Introduction

Review of Disability Studies (RDS)
Deep Impact: Pacific Rim Forum
Katie Aubrecht, PhD, Associate Editor for Forums

The International Pacific Rim Conference (Pac Rim) on Disability & Diversity, held annually in Honolulu, Hawaii, has been widely recognized over the past 30 years as one of the most diverse gatherings in the world. The event encourages and respects voices from diverse perspective across numerous areas, including: voices from persons representing various disability areas; experiences of family members and supporters across various disability areas; responsiveness to diverse cultural and language differences; evidence of researchers and academics studying disability; stories of persons providing powerful lessons; examples of program providers, natural supports and allies of persons with disabilities; and, action plans to meet human and social needs in a globalized world.

This RDS Forum represents a sampling of outstanding disability studies presentations from the 2015 Pac Rim Conference, themed "Deep Impact." The 2016 conference, " From the Margins to the Center", will be held at the Hawaii Convention Center on April 25th and 26th (additional information on the conference can be found using the following web link: www.pacrim.hawaii.edu). Across the four research articles, multimedia piece, and poem selected for inclusion in the Forum, a conception of disability as an *identity juncture* emerged as a common theme. Disability is imagined as a critical and decisive turning point that disrupts unexamined relations to self, other and society, and conditions the possibility of new ways of relating. Each of the works takes up the 'deep impact', the social and symbolic significance of this juncture in different ways.

In "Using the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) to Improve Understanding of Disability and Functioning," Patricia Welch Saleeby describes the global impact of a powerful way of identifying and responding to disability and disabled people. The ICF is a framework developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) to measure health and disability of individuals and populations that includes health domains and environmental factors (WHO, 2015). As Saleeby notes, problematic aspects of the ICF have been raised in disability studies. For example, Rob Imrie (2004) suggests that one of the limitations of the ICF is that is has been undertheorized, and that there are components of the ICF that require further conceptualization and clarification. In her descriptive analysis of the ICF, Saleeby suggests that components of the ICF align with a social model of disability and shows how the ICF can be used as a tool to understand the relational and contextual dimensions of disablement. Her reframing the ICF as a tool that directs attention to the social and environmental dimensions of health and disability has implications for how disability is identified within public health and social service perspectives. It also has the potential to 'impact' how the WHO is identified and understood within the field of disability studies – as a body that is both medical and oriented by a social model of disability.

Keisha Rogers, Rahim Skinner and Brenda Cartwright engage the identity juncture via a critical examination of the systematic oppression of culturally diverse students and faculty within university environments in their paper, "Strategies to Create a Culturally Responsive Learning Environment." The figure of disability as the product of a failure to recognize and respond to cultural difference animates in their analysis of a workshop titled, *Keeping it Real: Illusions of Equality and Injustice on College Campuses*. Their interest is in the impact that personal accounts of discrimination and exclusion that are shared within the context of culturally responsive education and training programs and practices can have on the treatment of culturally diverse and disabled students and faculty. They conclude their paper with a list of strategies for environmental and cultural change within universities that promote self-reflection and transformational learning in the interest of supporting equity and reciprocity of relationships.

In "The Spoken Word and Emotion in Communication," Karen Roberts shares her understandings and experiences of the transformative, creative and generative potential of what she describes as *spoken word*, and which she defines broadly as a performative art form that includes storytelling, music, cabaret, and theatre. Roberts describes how she has used her art as a means of crossing boundaries between self and other. In doing so, she identifies spoken word as an art form that offers an outlet for emotion and self-expression, while at the same time evoking emotion and shared understanding in her audiences.

Douglas Kidd recollects and reflects on the significance of trauma as he experienced it in the form of a traumatic brain injury that resulted from a car accident in, "Disability Studies Influence on a Profoundly Altered Identity." Through his moving narrative, Kidd recounts his experiences of survival and living with traumatic brain injury, and how they were shaped not simply by changes in functioning, but also by alterations in his awareness of his surroundings, his sense of self, and of time itself. Drawing on Alison Kafer's (2013) understanding of how disability renders time queer, Kidd details the emotional affects of temporal dissonance as he experienced them within the context of sudden onset of impairment, and how at times this dissonance took the form of perceived disembodiment. He concludes with his understanding of having experienced a destabilization of identity and emotions as foundational to a transformation in his relations with others and his world, and the field of disability studies as a critical support that he used to negotiate this process.

Steven Brown's poem "Devastate/Celebrate" depicts the violence and disenfranchisement, systematic exclusion and denigration of disabled persons in an ableist society. However, Brown also notes that even as oppressive social structures and environments shape how disability is experienced, they do not determine it. Through collective struggles for rights and recognition, disability communities have redefined disability and reclaimed disability history, creating space to live, to thrive and to dance. This is cause for celebration.

In "Towards Cultural Inclusion: Using Mobile Technology to Increase Access to Audio Description," Thomas Conway, Brett Oppegaard, and Megan Conway discuss a mobile application for audio describing National Park Service print brochures in Hawaii. They suggest that this application provides a means of enhancing the experiences of visually impaired park visitors addressing the failure of normative approaches to accessibility that treat access to cultural and aesthetic experiences as a luxury, rather than a right.

One of the definitive characteristics of understanding disability as an identity juncture concerns the way it can turn us towards greater recognition of the power and possibility in turning, re-turning, and of having been turned towards how. The works in this Forum engage the profound impact that environment, culture, communication, contingency, technology and the law can have on social understandings of disability, and the experiences and self-perceptions of disabled people. They also suggest that what disability and disablement mean are routinely negotiated, challenged and redefined in varied and discontinuous ways, from multiple and even contradictory perspectives. The collective impact of these works is perhaps best understood in terms of their exemplification of Tanya Titchkosky's notion of disability as an "activity of perception" that can provoke a sense of wonder about how disability is imagined in the ways that it is (2011, p. 59):

> "Disability is the activity of perceiving and thus representing how we orient to, for example, certainty and ambiguity. As we perceive through disability, then, all of us are intimately a part of what disability becomes in our perception. Disability exists in the midst of this perception, in the midst of people, and in the perception that flows between them. To understand disability as created in the liminal space between self and other allows us to address the confines of contemporary representations of disability, including the oppressive ones."

References

Imrie, R. (2004). Demystifying disability: A review of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, *26*(3), 287-305.

Kafer, A. (2013). *Feminist, queer, crip*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Titchkosky, T. (2011). *The question of access: Disability, space, meaning*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

World Health Organization (WHO). (2015). International classification of functioning, disability and health (ICF). Retrieved from http://www.who.int/classifications/icf/en/