are produced, disseminated, and reproduced. Cultural and media analyst

Michael Pickering broadly defined cultural representations as those "words and images which stand in for various social groups and categories… ways of describing and at the same time of regarding and thinking about these groups and categories" (2001, xiii). Media platforms, news networks, popular entertainment, social media, magazines, journalism, advertising, documentaries and movies all perform a valuable role in the dispersion and persistence of representational meanings. For Mitchell, this process *is* cultural, culture is always political, and cultural representation is "'language'" or "text" or "discourse" - but it is also the social, material construction of such things as 'race', or 'gender'" (64), and I would add, multiplicities of difference such as disability. In their exploration of the politics of difference, Kosek et al. defined the analytics of cultural politics as "an approach that treats culture itself as a site of political struggle, an analytic emphasizing power, process, and practice," where cultural politics "forge communities, reproduce inequalities, and vindicate exclusions" (2003, 2). One key strategy for cultural practitioners then is to locate and break down the textual, image, mediated mechanisms and social circumstances of persuasion that influence how people come to value certain cultural meanings as a perfectly acceptable and unquestionably natural state of affairs. This intellectual labor is accomplished in part by analyzing the cultural discourses, regimes of representation, and strategies of expulsion that both produce and depend upon the marginalization of difference (the Other).

In my own scholarship, theories of relationality and relational geography (summarized in section three) bring necessary context to how the cultural politics of difference become relationally and culturally articulated in historical and spatial contexts. During believes cultural articulation is "perhaps the most sophisticated concept that emerged in cultural studies from its encounter with Gramsci and Foucault," and he defined the practice of cultural articulation as "the process within which particular discourses and images become bound to one another within particular institutional structures…to create conditions in which particular meanings…come to seem and feel proper, right, natural" (5). Kosek et al. described cultural articulation as "a means for understanding emergent assemblages of institutions, apparatuses, practices and discourses. Nodal points of intersection [that] give shape to formations that are reworked through historical agency rather than structurally determined" (2003, 4). Articulation then is a way of thinking through processes of "joining and enunciation" in which various actors' link 'nodal' characteristics from seemingly isolated discursive productions to establish a co-constituting politic of identity and difference (2-4). I apply cultural articulation as a relational concept and an analytical tool for pinpointing how nodal characteristics "become *articulated* together in particular historical moments" (3) to provoke the co-constituting politics of disability, national identity, and global and transnational development.

Cultural Discourse:

"Once accomplished, the discourse must then be translated—transformed, again—into social practices if the circuit is to be both completed and effective. If no 'meaning' is taken, there can be no 'consumption'. If the meaning is not articulated in practice, it has no effect"

Stuart Hall, 1993

Stuart Hall described Foucault's definition of cultural discourse as "a group of statements which provide knowledge about - a way of representing the knowledge about - a particular topic at a particular historical moment" (2013, 29). Hall also understood ideologies as those "images, concepts, and premises which provide the frameworks through which we represent, interpret, understand and 'make sense' of some aspect of social existence" (2011, 81) and he was profoundly interested in deconstructing the discourses, the *systems of representation*—the language, signals, signs, and broader cultural practices—that make ideologies meaningful within a discourse. The intellectual work of discourse analysis is to locate and question how representational mechanisms within the discursive system "are deployed in particular times in particular places" to define what is knowable, "relevant, useful and true" about a topic (2013, 29-33). In my work, I draw heavily from cultural discourse theory to uncover and explore how the discursive mechanisms of *myths*, *stereotyping*, and *othering* work together to naturalize and 'make sense' of forms of difference.

In the seminal text *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes refined the semiotic theories he introduced in his 1953 work "Writing Degree Zero," to develop a secondary semiological system he defined as "myth," "mythical speech" and "mythology" (1972, 218-233). Scholars have defined "Mythologies" as an early postcolonial work that challenged the colonizing frames of French Imperialism. Myths are discursive apparatuses, and, according to Barthes, "everything can be a myth, provided it is conveyed by discourse… it is not defined by the object of the message, but by the way in which it utters this message" (217). For Barthes, mythology is a type of speech and myth itself is "a second order semiological system" that has effectively taken over the literal denotational features of an image or representation and transformed it into the signifieds of a second linguistic system he defined as ideology. This second level of messaging functions at the "broader cultural level" (Hall, p. 24) where any literal interpretation of the object or images material features are appropriated by wider, historically written, cultural translations. This appropriation naturalizes the signified by hiding its historical significance (without erasing it altogether) and fixing its meaning as assumed, given, and 'true' in the eyes of the viewer/consumer. The duplicity of the signifier in "Mythologies" is a key theoretical concept that underscores how specific representational frames serve as both an example of the power (the ability to fix meaning) and a symbol of it (the myth of the representation) without any actual reference to human history or experience.

Barthes' writings offer an extremely rich set of analytical tools for deciphering how the ambiguous nature of meaning in myth making leaves the language system itself open to an interpretive distortion that has the potential to transform ambiguous definitions and categories into fixed and naturalized ideologies.

In his focus on stereotyping and the Other, Pickering integrated semiotic theories and cultural methods to explain how these "mutually complimenting" devices discursively operate as tools of "symbolic expulsion" to exclude those that fall outside of what constitutes as "normal safe and acceptable ways of being" (2001, 47-50). Pickering called for an "analytical conjunction" of these two critical concepts whereas "stereotypes are one-sided characterizations of others, and as a general process, stereotyping is a unilinear mode of representing them" (47). Stereotyping and othering are essential to how individuals come to situate their own sense of belonging within a cultural system. Pickering is in agreement with Hall that stereotyping *as a cultural process* operates to mark, 'fix' and 'other' difference through the accumulation of "sharply opposed, polarized binary extremes—good/bad, civilized/primitive—" (S. Hall 2013, 219). Much like mythologies, these binary extremes are highly ambiguous mechanisms that are both historically dependent and inherently vulnerable to ideological distortions. Homi K. Bhabha called for an "analytic of ambivalence" that questions how, as a feature of colonial discourse, the ambiguous stereotype "gives knowledge of difference and simultaneously disavows or masks it" (1993, 110). In the context of my own projects, ambiguity and distortion explain why subjectivities that are commonly represented and interpreted as threatening in particular geo-historical contexts are so easily appropriated as objects of benevolence and pity when political circumstances shift.

In conceptualizing the ambivalence of the stereotype, Bhabha pointed to the "continual and repetitive chain of other stereotypes" that uphold power over difference by creating vague categories that, through their lack of clarity and meaning, easily transfer across marginalized identities and geographies. This transference is made possible through the concept of 'inter-textuality,' defined by Hall as the "accumulation of meanings across different texts, where one image refers to another, or has its meaning altered by being 'read' in the context of other images" (2013, 221-222). For Bhabha, the subjectification of difference is "possible (and plausible)" through historical processes that attempt to fix universally accepted and difficult to counter ideas of difference. Bhabha called for a critical reading of the colonial discourses, the inter-textuality, and the "politicized means of representation" that sustain stereotypical constructions:

> "In order to understand the productivity of colonial power it is crucial to construct its regime of truth, not to subject representations to a normalizing judgement. Only then does it become possible to understand the *productive* ambivalence of the object of colonial discourse—that

> 'otherness' which is at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity" (1996, 97).

Bhabha's "analytic of ambivalence" looks beyond what is contained within the frame of a representation to trace the "apparatuses of power" that construct and sustain stereotypical meanings. Hall argued meaning itself is "highly ambiguous," that any given image or text has multiple potential interpretations, and that representational practice attempts to 'fix' and "intervene in its many potential meanings… in order to privilege one" (2013, 216-218). The labor of cultural studies is to interrogate this ambiguity, draw attention to its history and inter-textuality, and to intervene in those representational practices that reaffirm privileged and stereotypical interpretations of difference. For Pickering, this involves "keeping the diverse interactions between 'then' and 'now' in continual and active view of each other," (194) and to deeply contemplate the cultural conditions that brought a particular myth or stereotype into view in the first place. Bhabha has insisted that to accomplish this task, postcolonial approaches must do more than attempt to reverse the stereotype by drawing attention to its essentializing features; a practice that Bhabha argued will simply reaffirm its stereotypical meaning. Postcolonial scholars must instead aim to destabilize the power within the stereotype by deconstructing its genealogy and challenging the cultural conditions of its making. Pickering recommended "bringing cultural history and contemporary media/cultural studies into closer intellectual relationship" through methods that engage the correlations between historical frames and present-day cultural productions. In my own work, I frequently move back and forth between the historical archive and current day representational practices to "disrupt the ways in which such forms of representation as race or gender (or disability *my insertion)* are naturalised" (200).

Visual Cultural Studies

"*What is at stake in the contestation of the sensible is rarely the formal question of visual perception but the social organization and control that is mediated by it"*

(Mirzoeff, An Introduction to Visual Culture 1999, 5)

Visual Cultural Studies (VCS) attend to the material and technical construction of photographs, images and visual texts and VCS methodologies are specifically concerned with the social, historical, and cultural components that bring meaning to their construction. Barthes expressed frustration with visual theories that reduce "the problem of visual information to the problem of its *effects* [original emphasis,]" and he argued that while the "the image can transform the psyche… it can also signify it" (1961, 45). VCS approaches consider not only how consumers/spectators/viewers receive images, but perhaps more significantly, what the construction of the image suggests about those that produce, and reproduce, ideological meanings. For Hall, cultural studies must analyze the "constitutive and political nature of

representation itself, about its complexities, about the effects of language, about textuality as a site of life and death" (2007, 43). VCS practitioners approach the idea of representation "as a concept and a *practice* (my emphasis) (S. Hall 2013, 216)" and this relatively new discipline offers a concrete set of theories and methods for decoding the literal and the connotational meaning(s) of cultural objects. Nicholas Mirzoeff, has distinguished VCS as a unique "endeavor to create a decolonial genealogy" of the many contradictory ways cultures and events are visually constructed. According to Mirzoeff, VCS epistemology "compares the means by which cultures visualize themselves in forms ranging from the imagination to the encounters between people and visualized media" (1999, 1). Mirzoeff describes VCS methodologies as postcolonial and comparative in nature with a primary focus on the histories, social, and political conditions embedded in a cultural object or event (1999, 2-16). While Mirzoeff draws on theories of situated knowledge, convergence culture, postcolonialism and additional critical theories, he also conceptualized a new disciplinary terrain that differentiates the key concepts of *vision*, *visualization* and *visuality* from their traditional material and sensory interpretations:

> "Vision is not the terrain of visual cultural studies until vision becomes visuality. Visualizing is not simply the production of objects that are visible. Nor is all vision visuality. Visuality is that which renders the processes of History visible to power" (1999, 5).

While VCS *is* interested in what is immediately viewable in the frame of an artifact, cultural theorists Mieke Bal contends the significance of their meaning must be traced through their "social and historical formation as impure *'visual events'* that stimulate multiple sensory experiences" (2003, 9). For Bal, it is *visuality* not the object itself that is the object domain of visual cultural studies and Gillian Rose has argued that the domain of visuality encompasses "the social practices through which specific visual objects become meaningful" (2014, 26). Visuality is a performative concept that stimulates emotion, conjures judgement, erases history, and reinstates particular assumptions in the spectator's imagination. The analytic of visualization looks for both the presences *and* absences in the image or text while it also "visualizes conflict" through modes of comparison between the historical and contemporary structures that articulate "the very nature of visuality as the visualizing of history" (Mirzoeff, 6-11). Visualization then, for VCS, is a method for theorizing how social conditions and representational strategies uphold an objects "ability to sustain a narrative within a single frame" (Mirzoeff, 91). Bal draws on Appadurai's theories of materiality, literary scholar Ernst van Alphen's ideas regarding the visual nature of written texts and Foucault's 'look of the knowing subject' in her discussion surrounding the relationship between the social construction of visual objects and 'acts of looking' as a "scopic or visual regime" she defines as visuality (2003, 10-18). Bal situates VCS as an emerging interdisciplinary movement that strives to make sense of the relationships between viewer and the viewed, what is seen and unseen and what is ultimately made visible or hidden by the performance of visuality. For research and pedagogy concerned with

locating the ways in which power reinserts itself through mediated and cultural processes, VCS affords a deeper critique and "the right to look" through comparative methods that take on the many conditions submerged within the production of a cultural object.

Disability Studies Frameworks

The American Social Model: A Brief Introduction

> *"In recent decades, historians and other scholars in the humanities have studied intensely and often challenged the ostensibly rational explanations for inequalities based on identity—in particular, gender, race and ethnicity. Disability, however, one of the most prevalent justifications for inequality in history, has rarely been the subject of… inquiry"*
>
> D. Baynton, Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History, 2013, p.17)

Disability activists, academics, and allies constructed the American social model of disability in the early 1980s to redefine disability identity and to counter dominant medical and public interpretations of disability as impairment. Generally speaking, the social model of disability sought to distinguish impairment from disability, frame disability as a culturally and historically specific construction, define disability as relationally constituted through disabling environments and social oppression, and to cultivate a disability rights movement that was centered on civil rights and justice rather than charity and pity discourses (Shakespeare 2013). Feminist and Disability Studies scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thomson has championed early disability studies efforts to develop a new social model based on civil rights and social justice that she argues both deepened and complicated critical identity studies. Garland-Thomson's contributions to the discipline of disability studies are foundational and she has remained a strong advocate for a feminist approach to disability that seeks to question the intersectional nature of identity politics that, as she argued in 2002, "feminist theory has been grappling with for years" (R. Garland-Thomson 2011).

Feminist Geographies & Disability Studies

> *"Understanding feminist disability studies as simply a combination of feminism and disability studies dulls its critical edge and lessens its potential to intervene in theoretical and social transformation"*
>
> Kim Q. Hall, Reimagining Disability and Gender through Feminist Studies, 2011, p. 1

Critical disability feminists have struggled to reconcile that, with all of its dialogue of situated and experiential knowledge, feminist studies has remained largely silent in regard to social justice issues and the situated experiences of disabled women, and particularly in the area of their reproductive rights. Sharon Lamp and W. Carol Cleigh have taken a particularly harsh view of feminist frames that they claim have "remained aloof… [and] seemingly abandoned disabled women" (Lamp and Cleigh 2011) from the

sterilization of feebleminded women during the eugenics period to more contemporary political debates over reproductive rights. Critical disability studies and feminist geographies are uniquely suited for exploring ideologies of difference and for what feminist geographer L.C. Johnson has identified as "documenting and challenging the complex ways in which oppressive social relations are constructed" (2009, 48). In "Feminist Disability Studies," Kim Q. Hall suggests disability studies "like the gendered or disabled body, is more than a sum of its parts" (2011, 1) and uncovering how oppression operates across history, geographies and cultures requires a fuller exploration of the intersecting categories of disability, race, class, gender, ethnicity and sexuality.

Rosemarie Garland-Thomson argues "disability studies can benefit from feminist theory, and feminist theory can benefit from disability studies" (2013, 16), and a starting point for locating how these two critical approaches inform, influence and complement one another is what Johnson framed as the "discursive and cultural turn in feminist geographies" (2009, 48) that emerged in the 1990s. This shift engendered new feminist understandings that approach gender as relational, gender division as spatially located and that question how dominant systems devalue, exploit and regulate multiplicities of difference. Dislocating power and the impulse to enact political and social change are core motivating factors for feminist geographers and engaging situated knowledge is a defining feature of the discipline. Locating how cultures define, value, construct and bind identities of difference is central to my own analytical approach and feminist geographies are essential for deconstructing the multiple and at times contradictory ideologies that mutually-inform disability topics. Kim Q. Hall argues feminist disability studies "makes the body, bodily variety, and normalization central to the analysis of all forms of oppression" (2011, 6) and this approach to bodily difference is fundamental for understanding how and why cultural agents and consumers consistently envision a so-called abnormal or improperly developed 'body variety.'

Postcolonial Disability Studies

> *"Disability issues still struggle to infiltrate into the development agenda and postcolonial theory work, marking a significant exclusion of critical disability studies analysis that examines the social, cultural, economic and political relational dimensions."*
>
> Tsitsi Chataika, Disability, Development and Postcolonialism, 2012, p. 252

Homi Bhabha has defined the postcolonial perspective and the study of the 'problematic of colonial migration" (1996, 54) as a mode of analysis that "attempts to revise those nationalist or 'nativist' pedagogies that set up the relation of 'Third World' and 'First World' in a binary structure of opposition" (1993, 248). Postcolonial disability studies explicitly argues for postcolonial critiques that draw on globally Southern epistemologies to question the social and material construction of disability as a contemporary colonizing project. This approach to disability places analytical emphasis on the historical

significance of colonial encounters in the global south and the material and embodied consequences that colonialism imposed, and continues to impose, on disability experiences (Barker and Murray 2013, Chataika, T. 2012, Grech, 2012 and Conell R. 2011). Postcolonial disability studies and feminist Tsitsi Chataika has argued that colonialism "cannot be shed like the skin of a snake and then tossed away and forgotten" and she has called out epistemologies from the global north as some of the countless remnants of colonialism that remain a potent factor in formerly occupied global geographies. Chataika is critical of generalized disability models that either engages disability as constructed by disabling social, political and economic environments and/or as a biological and medicalized marker of deficiency. In her critical analysis of "the political struggle in the disability, development and postcolonial discourse," Chataika challenges global development strategies that rely on northern models of disability to impose universal definitions and contexts onto individuals and populations located in the Global South. Cultural research and critical pedagogy strictly committed to the American and western social model has the potential to exclude the actual historical, material and embodied experiences of disabled people, while medical practitioners intent on marking disability as a biological deficiency "become romantic and blinkered by their own enthusiasm of bringing development to the [Global South]." In her response to the "vocabulary of charity, technical expertise, and deep paternalism," Chataika calls for development research strategies that do not ignore, and in fact privilege, the lived realities and political histories situated in so called 'formerly' occupied geographies (2012, 254-256).

Critical postcolonial and disability scholar Shaun Grech also places analytical emphasis on the historical significance of the histories of colonialism and disability in the global south and he has explored how these encounters have influenced neoliberal and global development agendas. Grech contends that the consistent application of the Western European and North American models of disability ultimately constitutes what he terms a "neocolonising of the Southern Space" that delegitimizes human contexts, cultures and localized knowledge (2012, 53). For Grech, racism and racial exploitation are central to the colonial encounter and these ideologies resonate throughout neoliberal global development agendas. Contemporary frames of deficiency and defectiveness have deep roots in colonialist practice and Grech argues that disabled people continue to endure the consequence of colonial actions that are stubbornly present in modern day neoliberal environments (2012, 52-55). Grech calls for critical postcolonial disabilities scholarship that draws out colonial history while remaining focused on making "present and credible, suppressed, marginalized and disaccredited knowledges… by critical Southern thinkers" (2012, 55). Grech is in agreement with postcolonial disabilities scholars that the consistent application of the Western European and North American 'social model' of disability lacks critical concern for contexts, cultures and localized knowledge and that this absence ultimately supports a "neocolonising of the Southern Space." (p. 52). However, Grech moves beyond the postcolonial project

by insisting that any investigation of Southern spaces and bodies must also consider history as one of the primary sites of interest. History is about power and colonial power plays a significant role in the lives and experiences in all globally Southern regions. For Grech, racism and racial exploitation are central to the colonial encounter and he stresses that these ideologies resonate throughout the neoliberal agenda today. Contemporary disability ideologies of abnormacly, deficiency and defectiveness are deeply rooted in colonialism and Grech argues that disabled people in the Global South continue to live in conditions produced by colonial ideologies that are stubbornly present in modern day capital and neoliberal discourses. While the focus on the social model is a productive means for questioning disabling physical environments and social policies, primarily in Northern contexts, any specific focus on history, culture and geography is limited.

Historian and disability scholar Douglas Baynton has criticized the absence of disability inquiry in history, citizenship, and immigration analysis and disability scholars are calling for intersectional epistemologies that attend to disability as a potent signifier *across* difference. The exploitation of disability plays a recurring and rarely deliberated role in the aesthetics of pity, fear and nationalism; whether summoned to incite the benevolent supremacy of a nation or to justify the expulsion of so-called undesirable identities of difference, leveraging disability is a powerful and nearly universally accepted relational strategy that travels across space, place, history and subjectivities. Stewart Murray and Clare Barker believe that "Disability Studies has the potential to make a more urgent intervention into contemporary Postcolonial studies and vice versa" (2013, 61) and they have expressed concern over disability studies limited interest in global politics, and postcolonial tendencies to undermine disability through metaphoric representations and universal definitions. The authors propose a theoretical model that would adapt "the most significant theoretical contributions" from each discipline to establish an integrated critical postcolonial disability studies that will ultimately "foster productive exchanges" (2013, 63) between the two critical fields.

Murray and Barker engage Edward Said's later postcolonial works in humanism and participatory citizenship to construct a theoretical intervention that shifts away from western centric social models of disability. They recommend paying critical attention to feminist theories of situated experience, cultural studies approaches to the construction of difference, and an appreciation for localized knowledge and postcolonial experience in disability research. These critical theorists enter into critical discussions about the intersections of disability, race, gender and cultural difference, and question the "relatively privileged" nature of the social model of disability. Nirmala Erevelles observed a troubling absence of scholarship in "the otherwise radical scholarship of both feminist disability studies and third world feminism" (2006, 117) that was interested in exploring the material and embodied links between war, poverty, gender, global development and disability experiences.

In this sense, the social concept of disability is insufficient for theorizing how chronic poverty, trauma, mass displacement, war and natural disasters can shift the disabled narrative from one of minority identity into the numerical majority population. Australian Sociologist Raewyn Connell draws on her conceptualization of *social embodiment* as a "collective, reflexive process that embroils bodies in social dynamics" (2011, 1369-1371) to call for a postcolonial critical disability studies agenda that includes 'southern theory' and the embodied experiences of the colonized. Conell situates the formation of the social constructionist model of disability alongside feminism, cultural studies, sociology, technology studies and additional 'global metropole' driven disciplines that sought to challenge the biomedical model and to understand how social and political discourses define, value and categorize bodies and shape embodied experiences. While in stark contrast to the biomedical categorization of disabled bodies as impaired, unworthy and disposable, Connell argues that imposing the social model onto the Global South, with its focus on social conditions and its exclusion of the physical and material features of impairment, is equally problematic. For Connell, biology and society "cannot be held apart" and social embodiment is a way to conceptualize bodies as material physical objects while recognizing they also perform and exist within social spaces and historical processes.

Postcolonial disability scholars agree that practitioners with a sole focus on the social model have a tendency to ignore the harsh realities experienced by people with disabilities in the Global South, and they also critique the discipline of disability studies as particularly resistant to disabling features in colonial contexts. Postcolonial disability scholarship pays close attention to the colonial histories that resonate through contemporary disabling projects in the global south and I believe theories specific to the discipline of postcolonial disability studies provide an effective means for exploring critical questions about the exploitation of disability as a nationalist project in the United States.

Transnational Disability Studies & Crip Theory

Disability needs to be recognised as a central power differential… it also needs to be understood as one of the ideological tools of what Mignolo terms 'global coloniality', which is the reproduction of the power imbalance between the Global North and the Global South and between the global West/East.

Kolářová and Wiedlack, Crip Notes on the Idea of Development, 2016, p.1

Disability scholars and Crip activists Kolářová and Wiedlack have questioned the critical silences in postcolonial and global development literatures and they in fact believe that "overlooking disability in the intersectional equation reinforces persistent epistemic coloniality… [that] undermine[s] the critique of much current post-and de-colonial work" (2016, 126). Erevelles also made note of an apparent disconnect between feminist disabilities discourses that have widely criticized the absence of disability in feminist projects while limiting their own attention to transnational constructions of race and disability. Erevelles

explains that there are multiplicities of 'difference' that are absent in internationally focused feminist disability projects and "while feminist disability studies have effectively critiqued the category of "women" upheld by mainstream feminism… it falls prey to its own critique of normativity by failing to serious engage "difference" along the axes of race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and nationality." Erevelles offers her own "*transnational feminist disability studies perspective*" (original emphasis) to address these deficiencies and she explicitly attends to "the material constraints that give rise to the oppressive binary of self/other, normal/abnormal, able/disabled, us/them" discourses (2011, 116-126). This characterization of intersectional and representational politics and the materiality of difference will provide substantial guidance for understanding and explaining national and transnational contexts that frame developmental and intellectual disabilities:

> "By *materiality* (original emphasis) I mean the actual historical, social, and economic conditions that influence (disabled) people's lives, conditions further mediated by race, ethnic, gender, class, and sexual politics" (Erevelles 2011, 119).

In the critical essay "The Eugenic Atlantic: race, disability, and the making of an international Eugenic science: 1800-1945," Mitchell and Snyder re-imagine Gilroy's notion of the Black Atlantic to "analyse disability and race as mutual projects of human exclusion" (2003, 844). The Eugenic Atlantic seeks to "fold disability into this cross national-equation" and the essay draws much needed attention to the erasure of disability history and the "truly trans-Atlantic affair" of American and European eugenics in western systems of education (843-845). Mitchell and Snyder's provocative work underscores that "while fears of racial, sexual and gendered 'weakness' served as the spokes of this belief system, disability… functioned as the hub that gave the entire edifice its cross-cultural utility." This emphasis on European and American eugenics as a "mutual project of human exclusion" and the "failure of western education systems to engage with a thorough-going analysis of beliefs about disability" remain substantial concerns in all of my pedagogical pursuits (2003, 843-846). Mitchell and Snyder's Eugenic Atlantic can be applied in multiple contexts as a method for thinking through how models and discourses of disability travel through histories and national borders, and, for addressing the persistence of ableist thought in academic and political contexts.

Kolářová and Wiedlack draw on postcolonial geographies, cultural studies, critical disability studies and Crip development theory to explore how global development "utilizes and leans against disability, race, gender, caste, social status, hierarchical notions of 'difference'" to construct a fantasy of development that promotes the continued colonization of disabled and racialized communities, individuals and cultures (2016, 125). As Guest Editors for the recent collaborative works published in *Journal Somatechnics Cripping Development*, Kolářová and Wiedlack introduce the editions central question: "how does the optimism of the ideology of development betray the very people that in theory

are supposed to benefit from it." The authors enter into the critical debate that surrounds the 'undying myth of development' that is foundational to the belief that development can and will eliminate global poverty. *Cripping Development* draws on multiple disciplines including postcolonial geographies, cultural studies, critical disability studies, Crip development theory, queer studies and postmodern thought to explore how development discourse "utilizes and leans against" disability, race, gender and other forms of difference to construct a fantasy that promotes the continued colonization of disabled and racialized communities, individuals and cultures. Similar to Douglas Baynton's theories regarding the political and social implementation of negative signifiers of disability to justify other forms of discrimination in the United States, *Cripping Development* foregrounds ideologies of 'normalcy' and "compulsory sameness" in its critique of global development's universal mission to normalize and develop bodies, minds, geographies and cultures of difference. The editors point to a new "Crip criticism" to illustrate how "the rationale of development is oftentimes upheld by disability and its interarticulations with race, indigeneity, class, gender and sexuality, and caste," (p. 130) and they caution against development agenda's that make no attempt to reconcile 'the shadow' of colonial power and *universalized* definitions and models of disability. *Cripping Development* raises insightful questions about the geopolitics of disability in neocolonial contexts and they complicate the "undying myth of development" that underpins the unproven ideological view that global development projects will eliminate global poverty. Much like the transnational postcolonial approaches, these authors contest disability and poverty studies frameworks that make no attempt to reconcile "the shadow of colonial power" or question universalized definitions and models of disability (2016, 130). Disability is a core discursive tool in the maintenance of ongoing power disparities between the north and the south and when deployed as a politicized mechanism, internationalized rhetorics reinforce what Walter Mignolo has defined as "global coloniality" (cited in Kolářová & Wiedlack, p. 126, 2016). Integrating transnational and Crip development theory, postcolonial disability frames, and theories in relational and spatial geography will help me to establish how the "shadow of colonial power" is implicated in contemporary practices.

Cultural and Relational Geographies

"If space is a product of practices, trajectories, interrelations, if we make space through interactions at all levels, from the (so-called) local to the (so-called) global, then those spatial identities such as places, regions, nations, and the local and the global, must be forged in this relational way too, as internally complex, essentially unboundable in any absolute sense, and inevitably historically changing."

(Massey, Geographies of Responsibility 2004).

Don Mitchell's theories on the relational features of social and national identity formation demonstrate how individuals within the borders of a nation adhere to "a particular kind of *identification* [original emphasis] with the "national… defined by one's relation to the (social) state… whereas national identity is related to the formation of certain kinds of individuals" (2008, 270). For Mitchell, geography "is structured in fights—culture wars—over inclusion and exclusion, over the making or shaping of boundaries around race, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality and over defining who constitutes part of the group. Geography is structured precisely by the question: Who has the *right* to space" (2008, 288). Geographer Doreen Massey also placed ontological emphasis on the relational characteristics that underlie the formation of social and spatial identities and she agreed with postcolonial approaches that recognize social identities are "in one way or another… forged in and through relations (which include non-relations, absences and hiatuses)… not rooted or static, but mutable ongoing productions." (2004, 5). Thinking space relationally provides an analytical approach to study how historically situated events like race purity movements of the early 1900s became instrumental in forging the United States' sense of national identity based on the relative developed status of the individual's living within its borders, and in turn, how the U.S. came to express this collective identity transnationally. While thinking space relationally provides a theoretical space for addressing local autonomies in global development agendas, Massey was also concerned with the transnational implications and she addressed the potentialities involved in global and regional identity construction in her essay "Geographies of Responsibility," cited below at length for clarity:

> "Rethinking a politics of place, or nation, is an emotionally charged issue… The aim initially was to combat localist or nationalist claims to place based on eternal, essential, and in consequence exclusive, characteristics of belonging… However, there is also a second geography implied in the relational construction of identity. For a global sense of place means that any nation, region, city, as well as being internally multiple, is also a product of relations which *spread out beyond it* [my emphases]" (2004, 6).

Massey's "persistent ruminations" (Massey 2015) on the relational nature of space have inspired an alternate view that conceptualizes space not as bounded by strictly localized material borders but also as "constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny" (2015, 20-22). Grech has drawn attention to these relational and spatial geopolitical crossings in transnational discourses of disability and global development and he has argued that "understanding the disability narrative in the global south means (re)positioning it and understanding it as a *global historical narrative* (original emphasis)" (cited in Kolářová & Wiedlack, p. 132, 2016). Grech is calling for a correction in the "evasive imaginations" that Massey has identified in social, political, and public ways of thinking about space and

spatial relationships. In the first, "*to turn space into time, geography into history,"* Massey draws attention to "modernist grand narratives such as that of Progress or that of Modes of production," where "the whole uneven geography of the world is effectively reorganised (imaginatively) into a historical que… a turning of geography into history itself" (Massey 2006, 90). Northern practitioners in the fields of global humanitarianism and charity have been particularly adept at leveraging oppressive misinterpretations of disability, and intellectual and developmental disability in particular, to bolster the 'grand narrative' of progress and permanently fix northern geographies and cultures at the head of the historical queue. This "rendering multiple histories into one trajectory" is reminiscent of Chataika's metaphorical colonial snakeskin; those that are proficient at writing 'geography as history' also maintain the power to 'shed' the historical and geopolitical context in which the story is told. In Massey's second evasive strategy is "*thinking of space as a surface*" (original emphasis) space is conceived as an immobile, static, distinctly final, material and temporally *grounded* formation that is "assumed to be equivalent to the landscape 'out there', the surface of the earth and sea that stretches out around us" (2006, 91). Massey gestured at narratives of the "classically colonial… voyages of discovery," to illustrate this conceptualization of space where northern explorers travel across distant spaces to discover new landscapes, geographies, and people. These stories envision that those 'discovered' are "located on this spatial surface which has been crossed, implicitly awaiting the arrival of the voyager," (2006, 92) void of agency, culture or experience. Reimaging the multiplicities involved in the construction of space, place and identity help re-imagine how America's early twentieth century construction of the improperly developed feebleminded subject became a co-constituting product of relations that, in Massey's terms, "spread out beyond" the national borders in ways that have profoundly influenced the geographic spaces and subjectivities of global development.

Critical geographer Rob Kitchin suggests "conceptions of disability are rooted in specific sociospatial and temporal structures [that] form, sustain and perpetuate stereotypes which underlie many exclusionary practices" and these structurally formed stereotypes are "enshrined within the maintenance of the dominant ideology" (2000, 356). Geographers Edward Hall and Robin Kearns have analyzed the lack of scholarly interest in topics in intellectual and developmental disabilities and they have argued that the social model's focus on physical impairment and socially constructed environmental barriers is at least in part to blame. In their studies, Hall and Kearns came to the conclusion that while those with intellectual disabilities continue to face social and environmental barriers, "the mind and mental difference has been largely excluded from the social model of disability, the model has tended to speak for *all* disabled people" (2001, 242). Highlighting this invisibility in disability theory is of particular interest in my work and "opening space in geography for intellectual disability" (241) is vital to my

argument that derogatory representations of developmental and intellectual disabilities are the primary signifiers used to mark, categorize and exclude intersecting identities of difference.

In their discussion regarding geographic scale and disability politics, Kitchin and Wilton ask, “at what scales are political (state) decisions made that impact the lives of disabled people” (2003, 98). This conceptualization of the political construction of scale and Kitchin and Wilton’s contention that “particular scales become constituted and transformed in response to sociospatial dynamics” (p. 98) draws attention to how the generalized meanings and abstract categories within a discursive production gain or lose value as they shift spatially or geographically. While Kitchin and Wilton attend to the politics of scale and disability in contemporary moments, I engage the spatial political concept they describe as “jumping scale—whereby political claims and power established at one geographical scale can be expanded to another” (p. 98) to question how specific developmental and intellectual disability categories have travelled throughout temporal/spatial locations. In an earlier study concerning the organization of material space and disability activism, Kitchin draws from Young's “Justice and the Politics of Difference” to explain the role of space in “reproducing and maintaining the process of power and exclusion” (2003, 344) to clarify how relationships between disabled populations, society and mechanisms of power operate to reinforce marginalizing practices. In addition to the material and relational organization of space and the constriction of spatial and embodied movement, Kitchin draws on Barthes notion of popularized myths and Hall’s representational theories to argue that stereotypical assumptions about disability “lead to distinct spatialities with the creation of landscapes of exclusion” (p. 351).

Thinking space relationally has influenced how postcolonial geographers theorize the politics of space, place and identities of difference and relational theories provide a more fluid way to work through the intricate relationship between a nation, its material boundaries, culture, history, and social body and the cultural mechanisms it draws on (or ignores) in the forging of its imagined identity. I believe that theories in relational geography can help to explain why and how localized perspectives, like the emergence of the feebleminded threat the early 1900s U.S., become relevant common sense knowledge in national and transnational contexts. Mitchell was clear that national identity “is related to the formation of certain kinds of individuals” (270) and my own work is keenly interested in questioning whether it is plausible or possible for the U.S. to put forth a self-narrative of strength and superiority that is not contingent upon marginalized categories of improperly developed individuals, cultures, or geographies.

Nationalism: Theories and Epistemologies

"It is the emergence of the interstices—the overlap and displacement of domains of difference—that the intersubjective and collective experience of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated"

(Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture, 1994)

While ample research has traced pejorative and racialized descriptions of the 'Other' that extend to the fifteenth-century this project will show that as the U.S. settled into progressive politics, modernity, capitalism and the new era of social science in the early-twentieth century the national focus shifted to novel metrics of normalcy, productivity, and the proper intellectual development of all Americans. I approach nationalism as "organizing and energizing force" (D. Mitchell, 272) shaped by spatial, temporal, material, and cultural relations and as a "discursive formation" that "grows in relationship to other political cultural and ethnic projects" (Calhoun 2006, 7). Political scientist Benedict Anderson proposed his definition of the nation as an 'imagined community,' whereas the nation is "*imagined* because the members… will never know most of their fellow-members… yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (1983, 24). Pickering extended Anderson's 'imagined community' into the realm of the spatial when he argued that that national identity, primarily in its modern and western form, is also an imagined territory "that has become collectively revered, exalted, even sacralised as a historic homeland." (2001, 85).

Culture, media and representation play a significant role in how individuals come to imagine their 'shared communion' with the national membership and the collective consumption of mass-media, press, and communication technologies greatly influence how they situate their own sense of belonging as "good and decent people" within the broader construct of the imagined homeland. Fousek believes that if the nation is indeed an imagined community, place, and territory, it is also discursively "imagined through public culture… in print, on the airwaves, and in the meeting hall. (Fousek 2000, 8). Broadly speaking, nationality and nationalism function through a culturally mediated and politically organized characteristic of belonging that necessitates "keeping in public view its negative counterpart of not belonging" (Pickering 2001, 107) and this is narrative of inclusion is accomplished in part by maintaining a stereotypical image of dangerous 'Others' across time, place, and mediated platforms.

Nationalism, as a culturally produced phenomenon, has the power to categorize what kinds of people, things, ideas fit the 'authentic' character of the nation, and the classification of difference for exclusionary purposes is necessary to this process. Nationalism then, as Don Mitchell points out, "tends to incorporate inequality… right at its center" (273). Pickering has traced "the concepts of both stereotyping and the Other… to questions of power and authority in the contexts of nation-building, colonialism and imperialism" (2001, xii) and he has emphasized the historical deployment of the

'stereotypical Other' in "processes associated with building a national identity and nationalist sense of belonging," (49). As a discursive production, nationalism is "simultaneously a way of constructing groups and a normative claim," (Calhoun, 27) "tells people who they are and who belongs," (Doyle and Pamplona 2006, 9) and "is a style of thought about identity, loyalty, and solidarity that values nation above all other sources or objects of identity" (Fousek, 18). Mitchell has argued that nationalism "organizes the masses around the idea of a space to be defended, a space that is the very embodiment of national sovereignty," (2008, 272). Defining what constitutes a 'space to be defended' is largely dependent on the social, cultural, and spatial interactions that contribute to how the masses envision the national collective identity.

Nationality and national identity are culturally produced concepts and Anderson proposed nationalism itself must be "understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the *large cultural systems* (my emphasis) that preceded it" (Anderson 1983, 29). American sociologist and disability studies scholar Allison C. Carey performed an in-depth analysis of the 'large cultural systems' that governed the civil rights of individuals categorized as intellectually or developmentally disabled in the early twentieth-century. Carey found this was a "time of great social dislocation" when increased immigration, shifting gender roles, growing economic inequalities and rising racial tensions set the political stage for multiple actors to push to restrict or even eliminate the basic civil rights of those categorized as feebleminded or mentally unfit" (2010, 52-60). Historian Gary Gerstle is also interested in the histories of racial and civic nationalism in the United States and he has studied the cultural links, shared meanings, and overlapping processes that shaped both early-twentieth century isolationist border policies and white purity discourses that sought to constrain the civil rights of African American, Indigenous, and ethnic populations *within* the national borders. Gerstle makes an important point about the near inseparability of these formations and he in fact anchors much of his writing to the notion that "civic and racial nationalism mutually constituted the ideological foundation of the U.S. nation at its very origins," (2006, 273). Gerstle differentiates the 'civic' and 'racial' domains in the passage that follows:

> "civic nationalism signified a desire to construct a polity and a people on an egalitarian and democratic foundation… and racial nationalism…expressed a sense of peoplehood grounded in common blood and skin color and an inherited fitness for self-government" (273).

In the United States, civic and racial nationalism are "contradictory but coexisting ideologies" (Gerstle 2006, 272-304) that profoundly influenced how the body politic envisions its collective identity both from within its borders and in global contexts. In his historical analysis of disability and citizenship histories in the United States, Douglas Baynton found "disability was a significant factor in the three great citizenship

debates of the nineteenth and twentieth century" (2013, 33). Negative signifiers of disability have functioned as powerful and effective markers for stereotyping race, gender, ethnicity and identities of difference throughout U.S. history. Baynton documented this largely unexamined practice in his analysis of three early twentieth-century historical moments in the United States; The Great Immigration Debates; Women's Suffrage; and the African American Civil Rights Movement. While Baynton's work does note a multiplicity of disability categories as markers for exclusionary systems of oppression, he points to pejorative interpretations of feeblemindedness as a particularly stubborn and an ambiguous marker of that was widely leveraged to delegitimize race, gender, ethnic and religious difference. Furthermore, Baynton also found that while there was widespread agreement at that restricting liberties of all feebleminded individuals was sound policy; there existed an equally strong public consensus that it was reasonable to apply ambiguous *categories* and descriptions of feeblemindedness onto Indigenous, African American, immigrant and female populations. Feeblemindedness was represented as a "synonym of human inefficiency and one of the great sources of human wretchedness and degradation," (Fernald, 1912, 3) and feminists, immigrant populations and civil rights activists fought against—and simultaneously reified—feebleminded and intellectual disability stereotypes that were culturally an institutionally deployed to rationalize *their* exclusion from full citizenship. Baynton's extensive research has demonstrated that "when categories of citizenship were questioned, challenged, and disrupted, disability was called on to clarify and define who deserved, and who was deservedly excluded from, citizenship" (2013, 17).

Baynton situates U.S. Progressive Era's politics of 'normality' as an ideological concept that developed alongside the science of statistics and ultimately displaced conservative notions of godly and 'natural' ways of being. This significant development paved the way for progressive methods that set a standard of evolutionary development centered on the predominantly white male heterosexual and 'able' bodied citizen. Binaries regarding the normal/abnormal body were essential to nationalist frames and Baynton provides documentary evidence that effectively illustrates the U.S. Immigration Acts of 1882 and 1907 designated as their first categories of refusal the feebleminded, idiot, imbecile and lunatic classes to refuse so called 'undesirable' ethic and racial groups. While Baynton relies heavily on disability as the primary signifier for exclusion with limited reference to blind and epileptic populations, his strongest evidence points to developmental disability as one primary category that institutional and governmental agencies leveraged to delegitimize multiplicities of difference. Baynton's attention to these key moments in U.S. history demonstrates how Progressive Era discourses of normality that emerged alongside the later part of the Industrial Revolution became stubbornly embedded into historical discourses of "nationality, race, gender, criminality, sexual orientation, and so on" (p.3).

Conclusion:

"Representation is a complex business and, especially when dealing with 'difference,' it engages feelings, attitudes and emotions and it mobilizes fear and anxieties in the viewer, at deeper levels than we can explain in a simple common sense way. This is why we need theories—to deepen our analysis."

(S. Hall, Representation 2013, 216).

Representation is a complex and consequential business and the very act of looking at—and pointing to—the cultural production of difference risks reinforcing the very essentialisms that my scholarship intentionally questions. Bhabha has warned that "to reconstitute the discourse of cultural difference demands not simply a change of cultural contents and symbols; a replacement within the same time-frame of representation is never adequate… it requires a radical revision of the social temporality… the re-articulation of the 'sign' in which cultural identities may be inscribed" (246). I recognize there is a real concern that bringing attention to frames of "subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement," (246) and multiplicities of difference can potentially reaffirm the cultural and historical conditions of their making. The epistemologies and ontologies that I have outlined in this field statement compliment and inform my own epistemological efforts to call out, while not re-establishing, universal interpretations of difference. The lens' of representational and cultural theory and visual cultural studies methods allow me to expand beyond a simple analysis of the immediately visible and material features of a cultural artifact by identifying my object of analysis as the *discursive processes* and cultural conditions that surround the construction and dispersion of difference. I apply theoretical strategies in cultural geography that have interpreted "the relational nature of space… [and] the relational construction of the identity of place" (Massey 2004, 5) to explore the mutually informing relationships that construct ideologies of difference *within* the United States to maintain a specific vision of national identity and the discourses that impose these American values in transnational contexts. Postcolonial disability perspectives make a compelling case that "all social hierarchies have drawn on culturally constructed and socially sanctioned notions of disability," (Baynton 2013, 17) and I pay particular attention to critical ontologies in postcolonial disability and Crip Studies that foreground disability as "'interarticulated' with other categories that hierarchically organise notions of human worth" (Kolářová and Wiedlack 2016, 125-127). Working together, the theories outlined in this field statement advance a greater appreciation for the significant costs our representational practices impose on diverse forms of difference.

Representation matters and representational politics influence social understandings, reinforce inequalities and at times justify exploitive and abusive practices; however, Hall reminded us that "representation is not a closed system" (2013, p. 224) and those dominant discourses that generate repressive ideologies also create the precise conditions necessary for social justice movements to

appear and even flourish. Cultural Geographer Don Mitchell has argued that representational politics are embedded in the ways "representations themselves take on a circulatory life of their own" and he points out that "cultural industries have a lot to say about the conditions of their own choosing" (147). My ultimate goal is to produce research and teaching projects that generate new intellectual spaces for scholars, the public and cultural industries to engage in cross-cultural dialogues that re-imagine how we write, represent and interpret multiplicities of difference.

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