Proliferating Cripistemologies

A Virtual Roundtable

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How might "cripistemologies" work? Without assuming in advance that we know what such ways of knowing might be, we have gathered in this roundtable a range of queer, trans, feminist, disability, and critical race theorists—namely, Lennard Davis, David Serlin, Emma Kivisild, Jennifer Nash, Jack Halberstam, Margaret Price, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, Jasbir K. Puar, Susan Schweik, Jennifer James, Lisa Duggan, and Carrie Sandahl—to meditate collectively on what those ways of knowing do. How, when, where, and why do queer, feminist, and disability epistemologies converge? What does it mean, in our own moment or historically, to respond to impairment (of body, mind, even behavior) in queer, feminist, or crip ways? If radical social movements of the last four decades have (expansively, even promiscuously) put bodies in motion, in what ways has neoliberal capitalism usurped, contained, or domesticated those bodies? How might that containment or domestication be cripped? What tensions or torsions exist among various cripistemologies? Are certain forms of queer (anti)sociality, for instance, in discord with interdependency as it has been imagined and materialized by feminist disability studies? Are there crip positions, embodiments, or moments of pain or pleasure that necessarily exceed the (compulsory?) identities or identifications of rights-based movements?

Lennard Davis

Perhaps we need to take our starting point from Occupy Wall Street. Can we imagine an analysis in which we use the 99 percent/1 percent algorithm to speak of crip ways of conceptualizing biopower? In this model, clinicians and practitioners represent the 1 percent, and the rest of us are part of an Occupy-DSM multitude. But things are never that simple. We are interdependent on the derivative language of illness and wellness. The inevitability of capital seems to be paralleled in the inevitability of terms like "depression," "OCD," "addiction," and other "disorders." The multitude of citizens with depression reiterates the host of citizens who feel no ability to affect their position in neoliberal capitalism. Not to say that capitalism causes depression, but that neoliberalism relies on and profits from certain "disorders." The profits from the disease entity called "depression" have staggering consequences for neoliberal capital since the condition interferes with productivity, and is at the

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same time the ghostly echo of the passivity required for the continuation of neoliberal modalities.

David Serlin

One of the gravest, and perhaps most overtly ahistorical, moves that any feminist or queer disability studies can make is to assert that the containment of crip ways of knowing—the domestication of cripistemologies—emerges from neoliberalism, or whatever iteration of late capitalism activists and scholars have charged with transforming material and social relations since the 1980s. Long before the terms *independence*, *autonomy*, and *self-care* were swallowed up and exploited by neoliberalism, the forces of rehabilitative habitus and somatic sameness were responsible for bludgeoning cripistemologies into familiar forms of generic submission. While feminist, queer, and transnational disability studies have recovered differential bodily subjectivities as sources of meaning-making, differences now often get distilled down into forms of identity politics, a process that neutralizes those morphological and cognitive differences that constitute pre-identificatory categories of disabled experience. This is a scenario not dissimilar from those LGBT activists whose focus on rights and representations has obscured and diluted the counter-identificatory effects of queer phenomenology.

How, then, might we conceptualize new relationships between physical impairments, spatial environments, and psychic or cognitive subjectivities that are not contingent on disabled identity as a primary modality of legibility? The sensorial and intersubjective dimensions of disability may produce cripistemologies for which disability is but one differential of identity, not its sole form. Legislation like the Americans with Disabilities Act offers the promise of a level playing field in order to neutralize body differences legally and fulfill the promises of liberal modernity. But such legislation refutes differential cripistemologies as a function of liberal modernity's need for somatic sameness.

Emma Kivisild

If stories and storytelling are fundamentals of knowing, it follows that autoethnographic writing is an epistemic endeavor—or perhaps a cripistemic endeavor. Yet, I reject the presumption that having a disability in itself gives a necessary perspective on certain issues. Whether I was a queer disabled

feminist at any point in time might not affect my memoir. However, the crip memoir is affected by what Trinh Minh-ha might call the situated *i* of my disability. My motorized chair, homophobic doctors, no curb cuts, the hope of new treatment, the academy, support groups: from these i learn. It's crip learning, utilizing a crip lens through which i look back 30 years to re-member and re-evaluate politics and identity. Is it this *i* that sits at the convergence of queer, feminist, and disabled epistemologies?

Cripistemologies are epistemologies of slipperiness and clouds of meaning. So even though experience is not necessarily a way to authentic knowledge, is it a way to slide at the edges, inhabit the clouds?

Jennifer Nash

I work in a field that has been preoccupied with the relationship between epistemology and identity: black feminist studies. From Patricia Hill Collins's work on "a unique Black women's standpoint" to Kimberlé Crenshaw's insistence that experiences of multiple marginalization grant black women a critical view of power's workings, black feminism has revealed the epistemic advantages that emerge from social marginality. In so doing, black feminism validates embodied forms of knowing, legitimizes experiential knowledge, and endorses forms of knowledge too often dismissed by the academy. My position as someone committed to black feminist theory *and* politics in an era marked by a turn away from identity politics raises (at least) two questions about the politics of race, gender, and epistemology.

First, what happens to radical projects—like black feminism—when they become institutionalized? What happens to outsider projects when they become *insider* projects? The integration of intersectionality into nearly every field in the humanities and social sciences has meant, at least to me, that intersectionality has been tamed. In our current intellectual-political moment, intersectionality has all too often been used to do precisely what black feminist standpoint epistemologists *rejected*—"including" black women rather than dismantling the workings of power that marginalize certain forms of knowledge.

Second, what happens to identitarian projects that insist on particular racial or gendered epistemologies in a moment marked by a post- or anti-identitarian turn? Identity politics has been subjected to productive critiques: Wendy Brown exposes the claims to woundedness at the heart of (at least some) identity work; Jasbir Puar critiques intersectionality's fierce attachments to liberalism; Cathy Cohen urges us to think about provisional coalitional politics

rather than fixed identity politics. So what does it mean to continue to work in a field that is fundamentally committed to identity politics? What does it mean to be invested in a kind of intellectual and political labor that is seen as temporally dated?

At times, my work has dealt with this dilemma by celebrating black feminism's non-identitarian labor. But I have come to consider—and embrace—the importance of critically engaging with black feminism's identitarian work rather than rejecting it. Is the institutionalization of black feminism the reason why identity politics has come to seem old-fashioned? This institutionalization allows us to tell a set of stories about the relationship between identity politics and temporality that may have implications for the role of identitarian labor in disability studies.

Jack Halberstam

Any cripistemology worth its name should identify modes of not knowing, unknowing, and failing to know. If conventional epistemologies always presume a subject who can know, a cripistemology will surely begin and end with a subject who knows merely that his or her ability is limited and that the body guarantees only the most fragile, temporary access to knowledge, to speech, to memory, and to connection. If we were to imagine a politics based upon such negative forms of knowing, it would not be an identity politics at all and would not consist of action or knowers or doers—a cripistemology should give rise to a politics of radical passivity, a refusal to inhabit the realm of action and activation at all. While Lennard sees depression as an "echo of the passivity required for the continuation of neoliberal modalities," I see neoliberalism as always a call to be, to do, to enact. Depression is its own form of refusal—of life, of love, of pleasure. Like David, I think it is a mistake to figure forms of capitalism as containments of alternative knowledge—many ways of being and knowing, unbeing and unknowing, exceed and make detours around capital or get stuck in-between economies, identities, and desires. Consider the case of Temple Grandin: known internationally for her profound insights from the vantage point of autism into the emotional lives of animals, Grandin professes to being baffled by human behaviors. Describing herself as feeling like "an anthropologist on Mars" in the presence of normative human interactions, Grandin has no trouble interpreting puzzling animal behaviors. Observing the fear of animals being led to slaughter, Grandin realized that what scared the animals was not what might have scared humans, namely their impending

doom; rather, since the cattle could not know they were being led to slaughter, something else must be scaring them. Small details—sounds, shiny things, reflections, dark entry ways—sent the animals into a panic. Grandin designed and built restraint systems that eased their suffering (winning her acclaim from animal rights activists).

In a BBC documentary, *The Woman Who Thinks Like a Cow*, an interviewer asks Grandin what she does for fun; she answers that she sometimes goes to the movies. What kinds of movies does she like, asks the inquisitive British interviewer—*Wallace and Gromit*, says Grandin, that sort of thing. The moment is telling and funny, providing a marvelous image for Grandin's relation to the world. Like Wallace in the wry cartoon series about a man and his dog, Grandin interprets the world through the eyes of an animal companion, and like Gromit, the lovable mutt who puzzles over his human pal's actions all the time, Grandin takes nothing for granted in the realm of the human, questioning everything in her mission to convey new ways of knowing through counter-intuitive forms of unknowing.

Margaret Price

I am interested in the slippage between the three entities mentioned parenthetically in the prompt: *body*, *mind*, *behavior*. Although there are nods to "mind" in much disability-studies scholarship, the epistemological return to an understanding of "body" as a fleshly entity—a puppet of meat—remains quick and unmarked. As gleefully as we have cripped the symbol of the stick figure in the wheelchair, still it rolls over us.

I found the term *bodymind* through the work of Babette Rothschild and adopted it immediately, since it tells more truth than a Cartesian (or sometimes crip) separation of the two. Yet its conjoined structure indicates that those entities, *body* and *mind*, still exist separately in our understanding. What metaphor or sign would figure the bodymind more truthfully still? A braid, a fractal, a soup?

Minds have been slipping around bodies for thousands of years now—in humors, in bile, in spirit or *thymos*, and through divine interventions. What would happen if we did not *add* mind to body, but rather *grounded* our theories in bodymind? Neuroatypicality is often marked not by limitations but by excesses: of fantasy, speech, awareness, sense, or sensitivity. What if we took our cue from bodymind theory to suggest disability as proliferation instead

of limitation? What would happen if we applied *crip* as a verb to the noun *bodymind*? To crip is a transitive act. What lies on the other side of transition?

Rosemarie Garland-Thomson

Disability, feminist, and queer theories have given us critical tools for thinking about human variation in the complex material encounters of bodies and environments. Disability studies' primary contribution to this epistemological analysis is the concept of access. David suggests that disability studies invites us to "conceptualize new relationships between physical impairments, spatial environments, and psychic and cognitive subjectivities that are not contingent on disabled identity as a primary modality of legibility." What I take him to mean is that the motion of varying, particular bodies, set in motion by varying minds, converges in an environment. The motion in this convergence is shaped by what disability studies calls "access." Knowledge emerges in the form of differing bodyminds moving through environments together, navigating barriers, and finding pathways, both materially and metaphorically.

Jasbir K. Puar

I teach a class called The Globalization of Disability. The course title indicates first the ways that the conceptualization of *what disability is* travel through circuits of political economy, legislative rights regimes (nation-state and international human rights), and indeed now through the project of disability studies. The class also focuses on how geopolitical relations of global disparity literally produce disability: labor exploitation, biomedicine, colonization, occupations, and war machines. In other words, disability is already part and parcel of a system of governing inclusion and exclusion, and the category *disability* may well create exclusion as much as it ameliorates it. What forms of epistemic violence does the category of disability, routed through neoliberal capital and flows of globalization, produce? How will cripistemologies address the dominance of Western knowledge production, the predominance of English, the tendency to look to Western Europe and the US for frames of modernity and progress, or for what one should know?

While our class exerts pressure on disability studies proper around a much-needed intersectional critique, decentering the white, Euro-American, and economically privileged subjects continually recognized as "disabled" (a

cripistemological corrective, if you will), it also pushes beyond a well-worn critique of identity politics and its limitations to highlight constantly shifting assemblages of power. I want cripistemologies to articulate not only alternative epistemologies, but also ontologies, challenging the limits of intersectional analyses and noting the disciplinary character of any subject-driven endeavor.

Susan Schweik

"Epistemology": from Greek "epistashi," "knowing how to do" or "understanding," with its deeper trace of "histasthai," to stand (apostasy has the same trace). In "cripistemologies," "crip" comes up against the core ableist assumption that one must stand in order to understand.

How far back might we find traces of (anti)social disability theory, crip apostasy? Not that far back—*crip* is historically specific and 1966 is a watershed. That year Paul Hunt published, from "the dark" of the nursing home, "A Critical Condition," his radical manifesto claiming suffering, uselessness, disturbance, abnormality, and unpleasantness. That year Josephine Miles, a disabled poet living a markedly independent, interdependent, and atypical life, wrote her verse play "House and Home," which involves a husband and wife who grimly overturn family norms; home's usual styles of care, "bare and queer," are restored at the end, just barely and still queerly, to the "monstrous merry / engagement of the ordinary"—all this in an enigmatic, stilted style that could be critical fodder for Lauren Berlant: deadpan crip.

Or we could turn to 1987, Leo Bersani. But here, thinking directly about anti-social theories, I take seriously Fiona Kumari Campbell's cautions about how disabled people already "live under the enormous weight of supposed passivity figurations" (222). Thought experiment: imagine someone with an ostomy and sewed-up rectum reading the essay, "Is the Rectum a Grave?" So much there to foster critical crip sexuality theory—and still: the sexual ostomate is not, on the whole, imagined in the community of the anticommunal, the equality of the anti-egalitarian, the nurturing of antinurture and the loving of antilove.

Jennifer James

I was immediately intrigued by a "cripistemological" approach to cultural studies and social critique. The voices invited to speak in this conversation

intrigued me even further: a group of "queer, trans, feminist, and disability and critical race theorists" collectively considering how varied "ways of knowing" might "converge." Those of us speaking from any/all of those embodiments know one thing certainly: what it means to be rendered invisible. I was therefore surprised to discover what had gone missing when the epistemologies were named. "How, when, and where do queer, feminist, and disability epistemologies converge?" How might we "respond to impairment . . . in queer, feminist, or crip ways?" Race, though originally mobilized as a key term, is absent. Nor can it be found within an expansive syntactical appendage (as in "*such as* queer, feminist, and crip, *or others*"). Has "racialized" knowledge—in my case, blackness—been unconsciously foreclosed as an impossible or undesirable or simply *unthought* way to know? Is placing black bodies "in motion" in relation to other bodies a useful way to conceptualize the outcomes of twentieth-century African American social movements? Put differently, if a black body moves into the "diversified" neoliberal US university but nobody sees it, did it actually move? And does intersectional praxis falter when we feel compelled to speak "as" one of one's identities? Do those speech acts create discord with more idealistic theories of intersectionality? If so, is there a space for black academic anti-sociality in this cultural moment?

Lisa Duggan

One way to think about the contribution of disability activism and scholarship to radical epistemologies is to think in terms of keywords. Rosemarie points to the significance of *access*. The *OED* provides broad and illuminating historical resonances:

> 1. A coming on or attack of illness, emotion, etc.; 2. A sudden fit of some emotion or feeling; 3. The power, opportunity, permission, or right to come near or into contact with someone or something; . . . 3c. Law: Relating to, involving or granting the right of a non-custodial parent (or occas. other guardian or family member) to spend time with a child; 4. The action of going or coming to or into a place; coming into the presence of a person; 5. A means of approach, an entrance; 6. The fact or possibility of being approached or reached; 7. The action or an act of coming towards; 8. The coming together of the members of Parliament, an assembly; . . . 10. Computing: The process or an act of obtaining or retrieving data from storage; 11. The joining or addition of something to something else, or of a person or people to others . . .

Here we have a joining of bodily and mental state, the means of mobility and entrance to places, the obtaining of information, the mode of relating

to persons and things, and the practice of politics. Quite a stunning set of connections held within the history of usage of that one word: *access*. Material space, information, and things exist in irreducible political relation to the movements and actions of bodies in varying physical and affective states. How might we rewrite the history of empire in relation to this concept? Now there is an epistemological challenge worth accessing.

Carrie Sandahl

How do we know what we know from the vantage point of living in and with our very specific bodyminds (thank you, Margaret)? Disabled people are really just at the beginning of considering this question, and I worry we are moving too quickly away from disability identity before mining it for all that our concrete, grounded experiences have to teach us and others.

Disability arts, for example, explore disability experience in new and unexpected ways and model alternative ways of being and doing "this thing called human" (to borrow a line from Neil Marcus's *Storm Reading*). Disabled artists not only tell our stories, but critique both mainstream and alternative communities, show variety in the human form itself, and model how variety necessitates change to structures of all kinds.

Many disability artists, ironically, must keep their work out of the public sphere, performing for free or getting paid under the table, because to earn income from their work would jeopardize the government benefits they need to survive. Thus, the experiences we know most about are those of the "able-disabled," a snarky term used in the disability community to describe those, like myself, who clean up nice for company—those whose appearances and behaviors stray least from the norm, and who require few or no accommodations to participate in mainstream culture, including as wage earners.

However cripistemology evolves, it *must* include not just the easily assimilated able-disabled but our brothers and sisters who have the most to lose in becoming visible—those who are completely socially marginalized, stigmatized, and hidden away in institutions (residential, prisons, etc.). What they know, how they know, and why it matters is most threatening to the status quo.

Merri Lisa Johnson and Robert McRuer

In conceptualizing the term "cripistemologies," one of its initial potentialities lay in the implications of structurally placing crip(s) at the beginning or center of the production of knowledge. A long political and intellectual history trails out behind this notion of thinking through what Margaret calls the crip *bodymind* to produce first-hand, and in some cases, first-person knowledge about topics that concern disabled people and communities, broadly conceived. In the historical moment that Jennifer Nash invokes, the Combahee River Collective imagined such ways of thinking as "the most profound and potentially most radical politics." Drawing on these and other responses from Round 1 that invoke the past (Carrie, Jennifer James, David, Susan), how might we invent cripistemologies for the future that engage more critically and consistently with these varied historical attempts to produce knowledge and political action otherwise?

Given the origins of standpoint epistemology in black feminist theory, might we reflect further on racialized knowledge—and its foreclosures—as the basis for a cripistemology designed to attend in meaningful ways to human variation and the power differentials that structure it? Should we, or how might we (since responses thus far have tended to prefer an abstract theoretical register), encourage the concrete, the personal, the material, the narrative, the experiential? When, where, and why does the "access" that Rosemarie and Lisa theorize get contained or—to draw on two terms deployed by Jasbir—regularized or (dangerously?) recognized? Under what circumstances might a more radical dimension of this (neo)liberal notion of access be realized? How are the contemporary movements that Lennard and Jack invoke (and view differently) globalizing disability and perhaps in the process changing our conceptions of access? And how, finally, do calls for radical passivity (Jack) or questions of antisociality (Jennifer James) relate to those desires for and interrogations of access?

Lennard Davis

It seems to me that we must get beyond personal narratives. Aside from the personal relief and understanding they bring to the writers, and the affective and even cognitive recognition and identification brought to readers, I have serious reservations about their effects. Neoliberal society has plenty of room for narratives of this type. In the case of books on depression, the narratives are

predictably about overcoming, usually by taking prescription medication. They work against the idea that depression might have at least some of its causes in the very history of modern psychiatry and what David Healy calls "Pharmaggedon." Such narratives avoid class and social position, concentrating on a self-realizing, rational subject rising out of the ashes of the stigmatized and formulaic depressed person.

We need a new kind of personal narrative that problematizes the idea of the person, questions the generic categories of the genre, defies the publishing paradigm, and moves toward other forms of distribution. One example is the Deaf Vlog (let us call it D-Vlog), a form that not only uses a foreign language, but also makes full use of the visual potential of the Vlog format. By limiting the viewership to those who know ASL or whatever sign language is being used, it denies attempts to universalize experience, instead promoting in-house, in-group political discussion that leads to more public movements. I am not arguing for a ghettoization of protest, nor an exclusivity of disabled culture, but for formats that resist assimilation, lead to progressive political action, and question the very nature of the transmission.

David Serlin

Does the embrace of a disabled identity foreclose possibilities of imagining different bodily futures? This is an important question for any scholar or activist contemplating the concept of a critically engaged cripistemology. Experiences of bodily difference and desire, in all of their variegated glories, are the most likely dimensions of subjective identity to be sacrificed for the privilege of social and political legibility. A critical cripistemological position focused on the subjective experience of bodily difference might expose the tendency for the social life of disability to be transformed, under codification or implementation of law, into something wholly different than the experiential life of disability. This position parallels the queer critique of the same-sex marriage movement, which challenges the equation of a legal life of rights with a social life of happiness. Supporters of same-sex marriage contend that, without legal recognitions of one's rights, one lives in epistemological darkness, unequal before other human beings.

Living in a nation or community without legal protection is, of course, intolerable. It delivers one to a wilderness of possible outcomes. Yet a carefully cultivated cripistemology may well provide an oasis in which identity formation, knowledge production, and activism can take shape. Disability can

exist outside of the overarching epistemological frameworks of law, medicine, government, and religion, and differential bodily subjectivities must be instrumental, not incidental, to the formation of disabled identities and reimagined human futures.

Emma Kisivild

I look to my two qualifying papers—on autoethnography; and on feminism, identity politics, and intersectionality. In the cold, dry academic environment, I wrote these papers using voice activation software, spelling out difficult words using the NATO phonetic alphabet; exacting extra time because of my eyesight difficulties; braving a campus under constant construction in my motorized wheelchair in order to use the library. Yes yes, I am thankful for administrative helpfulness and technological miracles. But these are my particular experiences, and they affect my thinking. They must count for something beyond self-pity.

I am teetering between ability and disability. Much of my work looks back in time, and therefore looks to my youthful able-bodied self. I am excited about autoethnography, yet I have no choice but to move beyond simple identitarian memory and see that self and ability are changing all the time, that experience is changing all the time, and therefore that epistemologies are changing, too.

Cripistemology is not a process of addition; it is a snapshot of surprise, an opportunity, a challenge.

Jennifer Nash

I am drawn to the idea of "cripistemology" because of my investments in a black feminist tradition which has often been interested in standpoint epistemology: in speaking *from* a location, and in naming *that* location. Like Jennifer James, I am interested in what happens when black feminism's long-standing investment in both *the politics of knowledge* (whose work gets to count as knowledge? as theory? as valued intellectual labor?) and in *centering* subordinated knowledges is elided.

How do we understand a roundtable that forges an epistemology focused on centering crip knowledges, yet either disavows or neglects intellectual and theoretical traditions that are all about standpoint epistemologies and the politics of knowledge? What might a black feminist reading of Rosemarie's call

to think about "access" reveal, or how might a black feminist tradition inform Carrie's plea to consider *what* we know, *how* we know, and *why* it matters?

What does it mean if "cripistemologies" seek to route themselves through theoretical and political traditions that are explicitly *not* black feminist? How can we understand the attachments and detachments that underpin that move? These are not accusations, but a moment of curiosity that invites a larger conversation about drawing connections between our fields—here crip theory—and other fields, how we decide who our theoretical and political intimates are. What pasts does the call to "cripistemologies for the future" jettison, and why? How might our "cripistemologies" *look* and *feel* different if we could imagine theoretical connections where we never imagined them—or where, for whatever reason, we avoided them?

Jack Halberstam

I am thinking as I write this about the debates around autism, masculinity, and violence in the wake of the shooting of 26 people in Newtown, Connecticut. Some people would like to believe that a young man's autism and not his easy access to semi-automatic weaponry lies at the heart of this act of slaughter (and it remains unclear if "autism" is even the right word for Adam Lanza). The sentimental outpouring in response to the Newtown tragedy is as wrong as the lack of empathy that was presumed to have created it—because if people wringing their hands and scratching their heads and hugging their children would put that same intense energy into banning guns, we would not need to witness their horror, their outrage, and their bewilderment time and time again. Perhaps the only identity that should be theorized in relation to the young man with the gun who believes that 26 people need to die because he somehow feels wrong and at odds with everything is whiteness. Toxic whiteness finds expression in obscene ejaculations of bullets; the white guy tears the flesh of those who somehow are taking love away from him, who represent a future he cannot access, and who ultimately signify his demise. White masculinity goes down swinging and we all feel the pain.

Margaret Price

I want to pick up on Jennifer James's point that racialized knowledge may in some cases—perhaps this one—be constructed as "an impossible or undesirable

or simply *unthought* way to know." Jennifer (I would prefer to speak to you directly, even in this indirect medium), you are right. All of us at this roundtable know in our bones what it is to be "rendered invisible"—unthought—unmade as a human being. Yet that knowledge does not always translate into an ability to think, desire, or know differently. A process and practice of unlearning must take place (and continue). For years, I have been watching and working with colleagues at SDS and elsewhere as we try to unlearn racism. This is not entirely, not even mostly, an intellectual endeavor. I wrote some years ago (in reference to being a white professor at a historically black college), "Racism sticks to my skin, glints in my blue eyes, lolls on my tongue" ("Then," 95). I am not basking in white guilt, nor asking for absolution. I am thinking toward what it means to inhabit—not just "have," but inhabit—a white person's bodymind.

Narratives matter. This is an important tenet of black feminist theory. It is also not a simplistic one, that is, an argument that stories make meaning more "real" or more "relatable." The move is more complex than that. Here is an example: At the beginning of Patricia Williams's essay "The Brass Ring and the Deep Blue Sea," the narrator addresses the reader directly, stating, "You should know you are dealing with someone who is writing this in an old terry bathrobe with a little fringe of blue and white tassels dangling from the hem" (4). Funny, right? A little slice of life? Yes and no; actually, Williams told me in an interview that the image is an interdiscursive reference to Descartes's *Meditations*, which few of the book's reviewers picked up, she pointed out. As an author, she figured herself as a black woman at home alone in her bathrobe, writing, but the narrative she meant to build—of a philosopher grappling with root questions of what it means to be human—was somehow illegible to most readers.

Without letting go of important markers such as race, gender, disability, class, and also always striving away from what Stephanie Kerschbaum calls the "fixation" of difference, we must continue to find the through-lines. One such through-line with which DS scholars, including Rosemarie, have been working carefully is *vulnerability*. One that is going to need much more attention in coming years is *pain*.

Here is a question for Lennard—this is what I've been trying (unsuccessfully) to write about of late—what do we *do* with depression? With panic attacks and borderline breaks? How shall we desire disability when the condition in question is itself composed of pain? The pain of hopelessness does not lend itself to analysis. It has a queer immutability. As a disability studies scholar (and storyteller), I do not know what to do with my lived experience of pain.

Rosemarie Garland-Thomson

I appreciate this conversation and its efforts at "structurally placing crip(s) at the beginning or center of the production of knowledge." One particularly positive direction would pursue Jennifer Nash's call to "imagine theoretical connections where we never imagined them." David's call to focus on "the subjective experience of bodily difference" seems just right in this regard.

However, I need help understanding the risks and processes through which we imagine and accomplish these propositions. I need to know how, when, and where access leads to assimilation. Or how, when, and where resistance leads to exclusion. I find two worries in our critique. One concern is that accusations of false consciousness against some people with disabilities will fracture certain opportunities for solidarity upon which positive identity politics and social justice initiatives are built. (One thinks, for instance, of the accusation made against Deaf people who participate in Deaf culture and use cochlear implants or hearing aide technology *along with* sign language.)

My second concern is that our critique risks relegating many people with disabilities who have a vivid, knowledge-producing "subjective experience of bodily difference" to a place of purity outside of contaminated structures. This is my objection to Julia Kristeva's theorizing of the disabled subject as the ultimate unassimilable that must remain forever excluded even as she argues for inclusion as justice. Disabled people are her anchor for a theory of absolute social and political abjection. While I am certainly worried about dangerously regularizing access and wary of neoliberal appropriation, I'm also worried about particular kinds of material exclusions of people with disabilities in a social order not at least aimed toward the logic of human and civil rights.

Jasbir K. Puar

Part of what I find so exciting about the term cripistemology is its potential to swerve from a grounding in a knowledge production project that seeks to counter other forms of epistemic violence by producing its own known objects. That is to say, cripistemology does not have to reproduce the violence of the mandate of Western knowledge as able to know its object. Nor does it need to presume, through infinite redress or what I have called the "epistemological corrective" of intersectionality, that if we have perfect knowledge we will have justice. Instead I read the "crip" in cripistemology as a critique of the notion of epistemology itself, a displacement not only of conventional ways of knowing

and organizing knowledge, but also of the mandate of knowing itself, of the consolidation of knowledge. This supplements a cripistemology with "crip(s) at the beginning or center of the production of knowledge" by offering another reading of cripistemology as a matter of debilitating contemporary forms of knowing with forms of unknowing, sensing, refusing to know, akin to Jack's formulation, and, further, a matter of challenging the status of knowledge itself. What this entails for me, unlike Jack's "negative forms of knowing" or a politics of radical passivity, is proliferating cripistemology affirmatively and prolifically rather than reactively within a dialectic. Disability studies is already successful in this vein, undoing conventional ways of knowing and knowledge of the body, of capacities, of human and species variation. But I am thinking of something wilder: an overwhelming of modes of knowing such that what constitutes knowing itself becomes confused, disoriented, dissembled. If we are to refuse not only our place at the table but what the table itself mandates, we can afford nothing less.

Susan Schweik

What do we *do* with depression? Great question, Margaret. Here's one example of "unthought"—*undocumented*—"ways to know." I am thinking about immigrant justice movement performances of radical undocumentation. Undocuqueer activists stage coming out as both queer and undocumented; Undocuhealth, a project of the National Immigrant Youth Alliance, seeks to "serve the mental health needs of undocumented immigrants," focusing both on the lack of resources for those without "papers" and on the prohibitive costs of services. These different calls for action raise epistemological questions. Why has "undocuqueer" posed itself as a specific kind of identity category, however unsettled, while "undocuhealth" gestures toward a universal, fluctuating condition? (A person may identify as "queer," but not as "health.") How does Undocuhealth depend on and disrupt the medical model of well-being? Legal scholar Kathy Abrams is exploring how affective performances of coming out as undocumented engage in claims-making at the very moment when the activists "might be most disenabled." Does undocuclaiming, then, found itself in a kind of ability? Undocuhealth explores exactly this problem. Activists define themselves on one side as "Undocumented, Unafraid and Unashamed"; on the other, they foreground "how living in fear is affecting us physically, emotionally, and mentally. People are depressed, anxious, or even suicidal." This dual insistence offers a powerful model that sustains *and* challenges a

disability studies based in general notions of "claiming disability" or, now, "crip epistemology." What further possibilities emerge if we imagine an "undocucrip" perspective? Or propose an undocucripistemology?

Jennifer James

In the late 1980s I volunteered in a public psychiatric hospital with patients who were, in the crude classification of the DSM, considered MR-ED: both "mentally retarded" and "emotionally disturbed." Most had a psychosis complicated by either a "low I.Q." or "brain damage." The damage in some older, long-term residents was likely attributable to lobotomies performed in the 1950s under the disgraced George Washington University surgeon William J. Freeman. Given what I witnessed and documented—understaffing, overcrowding, emotional and physical abuse—I was unsurprised that a few years later, the Department of Justice threatened to shut down the hospital for violating patients' rights under CRIPA, ADA, and the 14th Amendment. The DOJ document castigating the facility's poor assessment protocols seems relevant to our conversation about intersectionality: "patients often have inconsistent, unreconciled, diagnoses . . . one patient had been diagnosed as suffering from a bipolar disorder and, at a later time, as schizophrenic, paranoid type with mild mental retardation . . . Absent a proper diagnosis, proper treatment is not possible." The DOJ viewed "inconsistent, unreconciled diagnoses" as evidence of imperiling practices. Yes: but they are also evidence that medical categories fail, multiple illnesses can emerge concurrently, and at times, one can be more prevalent than another. Thick conditions, like intersectional identities, are inherently inconsistent and irreconcilable. The belief that scientific *knowledge*—a "proper" and proprietary reading of the bodymind—would lead to "proper" and proprietary treatment represents the dangerous anti-intersectional logic of larger classificatory systems. If humans identify themselves in recognizable ways, then we will know how to treat them, whether properly or *improperly*.

I befriended a man in his fifties, poor and black, who had been diagnosed schizophrenic/"MR." His "hallucinations" enabled him to preach to invisible congregations (from an upside-down Bible because he could not read). Much to the staff's irritation, he insisted that he could speak to his dead father. What aspect of his circumstance rendered him *property* of the state, and consequentially, subject to *improper* treatment at every turn? Illness? Race? Poverty? Masculinity? Age? Illiteracy? An incalculable combination? Was it his refusal to be owned, articulated in his unwillingness to characterize communication

with the dead as mere delusion even when met with abuse? How would a cripistemology articulate the *improper* as a mode of politics rather than as an invitation for violence? Might it show us how to *disown* identities that misrecognize us, how to be inconsistent and unreconciled—working, speaking, acting, and knowing from our always-shifting standpoints?

Lisa Duggan

The call to place "crip" at the beginning or the center is not a call to *add* disability to an intersectional matrix of race, gender, class, sexuality, nationality, religion. It is a call to step aside, provisionally, to imagine theory and politics from the capacious "standpoint" of disability. This is a moment in the formulation of new ways of thinking and acting politically, not an endpoint. Disability is not to be separated from other social formations; indeed it cannot be. But in order to think in new ways, for just a moment, we place "crip" at the starting/central place in our imaginings. This is akin to the Combahee River Collective's move to reimagine the political world from the perspective of black women, not to set aside other perspectives but to expand the whole. It is also akin to Gayle Rubin's move in "Thinking Sex," a move to the side and not away from or out of feminism(s) in order to allow "sexuality" to be thought in new ways.

This call to place "crip" at the start/center is also not a call to *know* more, or more definitively, about disability. It is a call to rethink, or reformulate, or recast our thinking along different lines, at least provisionally. It is a call to intellectual, political, and affective creativity. This call runs up against at least two contradictory challenges. First, how do we formulate a "crip" perspective that takes ability/disability at its broadest points of inclusive meaning, embracing fully our understanding that disability is produced in and through a social world that organizes abilities in invidious and hierarchical ways? But second, how do we then also attend to the very particular bodyminds, in their very particular variations and in their particular places and times, that contend with the material and affective impact of the historical and contemporary world? How do we write crip history, both personal and collective?

It is important not to denigrate either project, but to constantly reformulate each in relation to the other in order to push the boundaries of disability studies and politics in radicalizing ways.

Carrie Sandahl

I have team-taught a graduate seminar in disability studies with Jim Charlton for the past four years. Charlton is a wheelchair-using, hardcore disability activist, and scholar of disability, political economy, and globalization. His reputation precedes him. On the first day of class, he makes piercing eye contact with the students and states, "I know more about disability than 99.9 percent of people in the world." The students visibly wither. Then, he quickly switches gears, and with glinting eyes and impish charm continues, "and I know almost nothing about disability." Every year, students laugh out loud at this one-liner. Even though I've heard his spiel four times, I laugh the loudest.

I would call Charlton's statement and the way he performs it "doing cripistemology," or cripping knowledge itself as Jasbir suggests. In his opening remark, Charlton undoes his own authority (and mine). He follows his one-liner with another: "When you leave our program you will know even less about disability than when you entered." This line also always gets a laugh, but this time the students' laughter is tinged with anxiety. I always think he's being hilarious, even though we are both being kind of mean.

To unpack this anecdote, I want to rewind to 2003, when I coined the verb "to crip," as I needed a verb to describe the strategies that crip, queer, solo autobiographical performance artists use in their work to critique not only mainstream communities but disability and queer communities as well. My original definition was that cripping "spins mainstream representations or practices to reveal able-bodied assumptions and exclusionary effects. Both queering and cripping expose the arbitrary delineation between normal and defective and negative social ramifications of attempts to homogenize humanity, and both disarm with a wicked humor, including camp" (37). Since 2003, Robert and many others have developed the definition way beyond my first grasping attempt. Curiously, though, the last part of my definition remains underdeveloped. Maybe crip humor seems so coupled with live stage performance that it appears less relevant to other contexts?

Perhaps now is a good time to revive and tweak the last part of my definition. I have been productively challenged by what some have argued here about cripistemology's exclusions or failed acknowledgements, such as Jennifer Nash's invocation of black feminist scholars whose work undergirds much of our thinking. Such provocations lead me to ask more questions: What methodological tactics can we deploy to critique hegemonic and even deadly notions of disability? How is dissent and difference in our methodology an asset? I am bringing back crip humor as a potential component of a cripistemological

methodology that critiques ableism, while also making space for the fissures and contradictions already forming in our nascent definitions.

Crip humor reflects a response toward a world that does not want to see disabled people as fully human. Crip humor is impish, paradoxical, and somewhat mean. It's rude and sometimes profane. It lets the powers-that-be know that we crips know what's going on, as in *They can't pull the wool over our eyes*. We know that our people cannot be described as "takers-not-makers." We know we're a huge pile of raw material that feeds the medical-industrial complex's machinery, generating, by many estimates, up to 18 percent of the GDP in the United States. You need us as much as we need you.

Crip humor makes people uncomfortable and even angry and does not always translate well from one disability community to another. Deploying crip humor, then, also means taking responsibility for what it incites in others and maintaining a willingness to revise what you thought you knew. Making people laugh, or even making people uncomfortable, cracks open space for unknowing.

As I have learned from Charlton, crip humor is a way of claiming that we know a whole lot more than most people know about disability, while citing how very little we really do know.

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