events? Do televisions in public areas display closed captions? Will deaf students be able to ask a question of the student-government candidates during a debate and understand the answer given? For deaf and hard-of-hearing students to truly experience what those who can hear do, we must think about how to provide services in a way that treats the deaf person as a student, not as a mere learning machine whose needs are contained by the four walls of a classroom.

Reaching out to potential students is the first step to a partnership. How students find out about a university and what they learn are very important. Outreach materials should indicate a diverse workforce. All information should be accessible to everyone: ask people from a variety of groups for the disabled to help develop the materials and presentations.

Generally speaking, the goal of higher education is to produce leaders who can participate fully in our world. We need to change the way we define and think about disability and inclusion—respect and embrace all people—if we are to help every student and achieve a new, thoroughly integrated society.

Compulsory Feral-ization: Institutionalizing Disability Studies

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While disability studies has opened up new discursive spaces for revising cultural attitudes and beliefs about disability, its increasing legitimation in the contemporary academy comes with conflicts. The university as a research location cannot merely divorce itself from the ethical and restrictive practices that have characterized the past two centuries. In fact, it does so only at its own risk and, even more important, at the risk of further entrenching disabled people in its institutional grounding. The institutionalization of disability studies is just that—a formal cultural ingestion process that churns out knowledge about disability while resisting reflexive inquiries about whether or not more detail is inherently better. More knowledge is inherently better for the institution because it keeps the research mill active, but here we want to contemplate the degree to which generating more professionally based data about disability threatens to reproduce some of the problems that have characterized the study of disability to this point in history.

The title of this talk is one of our favorites, yet alas, the credit belongs to Bruce Henderson, who introduced it during a recent seminar on disability, eugenics, and the history of evolutionary theory in the PhD program in disability studies. By compulsory feral-ization, he may have intended both to pun off of the early-twentieth-century practice of compulsory sterilization and to suggest a manner in which disabilities tend to be automatically turned into examples of human insufficiences in need of professional mediation. In this scenario disability becomes a regressive throwback to a prior, primitive, subhuman state. Disabled people often contest this association of their bodies with lack. For instance, in a recent correspondence the *Cuckoo* comic book artist Madison Clell argued that "I *strongly* disagree that Dissociative

https://doi.org/10.1632/S0030812900168038 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Identity Disorder [Multiple Personality Disorder] is a disability—it can become disabling for day to day functioning but in reality its genesis is an efficient survival mechanism." Beyond this critique of disability as synonymous with pathology, the phrase compulsory feral-ization also suggests that the history of disability has continued to resonate with those early French efforts to train the Wild Boy of Aveyron; he that was christened with the label "feral child" and came to be the avatar of a whole line of savage children reared in nature by wolves and other nonhuman creatures.

The feral child was an invention of post-Enlightenment Europe: a kind of collective mirage that, as in the early days of colonialism, presented an opportunity to conquer a lost primitive self—our evolutionary predecessor. The category—for it served not as a description of individual behavior but rather an orchestrating classification of medical science at the end of the eighteenth century—brought together myth and empiricism by associating a child who was perhaps deaf, mute, autistic, or some combination with a condition that represented both a form of subhumanity and a radical humanitarian promise. The feral child was recognized as a disadvantaged entity cut off from the civilizing efforts of human communities; one that represented what the renowned mental asylum reformer Philippe Pinel called an "incurable idiot" (Shattuck 37). Efforts to educate feral children set in motion the elaborate apparatus around "idiocy" that culminated in the field of eugenics. Further, this dismissive and dehumanizing diagnosis of the "wild boy" was tempered by equally respected psychologists such as Jean Itard and Edouard Seguin, who saw "the Wild Boy of Aveyron" as a potential link back to an unadulterated human nature to which moderns had lost access. This savage existence represented the opportunity to test out the Romantic notion of individuals as blank slates—a surface on which culture inscribed itself in shaping a self. The Wild Boy, who was later named Victor by Itard because of the boy's presumed pleasure at hearing the sound of the vowel *o*, promised to solidify pre-Darwinian theories of evolution that premised humans as derived from animals. This paradoxical formula of failed humanity and primitive hope may seem, at first glance, antithetical. But if we recognize these two descriptions as a general formula for disability, then "compulsory feral-ization" nicely sums up the situation: historically, disability has represented both an example of faulty human organisms and the promise of a body that might serve to teach us something about ourselves (note that "ourselves" does not include people with disabilities).

In either scenario, the critical terrain shared is one of research and its inevitable by-product, intervention. As an example of organic failure or insufficiency, disability, by the nature of its definition, embodies the need for compensation; one's relation to disability in the sciences is to situate disability either as a functional deficit in need of restoration or as a failure of the social context to adequately accommodate difference. As an example of primitive promise, disability is presented as an opportunity to learn about ourselves as vulnerable organisms—the reestablishment of our bodies to some rudimentary origin where the mechanics of the organism were somehow more self-evident; disability is recognized essentially as a body-in-the-making. As Olympia, the bald, albino, female protagonist-narrator in Katherine Dunn's *Geek Love*, explains, "[T]here's something about disability that's like wearing your vulnerability on your sleeve, as if all of my secrets are exposed, and people trust in me enough to confess their own secrets of failure or dysfunction" (156). Disabled bodies represent something critically valuable as a potential fount of information about generic organicity while they are themselves shut out of meaningful communion with others. As long as disability is narrated in this way, disabled people will find themselves the objects of an inexhaustible research machine—one

https://doi.org/10.1632/S0030812900168038 Published online by Cambridge University Press

that uses up their bodies, their energies, and their time with wanton abandon. One of the primary oppressions experienced by disabled people is that they are marked as perpetually available for all kinds of intrusions, public and private. Disability makes one's body fodder for any number of invasive approaches.

This proved to be the fate of feral children as well. Their savagery justified their incarceration, disciplinary regulation, subjection to experiment, and, ultimately, abandonment by the professions presumably devoted to their salvage. For Itard, Victor represented both an opportunity and an impossibility. Here is how Michael Newton characterizes their relationship after years of intervention could not bring Victor to speak:

> It is not hard to feel as sorry for Itard as one feels for the wild child. For Victor's story catches hold of a vivid and tactful tenderness: its subject is ultimately that of yearning for and missing love. Unwittingly, perhaps, Itard left us a story not just of the education of a young savage, but of his own inability to be close or intimate. A scientific detachment operates in Itard, and he watches with surprise and regret as the emotions he obviously feels for Victor are hardly reciprocated. . . . Itard seems doomed to detach himself from those he tried to get close to. Pupil and teacher, father and son, adult and child, doctor and patient, scientist and subject—in each case the relationship is skewed and fundamentally unequal. Itard clearly dreamed of rescue for the young and abandoned boy. Some lost part of himself must have seemed contained in poor Victor, something that he might retrieve, look after and make better. Yet the imbalance of power between the two of them, the unbridgeable distance between their several worlds, doomed the attempt; and in the end, it is Victor, the named one, who haunts us as he haunted Itard. . . . (127)

We think this description by Newton gets the conflict exactly right in many ways. Ultimately, the record of Victor functions as little more than a Western empiricist's fantasy. The story of the wild boy is the story of Itard's personal and professional failure to bridge a gap that Victor refuses to cross. Victor becomes the quintessential unwilling subject since he will not further the goals of scientific research and will not be interpellated into the discourse of rescue. Whose desire is on display here? Victor's need to interact with a civil society that would exhibit and pander to his "savagery," or Itard's professional hopes? As the surrogate of science, Itard dreams of access to the wild boy's savage secrets to increase his professional notoriety.

Disability finds itself in a peculiar situation in the academy: it is allied with a form of subaltern knowledge that is disparaged and sought after at the same time. Research both invests itself with the promise of solving human differences and undermines the humanity of its object of study with a chivalric story of rescue. Disability is endlessly differentiated into myriad categories of dysfunction (our own neuromuscular disability has now fractured into five different subtypes in the Human Genome Project) and yet never made ultimately coherent (or, you might say, never successfully "cured" of its defining difference).

The history of disabled people has come home to roost, so to speak, in university disability studies. Just as Itard longed for a more meaningful relationship with Victor, so one might characterize disability studies as provoking a similar response from those disciplines most dependent on narratives of disability as insufficiency in need of normalization (special education, physical therapy, occupational therapy, communication disorders, nursing, medicine, kinesiology). This desire is what we identified as "compulsory feral-ization" in the opening of this analysis. Disability studies is recognized as both a threat and a saving grace of sorts among the applied health sciences: it is a threat in the sense that a once-silenced object now has the agency to talk back to the professions that

https://doi.org/10.1632/S0030812900168038 Published online by Cambridge University Press

would speak its inferiority; it looks like a saving grace to any field that hopes to include disabled people and thereby appear beyond reproach. Rehabilitation sciences long to be accepted in the field of disability studies by those who have traditionally served to ameliorate disabilities. This compensatory desire exists literally as an earnest belief in "helping" disabled people and viscerally as a commitment to mending (or, at least, disguising) bodies believed to violate social and scientific norms of appearance and functionality.

The humanities are fundamentally different, however, in that it's difficult to tell whether disability studies matters at all, but we'll get to that later. There is a foundational impulse across the sciences and therapies to treat disability as something gone awry—to tame the "wildness" that bodily, sensory, and cognitive differences represent. As one University of Illinois, Chicago (UIC) faculty member in physical therapy argued, "We are here to *help* disabled people with their problems." Yet, helping extended neither to seeking disabled people's input as to what they wanted from therapy nor to training disabled people as physical therapists themselves. There is a long-standing assumption in physical therapy that disabled people cannot perform the physical (and, perhaps, intellectual?) demands of the profession. This is in spite of the fact that physical therapy programs in other countries—such as the one at the University of Costa Rica—are training individuals with disabilities to be practitioners. The investment in practices of assistance for disabled people is honestly deep: the helping professions, like Itard, demonstrate a commitment to disability that is meaningful but also riddled with ambivalence—what Newton calls a doomed detachment toward those one seeks to save. Yet the key motivation to help is based on an equally objectifying premise: the rehabilitation sciences seek to cure, disguise, or lessen the difference that marks their clientele as faulty. Therefore, the thing that made the feral child desirable—its primitive deviance—can be accessed only by destroying the desirable quality. Similarly, disability draws the attentions of fields that seek to cure, fix, repair, or deny its existence. Disability is a difference that exists only to be undone.

Let us explain how we understand the field—particularly in its current incarnation at the University of Illinois, Chicago—to draw the parallels necessary to make this paradoxical formula of compulsory feral-ization useful, particularly as we try to imagine the role of disability studies among the ranks of other legitimated academic disciplines. As a celebrated case study, disability studies ironically plays the role of an exceptional, albeit unruly, child. No one wants to qualify as an exceptional child if that means a special exception in need of various qualifiers, lowered standards, and infantilizing treatment. In our video *Vital Signs*, Harlan Hahn refers to this tendency as the distaste for euphemism: as if "disability were so awful that you have to disguise it with all of these fancy words. We [in the disability community] don't like that!" During Victor's stint in Paris, the boy was singled out for a great deal of special treatment: a battery was affixed to his person that administered electric shocks for bad behavior; numerous psychological and physiological tests were administered to assess his functional status as a primitive throwback; and he was hung out of a fourth-story window by his feet to better align his interests with the goals of his training. These curious signs of commitment to Victor's well-being were a result of the desperation that his managers felt at being unable to reconcile their imagined object of study with the one that was actually before them.

What became immediately obvious—and this is the danger of having one's object of research suddenly on location—was that there existed considerable distance between Victor's desires and those of the diagnostic institution. As the Jamaican writer Michelle Cliff explains in her essay "A Journey into

https://doi.org/10.1632/S0030812900168038 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Speech" (1988), "I felt, with Victor, that my wildness had been tamed—that which I had been taught was my wildness" (57). In other words, Victor not only was being trained in the manners and customs of the moderns but also was being taught his savagery—a barbarism that he had not recognized before his ingestion in the classification of feral.

This same situation of oppositions has, to some degree, characterized efforts to integrate disability studies into the College of Applied Health Sciences at the University of Illinois, Chicago. The Interdisciplinary PhD Program in Disability Studies, the only one of its kind in the country, finds itself functioning as an academic case study for other institutions and the disability community in general. While none of us has been subject to electrical shock or hung out of a fourth-floor window by our feet, faculty members and students endlessly feel the press of being ensconced in the institution to which our field has dedicated much critique. Thus, like Victor, we are being taught our wildness, since the perspective of disability studies proves so difficult to institutionalize. Almost as a literalization of its disciplinary location, the disability studies program exists precariously near the buildings that house the therapies and the medical school on one side and the public health building on the other (this is the layout of our campus, so it's more than a metaphor). In other words, disability studies finds itself flanked by disciplines that it has set out to challenge. This physical locale places many disabled people on campus in relatively close proximity to practitioners in these fields. One can look out an office window and watch disability studies students, staff, and faculty members passing white-coated individuals on the sidewalk fairly regularly. One also often witnesses the white-coated strollers craning their necks for a quick diagnostic assessment of the bodies making their way into the Disability, Health, and Social Policy building. It's amazing how many times one can be diagnosed when sharing pathways (textual and literal) with medical and rehabilitation professionals. Just as Victor was unleashed into the courtyard at the Institute for Deaf-Mutes for Parisian onlookers to gawk at him, so one can find oneself the subject of evaluating gazes with some frequency at UIC.

Additionally, therapy students make up about a third of the disability studies graduate student cohort. Some in the therapies have reported feeling disarmed by the privileging of disability perspectives in disability studies—even when disability studies students advocate nothing more radical than the need to make the therapies more responsive to disabled people's goals. Members of the medical and therapy professions have always imagined their commitment to disabled people as their primary value, so hearing that disabled people—particularly disability studies students—do not necessarily share this sentiment often comes as a shock. Such concerns also mistakenly involve the identification of privileged bodies rather than of epistemologies within the field.

The program found itself saddled with an expectation to make therapy students feel comfortable even though the discipline often traffics in the discomforting challenge of many personal and public perspectives about human differences; to "belong conceptually to [the program]" the therapies have consistently argued that the rehabilitation of deficient bodies must be included in the program. In addition, researchers in the therapies argued that impairment-based research should also be included in a broad conceptualization of disability studies. Conceding these approaches to disability as part of disability studies would be tantamount to acknowledging and internalizing one's own deviance—to speak one's own subjugation on a bodily continuum from superior to normal to aberrant. This effort to have disabled clients speak their own debasement (even if this means positing their own state of mind) has been the ultimate goal of

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disciplines seeking to justify their own efforts. Here we come directly into contact with the advent of compulsory feral-ization—as with disability culture, disability studies must be tamed because it is undisciplined and, as one *New York Times* article put it, would "bite the hands that would feed [it]" (Martin). In fact, Newton tells a story where Victor grows so frustrated by his efforts to have his desires recognized as legitimate that he viciously bites Itard's hand in a moment of rage (125).

The institutionalization of disability studies is fraught with difficulties because the field situates itself as a force of destabilization—one that would treat unaccommodating environments and disciplines, not individual insufficiencies, as the object of change. If we had space we would proceed to analyze the phenomenon of "people-based research practices" to scrutinize contemporary institutional research relations to disability, and our argument would ultimately return to our contention that disability oppression occurs when a population is assumed to be endlessly available as a research object. Whether one believes oneself engaged in refuting harmful ideologies about disability or not, efforts to use disabled people for research inevitably flirt with a eugenics-based notion of expendability—expendability of energy, resources, and time, which are believed to exist in greater quantities among disability populations. In part this presumption about research availability stems from a foundational social belief that disabled people are sidelined from mainstream participation. This marginality, in turn, suggests more free time because of a defining lack of engagement in recognized cultural activities. However, we want to suggest that this form of marginality is an ideological formation of capitalism. The assumption of excess leisure time provides the grounds on which all disability-based research systems are based.

We would like to conclude with a few brief, cautionary tales to those participating in new efforts to involve disabled people and their experiences in research. Even in disability studies we are running the risk of reproducing research methodologies that may contribute to the exhaustion of people-based research practices. Research that involves human subjects threatens to replicate the oppressive history of time and energy depletion that is one of the primary sources of disabled people's subjugation. Even in our press to act morally and with the interests of disabled people in mind, we cannot afford to misrecognize the errors that developed out of training and diagnostic practices applied to feral children and schooling for blind and deaf individuals or the effects of eugenics and posteugenics. All research on disability has been conducted under similar "ethical" precepts—even eugenicists argued that their work was performed on behalf of the target population as an alleviation of societal problems. In our own college, we watch social science–based research practices marshal in students, community residents, and professionals with disabilities as if this population were an ever-flowing fount of information. Beneath the guise of a leftist agenda of disability-centered research, we still reproduce an intense degree of oppression in the name of a newfound respect for disabled people's input into the bottomless well of our quest for disability knowledge.

Even at UIC, which has some leanings toward radical research agendas for disability, one can witness an escalating tendency toward methodologies variously called participatory research, client-based research, or community consultation. We (and we include ourselves as participants in this research glut) interview disabled children about their experiences in schools; we have meetings with people of color in wheelchairs to promote advocacy of their rights; we survey our students about the transformational aspects of their work in disability studies; we bring in people with Down syndrome to participate in physi-

https://doi.org/10.1632/S0030812900168038 Published online by Cambridge University Press

cal exercise programs; we perform follow-up interviews with people who have managed releases from nursing homes; we compare the weight of people with developmental disabilities from one decade to another to assess their improving or declining health; we ask families about their frustration with service delivery, inadequate inclusion practices, sibling experiences of growing up with disabled brothers or sisters, attitudes toward disabled family members. In other words, we don't necessarily see the modern disability research industry enacting an appropriate level of restraint with respect to disabled people's pursuit of their own objectives. We are running the risk of reproducing aspects of an oppressive structure that disability studies was expected to correct or, at least, avoid.

We want to end by making a heretical claim that textually based analysis is the only absolute guard against the exhaustion of people-based research practices—primarily because a study of texts, no matter its limitations, exhausts no one but the researcher (and, perhaps, the original author). There is a great practicality to approaching the study of disability in this manner. Throughout this essay we have sought to reread the textual record of Victor, the Wild Boy of Aveyron, as a basis for analyzing the institutionalization of disability studies in the contemporary academy. This historical-referencing strategy was purposeful in that we believe the existing textual record is more than adequate for reflections on the state of disability. In fact, there needs to be a radical research-based agenda articulated from this point of view: since texts provide us access to perspectives that inevitably filter disability through the reigning ideologies of their day, their analysis turns social beliefs into objects of investigation. Just as disability studies has argued vociferously about the socially constructed nature of disability, we must recognize that texts supply windows onto social contexts (including present ones) for our scrutiny.

In other words, to some extent we have placed the emphasis incorrectly if we value texts only for their empowering representations of people with disabilities. We should rest assured that our era's beliefs about disability will be found wanting in the future, just as the social model is already coming under attack from various segments of the disability universe—including disability studies and disability activism. This is one reason why we counsel students against the usage of *positive* and *negative* as adequate terms for assessing the value of visual or textual representations. A positive image in our time quickly becomes a later moment's campy image, a barometer by which one assesses what was overlooked, left out, or depreciated. The ideological moorings that inevitably inform our era's representational strategies can quickly sediment and look forced. Representations are inevitably bound to their historical moment's shortcomings, idiosyncrasies, and obsessions. Disability studies, like other minority and identity areas of study, must engage all images as if they function in the spaces of cultural mediation. One of the primary tasks of disability studies is to cultivate media and textual critics in the therapies as well as the humanities who can intervene in the cultural images of disability that influence our responses and ways of imagining human differences.

When persons with disabilities move from passive, silenced objects of discourse to active producers of knowledge about the social, political, and phenomenological understanding of disability, they destabilize any number of objectifying practices. This change alone will prove monumental not because people with disabilities inherently know the truth of their own social and biological lives but because their visible entry into the discourse of their bodies makes all speaking positions in the field shift and grow necessarily self-conscious and, we hope, increasingly self-reflexive. This accounts for much of the

https://doi.org/10.1632/S0030812900168038 Published online by Cambridge University Press

discomfort posed by disability studies and, frankly, its radical promise.

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Developing Diversity and Equal Opportunity: Why the Disability Perspective Matters

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The passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was a great victory in justice for people with disabilities and for this nation. And though sometimes forgotten in the more recent wake of the ADA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, passed in 1975, has been equally significant for people with disabilities and our nation. Together these statutes have changed the landscape of American society, what it means to be disabled, and, maybe most important, expectations of and about disabled people.

Integration in primary and secondary school education provided for in the IDEA and nondiscrimination in employment guaranteed in the ADA work together to provide equal opportunity for disabled people. Though traditionally excluded from educational opportunities, today an ever-growing number of individuals with disabilities are pursuing higher education, and more and more qualified individuals with disabilities are entering the job market. Additionally, because of laws such as the IDEA, today's students *without* disabilities have had, unlike their parents, significant experience with students with disabilities as peers and classmates. The incoming workforce, therefore, will be more comfortable learning and working alongside disabled colleagues than were previous generations.

People with disabilities are not only entering the workplace in greater numbers but also facing greatly changed expectations about how they will be treated there. Young people coming out of high school and college today do not know a society without the ADA and IDEA. These statutes have reshaped their environment for the better, and whether disabled or not, students expect to benefit from its provisions.

The purpose of the ADA is to confront and prohibit discrimination and expand opportunities by removing physical and attitudinal barriers. This law has often, and appropriately, been compared to the historic Civil Rights Act, Title VII, which celebrated its fortieth anniversary in 2004. But the ADA and Title VII grew out of different cultural and historical experiences. This difference helps explain the current backlash against the

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