



**Crip Creativity:**



## **Decentering Normal / Centering Difference**

2020 © Karen Keifer-Boyd, Ph.D., Professor of Art Education, The Pennsylvania State University

Through cultural and material productions of difference, Crip theory challenges societal parameters of the normative informed by histories of racism, imperialism, colonialism and related assemblages of hierarchical power. Crip theory is a transdisciplinary theory of disability justice that is formed from intersections of critical disability, feminist, queer, and critical race/ethnic studies.

The following questions are at the heart of this Equity through the Arts keynote presentation.

1. What does *including difference* mean to you? Consider what *Inclusion* means to you, and in your practice? What does *Difference* mean to you and in your practice?
2. Who is marked as different and in what context?
3. How is exclusion and inclusion sustained or disrupted?
4. Who has power and privilege to be unmarked (e.g., race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability are not an issue)—and in what context?
5. How is disability marked or signified? Whose theories, ideas, beliefs, art, histories, lives are integral to what and how and who you teach through the arts?

**Self-identity, embodiment, and agency**—from critical disabilities studies perspectives—are the foci of the “Crip Creativity: Decentering Normal / Centering Difference” presentation.

**Left image** is from **Lisa Bufano’s** 2011 dance performance titled: *Home Is Not Home*, which conveys new meanings considering her death at home in 2013 and the pandemic in which we shelter-in-place, trying to create environments that we feel at home. Bufano used Queen Ann furniture legs as prosthetics, a focus of a chapter by Amanda Cachia in the 2020 book, titled, *Contemporary art and disability studies*, edited by Alice Wexler and John Derby. Cachia wrote about Bufano’s work in a 2016 publication and Alison Kafer includes Bufano as one of three artists in her 2019 article titled “Crip Kin, Manifesting,” in the journal *Catalyst*.

**Right image** is a film still from [Rachel Gadsden’s 2017 Shamal Performance](#). Through introducing art such as Rachel Gadsden’s art with her drawing films available on vimeo, teachers can introduce decentering normal activities designed to disrupt ableist notions of (ab)normal in order to transform assumptions of normal. The activities should engage students in discussions and experiences of ableist notions of (ab)normal and to challenge language, behaviors, and attitudes that position people as (ab)normal. Participating in the activities are ways to discover that normal is relative to one’s own experiences and to counteract narrow perspectives of what it means to be human. The goal is to change attitudes to value one’s own and others’ differences. Consider the parallels between Gadsden's creative process and her embodied knowing. Consider the role of documentation in Gadsden’s work in which her norm, her way of knowing and being in the world, is her material and content of her art.

Below, is a reference and resource document for Perpich Center that includes the art and publications presented in the keynote presentation for the Equity Through the Arts conference.

Karen Keifer-Boyd, Ph.D., Professor of Art Education and Women’s, Gender, & Sexuality Studies at The Pennsylvania State University. [kk-b@psu.edu](mailto:kk-b@psu.edu)

## References & Resources

- Annamma, S., Connor, D. J., & Ferri, B. A. (2013). Dis/ability critical race studies (DisCrit): Theorizing at the intersections of race and dis/ability. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 16(1), 1-31.
- Ashby, C. (2012). Disability studies and inclusive teacher preparation: A socially just path. *Research & Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 37(2), 89-99.
- Bell, C. (Ed.). (2011). *Blackness and disability: Critical examinations and cultural interventions*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press.
- Benin, D., & Cartwright, L. (2006). Shame, empathy and looking practices: Lessons from a disability studies classroom. *Journal of Visual Culture*, 5(2), 155–171.
- Baglieri, S., Bejoian, L. M., Broderick, A. A., Connor, D. J., & Valle, J. (2011). [Re]claiming “inclusive education” toward cohesion in educational reform: Disability studies unravels the myth of the normal child. *T.C. Record*, 113(10), 2122–2154.
- Cachia, A. (2016). Disabling Surrealism: Reconstituting Surrealist tropes in contemporary art. In A. Millett-Gallant & E. Howie (Eds.), *Disability and Art History* (pp. 132-154). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Claire, E. (2017). *Brilliant imperfection: Grappling with cure*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Cohen-Rottenberg, R. (2013). *Doing social justice: Thoughts on ableist language and why it matters*. <http://www.disabilityandrepresentation.com/2013/09/14/ableist-language/>
- Cohen-Rottenberg, R. (2014). *On normalcy and identity politics*. <http://www.disabilityandrepresentation.com/>
- Cohen-Rottenberg, R. (2014). *10 Questions About Why Ableist Language Matters, Answered*. <http://everydayfeminism.com/2014/11/ableist-language-matters/>
- Coleman, K., Ferguson, E., & Ramey, J. (2005). Disability art and culture project: About us. Anti-Oppression Statement. <https://dacphome.org/about/>
- Connor, D., & Gabel, S. (2013). “Crippling” the curriculum through academic activism: Working toward increasing global exchange to reframe (dis)ability and education. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 46(1), 100–118.
- Cosenza, J. (2013). The crisis of collage: Disability, queerness, and chrononormativity. *Cultural Studies <-> Critical Methodologies*, 14(2), 155–163.
- Davidson, M. (2019). *Invalid Modernism: Disability and the missing body of the aesthetic*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Davis, L. (2002). *Bending over backwards: Disability, dismodernism and other difficulties positions*. New York, NY: NYU Press.
- Davis, L. J. (2013). *The disability studies reader* (4th edition). New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.
- Derby, J. (2011). Disability studies and art education. *Studies in Art Education*, 52, 94–111.
- Derby, J. (2016). Confronting Ableism: Disability Studies Pedagogy in Preservice Art Education. *Studies in Art Education*, 57(2), 102-119.
- Disability Studies Arts & Education (DSAE) (2019). Mission. <https://dsae.online/>
- Disability Studies in Art Education (DSAE) (2019). Purpose. <https://www.arteducators.org/community/articles/295-disability-studies-in-art-education-dsae>

- Erevelles, N. (2012). "What...[thought] cannot bear to know": Crippin' the limits of "Thinkability" *Review of Disability Studies: An International Journal*, 8(3), 35-44.
- Firestorm Collective. (2014). Anti-oppression statement. <https://www.firestorm.coop/anti-oppression.html>
- Flynn, S. (2020) Corporeality and critical disability studies: toward an informed epistemology of embodiment, *Disability & Society*, DOI: [10.1080/09687599.2020.1755237](https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2020.1755237)
- Garland-Thomson, R. (2002). Integrating disability, transforming feminist theory. *NWSA Journal*, 14(3), 1-32.
- Gaylord, V., Powers, L., Hayden, M., Smith, J., & Finn, C. (Eds.) (2004). Impact: Feature Issue on Political Activism and Voter Participation by Persons with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities, 17 (2). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration. <https://ici.umn.edu/products/impact/172/default.html>
- Goodley, D. (2014). *Disability studies: Theorising disablism and ableism*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hall, Melinda C., "Critical Disability Theory", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2019 Edition). E. N. Zalta (Ed.). <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/disability-critical/>
- Jóhannsdóttir, Á., Egilson, S. T., & Gibson, B. E. (2020). What's shame got to do with it? The importance of affect in critical disability studies, *Disability & Society*.
- Kafer, A. (2013). *Feminist queer crip*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Kafer, A. (2019). Crip kin, manifesting. *Catalyst, feminism, and technoscience*, 5(1), 1-37.
- Keifer-Boyd, K. (2017-2019). *Overlap: Life Tapestries* exhibition and other immersive art experiences at <http://cyberhouse.arted.psu.edu/322/exhibition.html>
- Keifer-Boyd, K. (2018). Creativity, disability, diversity, and inclusion. In J. B. Crockett & S. M. Malley (Eds.), *Handbook of arts education and special education: Policy, research, and practices* (pp. 54-65). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Keifer-Boyd, K. (2019). ...not the epitome of normalcy. *IMAG#8*, 43-45. <https://www.insea.org/imag8>
- Keifer-Boyd, K. (2019). Finding unfamiliar bridges: Questioning the familiar. In A. Wexler & V. Sibbaghi (Eds.), *Bridging communities through socially engaged art* (pp. 194-203). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Keifer-Boyd, K., Bastos, F., Richardson, S., & Wexler, A. (2018). Disability justice: Rethinking "inclusion" in arts education research. *Studies in Art Education*, 59(3), 267-271.
- Keifer-Boyd, K., & Knochel, A. D. (2019). Decentering normal. In R. L. Garner (Eds.), *Exploring digital technologies for art-based special education: Models and methods for inclusive K-12 classrooms* (pp. 5-15). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Keifer-Boyd, K., Wexler, A., & Kraft, M. (2020). Inclusion matters: "Are you sure you belong here?" In A. Wexler & J. Derby (Eds.), *Contemporary art and disability studies* (pp. 48-60). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Kraft, M., & Keifer-Boyd, K. (2013). *Including difference: A communitarian approach to art education in the least restrictive environment*. Reston, VA: The National Art Education Association.
- Lawrence-Brown, D. & Sapon Shevin, M. (Eds.). (2013). *Condition critical: Key principles for equitable and inclusive education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Library of Congress. (2012). *Politics and the Dancing Body Exhibition*. <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/politics-and-dance/>
- Littlelobe Disability Justice Collective. [www.littleglobe.org/portfolio/disability-justice-collective](http://www.littleglobe.org/portfolio/disability-justice-collective)

- McRuer, R. (2005, Winter). We were never identified: Feminism, queer theory, and a disabled world. In T. Meade & D. Serlin (Eds.), Feature issue on Disability and History. *Radical History Review*, 94, 148-154.
- McRuer, R. (2006). *Crip theory: Cultural signs of queerness and disability*. New York, NY: NYU Press.
- Meekosha, H., & Shuttleworth, R. (2009) What's so 'critical' about critical disability studies?, *Australian Journal of Human Rights*, 15(1), 47-75
- Millett, A. (2008). Sculpting body ideals: *Alison Lapper Pregnant* and the public display of disability, 28(3), <https://dsq-sds.org/article/view/122/122>
- Mitchell, D., & Snyder, S. (2001). *Narrative prosthesis: Disability and the dependencies of discourse*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Mitchell, D., & Snyder, S. (2015). *The biopolitics of disability: Neoliberalism, ablenationalism and peripheral embodiment*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Mullins, A. (2009). My 12 pairs of legs. Retrieved from [https://www.ted.com/talks/aimee\\_mullins\\_prosthetic\\_aesthetics?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/aimee_mullins_prosthetic_aesthetics?language=en)
- Mullins, A. (2012). *The aesthetics of prosthetics: Aimee Mullins*. THINKR. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CEdhSpaiRUI>
- Novick, J. (2014). *Don't look down on me*. Retrieved from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mD\\_PWU6K514](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mD_PWU6K514)
- Nyman, M. (2013). [Interpretation makes it real: Disability and subjectivity in biopics of three women artists](http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/1777/3259). *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 33(4). Retrieved from <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/1777/3259>
- Palombo, A. (2014). Humor chic equal rights – disabled Disney princesses “Which Disney princess are you?” Retrieved from <http://humorchic.blogspot.com/2014/01/humor-chic-equal-rights-disabled-disney.html>
- Picciuto, E. (2015). They don't want an autism cure. *The Daily Beast*. [www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/02/25/they-don-t-want-an-autism-cure.html](http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/02/25/they-don-t-want-an-autism-cure.html)
- Piepzna-Samarasinha, L. L. (2012). *The Art and Practice of Disability Justice Going from a Point to a Sphere - Disability Justice and Cultural Work*. Retrieved from <https://prezi.com/yjav3hpgxz01/the-art-and-practice-of-disability-justice/>
- Richards, A. G., Tietyen, A. C., Jicha, G. A., Bardach, S. H., Schmitt, F. A., Fardo, D. W., Kryscio, R. J., & Abner, E. L. (2019). Visual arts education improves self-esteem for persons with dementia and reduces caregiver burden: A randomized controlled trial. *Dementia*, 18(7-8), 3130-3142.
- Sayce, L. (2000). *From psychiatric patient to citizen: Overcoming discrimination and social exclusion*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.
- Schalk, S. (2017). Critical Disability Studies as Methodology, *Lateral*, 6(1). [[Schalk 2017 available online](#)]
- Shildrick, M. (2012). “Critical Disability Studies: Rethinking the Conventions for the Age of Postmodernity.” In N. Watson, A. Roulstone and C. Thomas (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies* (pp. 30–41). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Siebers, T. (2008). *Disability Theory*. Lansing, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Sins Invalid (2016). *An unshamed claim to beauty in the face of invisibility: Our mission*. <http://sinsinvalid.org/mission.html>
- Sleeter, C. (2010). Building Counter-Theory about Disability. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 30(2).
- Snyder, S. L., & Mitchell, D. T. (2005). *Cultural locations of disability*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Stein, L. (2016). *Fluidity of Gender: Sculpture by Linda Stein* series. <https://www.lindastein.com/series/4728-2/>

Walker, A. (2019, Sept. 1). Alison Lapper says late son Parys was bullied over her disability. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/sep/01/artist-alison-lapper-says-late-son-parys-was-bullied-over-her-disability>

Wexler, A. (2016). Re-imagining inclusion/exclusion: Unpacking assumption and contradictions in arts and special education from a critical disability studies perspective. *The Journal of Social Theory in Art Education*, 36, 32–42.

Wexler, A. (2016). *Autism in a decentered world*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Wexler, A., & Derby, J. (2015). Art in institutions: The emergence of (disabled) outsiders. *Studies in Art Education*, 56(2), 127–14.

Wexler, A., & Derby, J. (Eds.), (2020). *Contemporary art and disability studies*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Woodruff, J. (2016). *Broken justice: Prisoners with disabilities lack 'scaffolding for success'*. <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/prisoners-with-disabilities-lack-scaffolding-for-success/>

Wong, A. (2014). *Disability visibility project: Recording disability history, one story at a time*. Retrieved from <https://disabilityvisibilityproject.com/>

**Karen Keifer-Boyd**, Ph.D., Professor of Art Education and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at The Pennsylvania State University, co-authored several books: *Including Difference* (NAEA, 2013); *InCITE*, *InSIGHT*, *InSITE* (NAEA, 2008); *Engaging Visual Culture* (Davis, 2007); co-edited *Real-World Readings in Art Education: Things Your Professors Never Told You* (Falmer, 2000); and has numerous journal publications. Her research on transdisciplinary creativity, inclusion, feminist art pedagogy and disability studies, visual culture, cyberart activism, transcultural dialogue, action research, and eco-social justice art education has been translated and published in Austria, Brazil, China, Columbia, Finland, Oman, and S. Korea. In her chapter *Creativity, Disability, Diversity and Inclusion* in the *Handbook of Arts Education and Special Education* (Routledge, 2018), she draws on *Disabilities Studies* theory and practices that change attitudes and environments to create an inclusive world of difference.

Co-founder and editor of *Visual Culture & Gender*, she has received Fulbright Awards (2012 Distinguished Chair in Gender Studies at Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt, Austria; and Finland, 2006) and residencies (Austria, 2009; Uganda, 2010); and several National Art Education Association (NAEA) awards including the Eisner Lifetime Achievement Award (2020) and the VSA Gerber Special Needs Lifetime Achievement Award (2018). She is an NAEA Distinguished Fellow Class of 2013. She is a recipient of a National Art Education Foundation grant (2017-2018) for social justice art education and a National Science Foundation grant (2010-2012) regarding gender barriers in technology. She is a consultant to the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts serving on the VSA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee; the Council for Policy Studies; and the NAEA Data Visualization research commission think tank. She served on the NAEA's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Taskforce (2018-19).

Her lifetime work is based on her deep belief that visual art is integral to forming subjectivity, community, agency, and enacting social change. Visual art is also a powerful way to interpret histories, concepts, and experiences. Socially engaged participatory art can develop human potentials for dialogue, empathy, personal and collective healing, and can create solutions to nuanced and complex eco-social justice issues, documenting, and exploring beliefs, theories, and histories.