

**MODERNITY, HEGEMONY AND DISABILITY: A CRITICAL  
THEORETICAL EXPLORATION OF THE HISTORICAL  
DETERMINANTS OF DISABILITY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Adopting a historical analysis methodology, this critical theory dissertation demonstrates how social, economic, political, cultural and intellectual developments associated with the historical period known as modernity gave rise to many of the disabling forms of oppression that continue to exist in contemporary society. The dissertation asserts that an understanding of the ongoing impacts of the past is necessary if progress is to be made in the present and future tasks of creating a more egalitarian and inclusive society. Because modernity has been understood in many different ways using very distinct criteria, this research project begins by clarifying the work's use of the term. Drawing upon extensive Critical Disability Studies literature as well as Gramscian, postmodern, psychoanalytic, Marxist and feminist frameworks of analysis, this dissertation then explores the hegemonic role of the white, able-bodied heterosexual male in perpetuating oppressive aspects of modernity such as hierarchy, inequality, dehumanization and the psychology of domination. Embracing a broad definition of disability, the dissertation exposes modernity's disabling impacts on women, Jewish people and members of the black, gay and disabled communities. In addition to exploring the past roots of contemporary forms of disability, this research project examines contradictory elements within modernity that have the potential to promote positive social change. The final section of this dissertation suggests that the concept of community has the potential to add to disability discourse by generating counter-hegemonic perspectives and social policies that support equality, inclusion and social justice for all those social groups that have been subjected to the disabling impacts of hegemonic power in the modern era.

## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my parents. My late father, Otto Raymond Mapp, encouraged me to stay in university no matter what my reasons for learning and completely supported my life and interests.

I am grateful for the support of my mother, Eulalie Rosetta Mapp, who shared my father's support for education and encouraged my pursuit of knowledge. Together, my parents provided the motivation I needed to learn to value education as a source of knowledge and development into a more understanding and compassionate human being.

My aunt, Agnes V. Timmins, strongly advocated education and dedicated herself to ensuring better opportunities for future generations of our family.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This Ph.D. dissertation in Critical Disability Studies (CDS) adopts a historical perspective that draws linkages between past, present and future while examining how the historical period known as modernity gave rise to many of the disabling forms of oppression that continue to exist in contemporary society. In recognition of the fact that modernity has been defined in many different ways using very different criteria, the first section of the dissertation clarifies the specific way in which the term is used in this paper. Drawing upon CDS literature as well as postmodern, Marxist and feminist frameworks of critical analysis, this research project is fundamentally grounded in a historical analysis methodology which makes extensive use of secondary sources. This methodology is ideally suited to the subject matter of this work because the dissertation's basic purpose is to reveal the past roots of contemporary forms of stigmatization and oppression that continue to disable many social groups. An understanding of the ongoing impacts of the past is necessary, this dissertation asserts, if progress is to be made in the present and future tasks of creating a more egalitarian, enabling and inclusive society.

After critically analyzing many of the factors associated with the historical situating of the white, able-bodied heterosexual male in a position of hegemonic domination that has functioned as a primary disabling force within the modern era, this dissertation demonstrates some of the measures that have been taken to enhance equality, rights and inclusion in our society and offers some suggestions as to how an inclusive concept of community can be integrated into disability discourse to support the future development of a more just, egalitarian and enabling society. While disability discourse has examined many social factors that construct and perpetuate disability, this dissertation suggests that a focus on the concept of community has the potential to generate new avenues of discourse and to support collective action to achieve more egalitarian and inclusive social norms and institutions. Overall, then, this project seeks to

show how the past and the emergence of the modern era have shaped disability in the present and then to offer a few suggestions on the creation of new strategies of change that support enhanced inclusion for persons with disabilities and other oppressed social groups.

At the center of this dissertation are Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony as articulated in his *Prison Notebooks* (1929-32) and the question of how an oppressive form of hegemonic power has been associated with modernity and the entrenching of what Siegal and McCormick (2011) and Hughes (1958) call a "master status identity," a socially constructed identity that dominates and subordinates all other identities. The dissertation discusses how the master status identity embodied in the white, able-bodied heterosexual male has functioned to privilege a narrow range of social groups while disabling many others, particularly those social groups that differ from modernity's dominant norms of health and identity. These disabled and oppressed groups include individuals with disabilities, women, members of the lower classes, and individuals belonging to the gay, black and Jewish communities. This dissertation examines how modernity is associated with the historical emergence of a society in which multiple sub-communities such as these exist in hierarchical and exclusionary relations. What is lacking in modernity, it would appear, is any viable attempt to create, at a pragmatic political level, a broad and inclusive community based on equality, democracy and universal human rights.

Chapter One of this dissertation examines linkages between modernity, hegemony and disability. It begins by discussing what constitutes modernity. There is much dispute over exactly what time period and criteria are to be used in defining modernity and the first chapter of this work discusses the wide range of criteria that have been used for this purpose. Of course, there is no way to establish or declare a definitive understanding of modernity, but the dissertation embraces Berman's (1982) view of modernity as beginning around 1500 and extending into the

late twentieth century and perhaps into the present, early part of the twenty-first century. Many important developments in human history are associated with this time period such as the Reformation, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution. During the modern era, the view arose that humankind has some degree of control over its destiny, rather than being powerless and subjected to providential governance, and this dissertation shows how the rise of industrial capitalism and new communications technologies such as newspapers, the telegraph and mass media offered evidence of humanity's growing autonomy (Berman, 1982, p. 15). Chapter One of the dissertation also explores the many disabling expressions of oppression that arose concurrently with this autonomy.

Democratic ideals, the empirical sciences and an ocularcentric emphasis on the visible world as the arbiter of the real all arose during modernity. These developments were controlled by the white, able-bodied heterosexual male and imposed on society in ways that had both positive and negative impacts on human freedom. Mullaly (2010) observes that the nineteenth century sanctioned the white bourgeois male as the norm against which all other groups were defined and oppressed as different, other and inferior (p. 67). Alternatively, Berman (1982) asserts that the developments of modernity facilitated "adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world" (p. 15). Thus, one of the central themes that Chapter One of this dissertation explores is the complex and contradictory nature of modernity as a historical period that has been both deeply oppressive and filled with vitality and opportunities for progress and new developments in all areas of human life. Berman's (1982) late modern period of 1900-1989 is particularly relevant to this chapter since it describes a historical period associated with a new focus on individual critical thought and autonomous processes of identity formation that have been, and still are, connected to many activist social movements. These

movements fight against political oppression, economic exploitation and dominant social stereotypes and media representations that stigmatize and disable social groups such as women, gays and members of non-white communities.

After clarifying the understanding of modernity that informs this dissertation, Chapter One discusses how the white, able-bodied heterosexual male became established as the ruling hegemonic power of the modern era. Gramsci's (1929-32) theory of cultural hegemony is supplemented by the works of De Beauvoir (1952), Rattansi (2007), Mullaly (2010) and many others to show how the hegemonic power of the white, able-bodied, heterosexual male has disabled gays, disabled people and non-white racial groups. Particular attention is paid to the role of writers such as Aristotle (384-322 BC), Augustine (354-430 AD) and Kramer and Sprenger (1486) in laying the foundations of modernity's assumption that women are fundamentally inferior and deserve to be dominated and subjugated by men. Forgacs' (2000) critique of modernity's "common sense" is elaborated in order to demonstrate that modernity's internal contradictions create space for competing hegemonic discourses. In recognition of capitalism as a defining feature of modernity, Chapter One also discusses how Jary and Jary (1995) draw upon Gramsci's (1929-32) theory of cultural hegemony in order to show that the major institutions of capitalist society - including the Catholic Church, the legal system, the education system, dominant political classes and structures, the media, and so on - embrace ideologies that benefit the ruling class. In the extreme case, this section of the dissertation argues, the disabling inequalities and binary codes of able/disabled, normal/abnormal, superior/inferior and included/excluded connected to modernity can and have resulted in the radical dehumanization of social groups defined as abnormal if they are also defined as serious threats to social stability.

Chapter Two of this dissertation discusses how the hierarchical social, epistemological and ontological structures of modernity have functioned to entrench radical inequality as a social norm and to dehumanize social groups that diverge from the hegemonic norms established by the white, able-bodied heterosexual male. Beginning with an elaboration of the central role played by this “master status identity” in modernity, the second chapter of the dissertation indicates how particular forms of rationality are required to construct some social identities as inferior and rightfully subjected to domination while others are assigned a superior, ruling status (Segal & McCormick, 2010, p. 275). Critical analysis of modernity’s understanding of rationality demonstrates that modernity’s hierarchical and unequal social reality is founded on a system of arbitrarily constructed norms of identity that are subject to constant change. The works of writers such as Goffman (1959), Stebbins (2004), Segal and McCormick (2010), King and McKeowan (2004) and Mahowald (1998) are utilized to show how the modes of rationality shaping human thought and social identity construction in modernity do not reflect a universal substance or essence, but rather reflect historically contingent systems of social power relations.

In the modern era, the white race, able body, male gender, heterosexual disposition and middle-to-upper socioeconomic class status represent the dominant markers of master status identity, and the second chapter of this dissertation discusses how modernity’s pervasive hierarchical classifications transform mere differences into invidious comparisons and rigid able/disabled, superior/inferior binary codes. Indeed, these oppressive binary codes persist despite the advances that have been made in the “more liberal, modern society” of today (King & McKeowan, 2004, p. 150). Writers such as Mahowald (1998) and De Beauvoir (1952) show how modernity’s binary coded identity classifications have denied women independent existence and positioned them in subjection to men. But the dissertation shows that this point applies equally to

all groups that are subordinated by the hegemonic power of modernity's master status identity. Accordingly, Chapter Two of this dissertation explains how the period beginning in the early-mid 20th century saw the rise of extreme expressions of white, able-bodied heterosexual male domination, particularly as manifested in the Nazi leadership of WWII. Hitler's hope was to eventually create a world state dominated by the supposedly perfect Aryan master race but he needed a scapegoat to function as the dialectical opposite of Aryan perfection and this chapter shows how it was mainly (but not exclusively) the Jewish people that filled this role.

In critiquing modernity's master status identity, Chapter Two discusses many writers within and outside the field of CDS who refute master status identity's construction of itself as superior to all other identities. For example, it explains how hooks (1992) subverts master status identity through an oppositional gaze that exposes and criticizes social constructions of reality that are rooted in inequality, exploitation and domination. It also explores Goffman's (1963) view that stigmatized individuals have the power to reinterpret the negative identities that have been forcefully imposed on them by dominant social power. While hooks (1992) affirms the need for critical opposition to oppressive and disabling social norms, Chapter Two also embraces Gramsci's (1929-32) support for new ways of thinking about and understanding the world that support a socialist political transformation. It further suggests that the Social Model of Disability (SMD) supports criticism of modernity's master status identity by exposing the many social determinants of disability that exist at both the wider structural/institutional level and at the level of social identity construction (Shakespeare, 2006, p. 30). Overall, Chapter Two examines the intersecting linkages between modernity's prevailing master status identity and the myriad hierarchies, inequalities and processes of dehumanization that continue to disable many groups in today's society.

Chapter Three of this dissertation explores the prominent role of Sigmund Freud in consolidating and legitimating the dominant social location of modernity's master status identity - the white, able-bodied heterosexual male. It discusses how Freud's (1910) ideas about normal and healthy human psychosexual development reflect and reproduce the processes of social identity construction characterizing modernity. During the modern era, the white, able-bodied heterosexual male has been constructed as a hegemonic identity with legitimate power over the members of all other social groups, and this phallic heterosexuality maintains substantial disabling power in contemporary society. The third chapter of this dissertation examines how exclusionary epistemologies have been used to construct human identity classifications that stigmatize and disable members of social groups defined as inferior and abnormal. For example, it explains that the eugenicist Sir Francis Galton's (1833) work, *Inquiries into the Human Faculty and Its Development*, promoted the influential view that people with mental and physical disabilities should be weeded out of society in order to maintain a healthy populace (p. 24-25). Chapter Three clarifies the way in which the scientific classifications created by individuals such as Galton supported the view that members of all social groups diverging from dominant social norms should be stigmatized and disabled as inferior, deviant and abnormal.

Chapter Three indicates that the eugenicist perspective advanced by Galton (1833) and others connected one of modernity's central values - the achievement of ongoing social progress - to the ideal of the physically and mentally able individual. From this perspective, individuals with disabilities manifest forms of imperfection that undermine social progress and this chapter of the dissertation explains that a significant aspect of modernity is the notion that individuals and social groups differing from hegemonic understandings of normalcy and ability pose a threat to social progress. However, Chapter Three emphasizes the way in which Freud's (1910) view of

human psychosexual development generated a binary structure of able-bodied, heterosexual normality and disabled, homosexual abnormality. Indeed, Freud (1910) describes homosexuality as an infantile expression of human sexuality based on failure to successfully resolve the momentous Oedipus complex. Moreover, Freud (1910) links phallic heterosexuality to socioeconomic power in modern society. This dissertation will explain how, in Freud's understanding of the healthy human adult, the phallic heterosexual male eventually matures and assumes an authority position at the head of the family and in society. He naturally transitions into the hegemonic social role of modernity's master status identity.

After examining Freud's (1910) construction of the hegemonic phallic male, Chapter Three critically challenges the reality of the Oedipus complex and the clearly false assumption that members of the gay community somehow lack the ability to form families, raise healthy children and participate in socioeconomic power. While there are many ways in which Freud's (1910) psychoanalytic ideas regarding human psychosexual development reflect and reinforce the social identity norms of modernity, Chapter Three draws attention to subversive elements within Freud's thought that relativize human desire, such as his recognition that human identities are culturally relative. The third chapter of this dissertation discusses Chodorow's (1989) observation that gender identities are formed through self-definition and changing cultural norms as well as her vision of a future that is free of rigid and exclusionary sexual and gender norms (p. 101-109). In addition, Freud's thought is critically examined from the standpoint of Oliver's (1990) discussion of the "politics of disablement" which pervades major social institutions within modernity such as the medical establishment. And, modernity's scopie elements are scrutinized in order to expose "the role of seeing" in constructing disabilities such as those connected to Freud's thought (Jay, 1988; Garland Thompson, 2001).

This dissertation's critical discussion of phallic male hegemony shows how a white, able-bodied heterosexual male viewpoint provides the lens through which human bodies are perceived and situated in modernity's hierarchy of worthiness. It draws upon Elkins' (1999) work to examine how the human body is subjected to processes of interpretation and evaluation that categorize all human bodies that diverge from the ideal of the physically and mentally healthy, white male body - such as the bodies of women, non-whites and people with disabilities - as inherently less worthy than the healthy white male body. However, Chapter Three emphasizes that critical discourses and the obvious presence of alternative interpretations of the human body mean that counter-hegemonic perspectives also exist within modernity's various realms of meaning creation. Interpretations of beauty, ugliness, race, ability, disability, man, woman, black, white, sexual normalcy and so on are subject to contestation and constantly changing. Despite this, capitalist assumptions remain dominant in modernity and classify people based on their economic productivity. As a result, Chapter Three indicates, notions of human worthiness in modernity are also informed by the economic dictates of efficiency and productivity.

Chapter Four of this dissertation shifts the analysis into a more contemporary framework by exploring hegemony, modernity and disability within the context of the current global hegemon - the United States of America. It begins by discussing the ongoing disabling of the gay community in the US despite the advances in gay rights that have been achieved in the US (and in other countries like Canada). The dominant political culture in the US continues to manifest, to a significant degree, an ingrained denial of the equality rights of social groups that do not conform to America's hegemonic white, heterosexual Judeo-Christian norms. Indeed, the battle for gay rights in the US still faces powerful resistance from conservative groups that champion liberty and freedom as the foundations of America and yet fear and oppose social policies that

promote liberty and freedom for *all* of the nation's social groups. Accordingly, Chapter Four discusses the role of irrational feelings of public fear in perpetuating the denial of gay rights (Herek, 2004, p. 16.). Examining America's global hegemonic status, it also discusses the current, troubling phenomenon of religious extremists from the US spreading homicidal expressions of hatred, prejudice and, indeed, terrorism, against members of gay communities in countries around the world (Domi, 2011, p. 1). The efforts of American religious extremists to support the legally sanctioned murder of gay people in Africa are presented as an example of the Americanization of the global psyche that is taking place under globalization and the spread of neoliberal ideology and practices.

While Beasley (2005) links the logic of able-bodied heterosexual domination to white masculine hegemony within all arenas of social power, and Watters (2010) asserts that America uses its hegemonic role to aggressively impose its own "crazy" social norms on the world as a whole, Chapter Four rejects simplistic, one-dimensional understandings of the US and suggests that the "individualistic quest" at the heart of American society contains positive potential. It is abundantly clear that American individualism can be corrupted by financial greed and narrow self-interest, but it can also promote acceptance of differences and individual expressions of personality and identity. The fourth chapter of this dissertation references Waldschmidt's (2005) view that American society is experiencing a kind of quiet revolution at the level of social identity construction that is relentlessly undermining the conservative hope to sanction and normalize a single hegemonic identity. Waldschmidt (2005) uses the phrase "flexible-normalism" to describe an increasingly powerful socio-cultural milieu and new understanding of normalcy that encourages oppressed Americans to affirm their right to freedom, liberty, equality and social inclusion despite divergences from hegemonic identity norms (p. 191).

Chapter Four pursues the conflict between Watters' (2010) view that America uses its power as a global hegemon to impose its "craziness" on the entire globe and Waldschmidt's (2005) observation that the power to define what constitutes "normal" is no longer in the hands of hegemonic groups in America. Indeed, the conflict between groups promoting exclusionary and inclusionary social norms can be observed in many aspects of contemporary American society and this dissertation suggests that the experiences of the disabled, gay and black communities have been at the center of this conflict. Chapter Four examines the disabling social processes that have coerced Afro-Americans into internalizing negative identities as being sub-human, lacking in intelligence, deviant and genetically disposed towards criminal behavior. Discussing relatively recent events such as the police killings of Michael Brown, Walter Scott and Freddie Gray, the dissertation explains that the processes of labeling and stigmatization that modern US society imposes on members of the black community are not new but represent strategies of disablement that America's hegemonic social groups have historically utilized to perpetuate their own power and privilege while exploiting and marginalizing other social groups.

One of the main themes examined in Chapter Four is the notion that the complex and intersecting linkages between modernity, industrialization, science, technology, capitalism and hegemony must all be understood as parts of a historical process that is deeply contradictory - undeniably disabling but also progressive and enabling. Siegal and McCormick (2010) emphasize that hegemonic social power can be abused to impose a deviant social status on members of minority communities (p. 275). Following this point, this dissertation shows how expressions of power and ideology characteristic of modernity stigmatize and label members of some social groups as "deviants" or "outsiders" (Falk, 2001, p. 23). However, Falk (2001) asserts that a constructionist approach to understanding sociological and historical phenomena

exposes labels of deviance or inferiority as products of “perspectives that change all the time” (p. 24). Hence, Chapter Four concludes by affirming the importance of education, critical awareness and historical consciousness in opposing exclusionary social norms and ideologies, and in fostering positive social change that creates greater equality and inclusion for members of stigmatized and disabled social groups.

Chapter Five of this dissertation discusses some strategies that have been used to resist the disabling expressions of hegemony that have defined the modern era and to create positive social change. One of these strategies involves the creation of new discourses. Stigmatized and disabled groups have increasingly recognized that language, discourse, ideology and socio-historical awareness constitute critical arenas in the battle against oppression. Linton (1998), for example, states that it is “particularly important to bring to light the language that reinforces the dominant culture’s views of disability” (p. 9). Focussing on the creation of enabling discourses, Jary and Jary (1995) reference Gramsci’s belief that oppressed groups must engage in “a cultural and ideological struggle in order to create a new socialist ‘common sense,’ and thus change the way people think and behave” (p. 279). Thought and consciousness must change before society can change at a pragmatic political level. Pursuing this point, Chapter Five suggests that a Marxist emphasis on class consciousness and social critique such as hooks’ (1992) advocacy of the oppositional gaze support counter-hegemonic discourses - and political action - that affirm the rights of social groups that have been disabled on the basis of class, race, gender, disability or any other factor. Chapter Five pays special attention to the empowering contradictions within capitalism and neoliberalism, which clearly exploit and disable but also appear to have revolutionary potential and the ability to support ongoing, progressive change within the modern society of today (McRuer, 2006, p. 2).

A significant portion of Chapter Five discusses the use of social policy, legal mechanisms and democratic ideals to promote social justice, rights and inclusion for disabled social groups. The landmark legal case of *M v. H* (1999) is explored in order to show how Canada's *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* was successfully used to create a new concept of 'spouse' in Canada that included same-sex partners. Chapter Five situates this type of legal activism within the concept of democracy and debates over the power of courts versus the power of elected representatives. Some felt that the court's ruling in *M v. H* (1999) undermined democracy because it was based on the *Charter* rather than on laws enacted in Parliament by elected officials (Martin, 2003, p. 99). But others pointed to the need to protect minority rights as part of democracy and to the economic efficiency of change achieved through simple court challenges (Bryden, 1994, p. 104). Supporting the use of legal mechanisms to achieve social change, Mandel (1994) asserts that the *Charter* transfers power to "all Canadians" (p. 39). Chapter Five suggests that the use of legal instruments such as the *Charter* to advance the equality rights of all Canadians fulfills democratic ideals. It also discusses a wide range of Canadian and international legal mechanisms that support human rights and social justice for marginalized social groups such as gays, members of non-white communities, and persons with disabilities.

The final section of Chapter Five discusses strategies with the potential to contribute to the development of more enabling, inclusive communities. It examines the view of Altman and Barnartt (2000) that "contestatory action" can promote social justice at the interconnected levels of practical social activism and social identity construction (p. 143). From this perspective, education, critical thinking and raised social awareness all represent aspects of contestatory action that can help overcome public passivity and implied consent to the disabling actions of hegemonic power. But Chapter Five questions whether adequate attention has been paid to the

disabling impacts of the modern understanding of *society* within the specific context of the way in which modern liberal democratic societies undermine the notion of a unified and inclusive *community*. The dissertation suggests that the oppressive elements implied within the modern understanding of what constitutes society can be observed through comparison of the concept of society and the concept of community. While the former, in a modern liberal democratic context, denotes the abstract concept of atomistic individuals forming a social group, or nation state, on the basis of mutually recognized contractual obligations, the latter recognizes the social collective and social relations as the very ground of the individual; the individual exists, one might say, only as a member of a community and through the social relations between individuals that permit human beings to experience lives of meaning and happiness (Giddens & Sutton, 2014, p. 20-23, 117-119). The fifth chapter of this dissertation suggests that analysis of the important differences between the concepts of society and community, and the implications of those differences for ideals such as equality, democracy, enablement and inclusion, can contribute a new and valuable element to disability discourse. Indeed, the concept of community is notably absent from the *Encyclopedia of Disability* despite its relevance to understanding processes of disablement.

Chapter Five raises the possibility that the concept of community supports the notion of an inclusive society where all individuals represent fundamentally equal and worthy contributors to the social whole. This chapter suggests that Childs' (2003) notion of "transcommunalism," which builds on the traditional concept of community as a social group formed by people living in a specific geographic location and having common identities and interests, has the potential to add to CDS discourse due to the author's unique perspective. Childs (2003) focuses on a type of community that is inherently active and progressive, reconciles diversity with cooperation, and

affirms the importance of both unifying common interests and local concerns. Childs (2003) thus implicitly asks how the type of liberal democratic society characterizing modernity - based on the existence of many different sub-communities existing in hierarchical relations of inferiority/superiority and privilege/oppression - can be transformed into a society in which all sub-communities are recognized and affirmed as equal parts of an inclusive whole. The notion of transcommunality is particularly relevant to disability discourse, this dissertation suggests, because it is a dynamic concept, describing a process of ongoing progressive and enabling social change rather than a particular social entity or organization. It is more like a verb than a noun.

The concept of transcommunality is strongly linked to the issues of modernity, hegemony, disability, capitalism, neoliberalism, social justice and inclusion that are at the basis of this dissertation. Critics of the concept, such as White (2003), assert that the type of active and inclusive community envisioned by Childs (2003) is no longer possible because capitalism, globalization and neoliberalism have virtually universalized the social construction of alienated and commoditized social identities that are incapable of forming community bonds (p. 172). However, Chapter Five of this dissertation suggests that critical discourse around the concept of community - and related concepts such as transcommunality - remains very valuable because it demands critical exploration of what constitutes community, of the differences between the concept of society and the concept of community, and of the types of strategies that activist movements can use to achieve substantive progress towards social justice and the practical realization of an inclusive society.

In a contemporary context, communities may be defined not only in traditional geographical or cultural/shared values terms, but also in terms of the unique 'space' occupied by virtual communities. Today, it is not easy to define what constitutes a community and it is

precisely this, Chapter Five asserts, that gives the concept of community the ability to add a very useful and informative element to disability discourse. In their work, *The Concept of Community*, Minar and Greer (1969) assert that “the importance of the concept of community lies in its very ambiguity... it embodies both the descriptive and the ideal; it recalls to us our power to make as well as to accept, to act as well as to behave” (p. 331). Minar and Greer (1969) implicitly affirm that the concept of community has great potential to generate counter-hegemonic discourses that defy reified viewpoints and encourage critical analysis of the disabling factors in society. The concepts of community and transcommunalism, Chapter Five of this dissertation suggests, can contribute a unique and valuable perspective to the process of understanding how the disabling inequalities associated with the historical origins of modernity have been perpetuated in the present, and how committed activists can strive to create a more egalitarian and inclusive society, or community, of the future.

In summary, Chapters One through Five of this dissertation clarify the concept of modernity that is used in the paper, discuss the oppressive hegemonic power that is located in the master status identity of the white, able-bodied, heterosexual male, and indicate a wide range of social groups that have been, and still are, subjected to modernity’s disabling ideologies, social norms, structures and institutions. Since the disabling power of modernity is strongly linked to processes of social identity construction, the dissertation discusses Freud’s role in sanctioning patriarchal manhood as society’s healthy and natural ruling authority. While subjecting modernity’s oppressive social hierarchies and epistemological classifications to critique based on Gramscian, feminist, post-modern and Marxist perspectives, this dissertation also notes the positive elements within modernity and specifically its incredible energy and vitality, which facilitate the creation of counter-hegemonic discourses and an irrepressible drive towards

constant social change. The dissertation examines modernity's disabling oppression of women, gays, blacks, Jewish people, members of the lower classes, and people belonging to the disabled community, but its final chapter asserts that new discourses, enhanced socio-historical awareness, democratic ideals and legal instruments such as Canada's *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* create space for resistance, empowerment and enabling social change. Finally, this dissertation advances the view that the concept of community and related concepts such as the notion of transcommunality have the potential to generate new avenues of inquiry within disability discourse and to support new activist strategies that promote equality, enablement and inclusion for all members of society.

## CHAPTER ONE: MODERNITY, HEGEMONY AND DISABILITY

### Defining Modernity

Defining modernity is a somewhat difficult challenge because many different writers have understood the term modernity in many different ways. There is a lack of consensus regarding both subject matter and historical time periods when referring to the historical era designated by the word modernity. In his work, *Theories of Modernity and Postmodernity*, Smart (1990) observes that modernity, in a very general sense, has been characterized as a term that “is used to situate the present in relation to the past of antiquity” (p. 17). However, the literature on the topic of modernity is characterized by a lack of specificity regarding the time when the break with antiquity took place and also in connection to the “historical referents or periodization” associated with the modern era (Smart, 1990, p. 15). Other writers approach modernity through a more precise lens. For example, in the work, “Periodization and Politics in Postmodernity,” Turner (1990) more suggests that modernity “arises with the spread of Western imperialism in the sixteenth century” (p. 6). In their work, *Empire*, Hardt and Negri (2000) offer another view of the matter, asserting that the emergence of modernity took place during the period 1200-1600, when new ideas arose to affirm that humanity had both the will and the power to determine its own destiny, rather than being fundamentally helpless and dependent upon Providence (p. 70-87). Indeed, the notion of a contrast between human dependence on the workings of a higher spiritual dimension and human autonomy is often linked to the emergence of modernity. In their work, *Machiavelli: The Prince*, Skinner and Price (1988) reference Machiavelli’s (1469-1547) statement, “I am not unaware that many have thought, and that many still think, that the affairs of the world are so ruled by fortune and by God that the ability of men cannot control them” (p. 85). Thus, one major theme that often arises in efforts to establish what constitutes modernity is the

shift from a humanity driven by faith and the assumption of a divine, ruling order of things to a belief that humankind has the power and autonomy to shape human societies and civilization (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 70-87).

In his work, “Modernity - Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow,” Berman (1982) describes modernity as a term that designates a wide variety of historical processes ranging from the artistic and cultural to the intellectual and technological (p. 16-17). Berman (1982) refers to the modern era as the historical period following what he calls the post-classical era in Europe, and he creates a series of subdivisions or stages existing within the modern era broadly understood. Drawing upon the work of Osborne (1992), Berman (1982) offers the following breakdown of modernity as a whole:

Early Modernity	1500-1789
Classical Modernity	1789-1900
Late Modernity	1900-1989

For Berman (1982), early modernity is linked to the Reformation and the religious movements of the 16<sup>th</sup> century that saw a renewed Catholic Church and the establishment of Protestant churches (p. 16-17). The classical modern period of 1789-1900 saw the rise of industrial capitalism and new communications technologies such as newspapers, the telegraph and mass media. Offering a similar view, Escobar (2004) states that “modernity has identifiable temporal and spatial origins: 17<sup>th</sup> century northern Europe, around the processes of Reformation, the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. These processes crystallized at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and became consolidated with the Industrial Revolution” (p. 211). Berman’s (1982) late modern period of 1900-1989 is associated with a new focus on individual thought and autonomous processes of identity formation that have been, and still are, connected to struggles

against political oppression, economic inequality and mass media representations that stigmatize and marginalize social groups such as women, gays, non-whites and disabled people (p. 16-17). While Osborne (1992) sees modernity ending in the late twentieth century, to be followed by the postmodern period of contemporary society, writers such as Bauman (1989) assert that the modern era continues in the present (p. 13).

The Renaissance began in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and extended into the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and some scholars associate modernity with the transition from the medieval era to an early modern era and then into a later age of modernity arising in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Berman, 1982, p. 15-36). The Age of the Renaissance and the Age of Discovery took place in the 14<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Age of Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the 18<sup>th</sup> century brought the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution and the Age of Enlightenment; these are all aspects of modernity that are understood in terms of approximate historical time periods (Berman, 1982, p. 15-36). Drawing upon Michelet's (1847) work on Europe's cultural history, Murray and Murray (1963) assert that the historical changes following the Middle Ages - a period extending from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries (400-1500) - led to the Renaissance and a specifically "modern" understanding of humanity and its place in the world (p. 9).

While the Renaissance designates an intellectual and artistic period that is normally viewed as originating in Italy and then extending to other European nations, the Age of Discovery, another aspect of the early modern era, is generally cited as a broadly European historical period ranging from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (Murray & Murray, 1963, p. 9). These time periods, of course, vary somewhat with different historical sources. From the viewpoint of those who associate modernity with the Age of Discovery, geographic exploration represents a large part of modernity, especially since extensive overseas journeys in the name of exploration

were a powerful factor in establishing the culture of Europe. For example, the Genoese seaman Christopher Columbus, sailing under the flag of the Spanish Empire, contributed to the Age of Discovery by sighting and landing on overseas territories. Forbes (1993) indicates that, on his return to Europe, Columbus brought back with him surprising proof that human beings actually inhabited overseas lands. Forbes (1993) states, “Before returning to Spain, he kidnapped some twenty-five natives and took them back with him. Only seven or eight of the native Indians arrived in Spain alive, but they made quite an impression on Seville” (p. 22). The Age of Discovery, then, was linked to white European geographic exploration and growing awareness of the existence of different peoples living in other lands.

The Age of Enlightenment represents a widely recognized aspect of modernity that is associated with the late modern age of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Zafirovski’s (2011) work, *The Enlightenment and Its Effects on Modern Society*, and Outram’s (2009) book, *Panorama of The Enlightenment*, concur that modernity included a range of ideas centered on reason, rather than faith, as the primary source of authority and legitimacy (Zafirovski, p. 144; Outram, p. 29). Reason became the basis for advancing ideas such as liberty, progress, tolerance, fraternity, constitutional government, secularism, and the removal of the perceived abuses of the church and state (Zafirovski, 2011, p. 144; Outram, 2011, p. 29). Thus, the period of the Enlightenment is linked to the search for the new, and this aspect of modernity gave humanity the scope to observe critically, to think differently, and to resist forms of oppression linked to governments and religious institutions.

Arguably, the reform of governance and the state represents a significant aspect of what is known as modernity. In a discussion of the historical significance of the French Revolution (1789-1794/1799), Hansen (2009) asserts, “Alexis de Tocqueville argued the importance of the

French Revolution was to continue the process of modernizing and centralizing the French state” (p. 3). The French nation needed a national vision of unity to inspire uniformity amongst the many dislocated nationals in France, and powerful words and ideals connected to the Revolution such as “Liberty, Fraternity and Equality” promoted a sense of patriotism (Hansen, 2009, p. 3). In a French context, notions of state identity, fundamental human equality and shared citizen experience represent aspects of modernity. Laws and policies were to encompass all equally, and no sector or class was to have more freedom or liberties than any other (Hansen, 2009, p. 3). Accordingly, a focus on revolutionary change - including violent change - also represents one of the dominant themes that is frequently connected to modernity.

The French Revolution is often cited as an important event in the historical emergence of modernity because it provided many of the foundational ideas linked to what we now think of as the modern state. One of these involves the ideal of universal human rights. Hunt’s (1996) work, *The French Revolution and Human Rights*, observes that the Revolution sought to transform France into a democratic and secular society with freedom of religion and a new emphasis on the importance of equality and civil rights for all (p. 7-12). One of the Revolution’s major documents was the “The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen” of 1789 (Fremont-Barnes, 2007, p. 190). Moreover, it was hoped that the new values and principles at the basis of the Revolution would extend beyond France’s borders. Aulard (1992) states that the Revolution rejected the inequality of the feudal system while supporting “the emancipation of the individual, a greater division of landed property, the abolition of the privileges of noble birth, the establishment of equality, the simplification of life... The French Revolution differed from other revolutions in being not merely national, for it aimed at benefiting all humanity” (p. 115). Of course, many of the ideals of the French Revolution have not been achieved, or at least not fully

or perfectly achieved, in the world we live in today. If the French Revolution was inspired by a vision of a new and modern world based on ideals such as equality and universal rights, many argue that this vision has been undermined by modernity's emphasis on vision.

In his work, "The Scopic Regime of Modernity," Jay (1988) observes that many writers argue that modernity is distinguished from other historical periods by its focus on the sense of sight. According to Jay (1988), it is widely claimed that the modern era "has been dominated by the sense of sight in a way that sets it apart from its pre-modern predecessors and possibly its post-modern successors. Beginning with the Renaissance and its scientific revolution, modernity has been normally considered very much indeed to be resolutely "ocularcentric"" (p. 3). In general, what this means is that modern Western thought and culture have been dominated by epistemologies, ethics and expressions of socioeconomic power that are quite literally centred on the sense of sight. For example, the scientific epistemology that arose in connection with the Enlightenment emphasis on empirical knowledge in the natural sciences generated a whole new phenomenological understanding of what constitutes truth and reality.

Because the natural sciences that arose in connection to the Enlightenment seek to explore, measure, quantify and classify the *visible* world and universe, the qualitative dimensions of reality were progressively devalued or altogether dismissed as irrelevant. The traditional arbiters of the real, religion and mysticism, were banished to the margins of society while scientific institutions gained broad social acceptance and credibility as arbiters of reality (Rattansi, 2007, p. 25). The oppressive implications of this form of ocularcentrism can be readily observed in modernity's attitude towards people with disabilities. Because their visible bodies do not conform to ocularcentric norms of health - the visible representation of the healthy, able-bodied man or woman - people with disabilities are subjected to stigmatization and oppression.

Qualitative aspects of their identities such as intelligence, the soul, moral virtue or even their fundamental humanity are ignored or dismissed as irrelevant simply because the eye perceives a bodily defect. Of course, the visual regime of modernity has been used to justify the oppression of all those who do not meet dominant norms of visually perceived excellence. With the white, able-bodied heterosexual male at the top of the *ocularcentric* social hierarchy, those belonging to all other social groups have been subjected to an inferior status, including women, racialized peoples and members of the gay community.

Foucault's (1995) work, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, emphasizes the surveillance techniques that arose together with science and technology in the modern period. According to Foucault (1995), the rise of science and technology was accompanied by the rise of oppressive forms of state authority, control and surveillance:

Side by side with the major technologies of the telescope, the lens and the light beam, which were an integral part of the new physics and cosmology, there were minor techniques of multiple and intersectional observations, of eyes that must see without being seen; using techniques of subjection and methods of exploitation, an obscure arc of light and the visible was secretly preparing a new knowledge of man (p. 171).

Foucault (1995) draws attention to the important issue of the contradictory changes in social power relations that have taken place during the modern period, and specifically to the contrast between modernity's emphasis on universal human rights and the increasing ability and willingness of state authorities to observe, control and monitor the actions of citizens. Thus, part of the scopic regime of modernity involves not only its emphasis on the visible as the ground of the real but on the act of seeing itself, and specifically the power of the state to see what people are doing, and thus to control their actions.

While some writers argue that modernity is characterized by a singular scopic regime that creates and sanctions many forms of inequality and oppression, Jay (1988) states that the notion of one “true” vision represents “an obvious fiction” that many people have rejected in favor of exploring new and multiple scopic regimes, including ones that are “hard to envision [but] doubtless to come” (p. 20). From this perspective, simplified understandings of modernity as a homogeneous historical era fail to account for the complexity and contradictions within modernity. Jay (1988) states that modernity’s scopic regime is “a contested terrain rather than a harmoniously integrated complex of visual theories and practices” (p. 4). According to Jay (1988), modernity includes many visual subcultures and “new understandings” that result from the “radical reversals” that constantly take place in the modern world (p. 4). The reversal of hierarchies described by Jay (1988) is reflected in Berman’s (1982) dynamic vision of modernity as a period with revolution and change at its core. Berman (1982) states:

There is a mode of vital experience - experience of space and time, of the self and others, of life’s possibilities and perils - that is shared by men and women all over the world today. I will call this body of experience “modernity.” To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world - and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are (p. 15).

Because modernity incorporates elements of revolution, contradiction, conflict and change, it contains a certain element of openness and unpredictability. Gusfield’s (1967) work, *Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the Study of Social Change*, reinforces this notion by indicating that “modernity does not necessarily weaken tradition. Both tradition and modernity form the basis of ideologies and movements in which the polar opposites are converted into

aspirations, but the traditional forms may supply support for, as well as against, change” (p. 351). Modernity, one might say, is conservative and radical at the same time.

As noted, the French Revolution was a historical event of enormous magnitude that took place within the modern era, but the arguments put forward by Jay (1988) and Berman (1982) suggest that modernity is also characterized by what might be called countless ‘micro-revolutions.’ These smaller-scale but still significant processes and events contain the excitement of change, suffering and constant renewal. Indeed, it seems clear that in many ways modernity, however defined, has *change* at its core. Although modernity is often associated with hierarchy, inequality, exploitation, European domination and oppression, Berman (1982) captures the contradictions and possibilities that inhere in the modern era:

Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology. In this sense modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity: it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. To be modern is to be part of a universe in which, as Marx said, “all that is solid melts into air” (p. 15).

It is evident that writers have advanced many different understandings of what constitutes modernity but, for the purposes of this dissertation, modernity is understood as the highly contradictory historical period beginning roughly around 1500 and extending to the present. Although Marx claims that the concept of modernity refers to a historical period when change is a constant reality and “all that is solid” has the potential to “melt into air” and give way to new realities, it seems apparent that many of modernity’s oppressive characteristics - such as class, gender and racial inequalities - remain stubbornly entrenched.

Mullaly's (2010) work, *Challenging Oppression and Confronting Privilege*, discusses the linkages between the rise of science that took place during the modern era and the normalizing of racist ideologies and practices that privilege whites - especially the white male - while subjugating members of all other races. Mullaly (2010) states:

Scientific discourse of the nineteenth century gave legitimation to a white, male, bourgeois, body type and facial features as the norm or hierarchal standard against which all other groups were measured. Using this measuring stick, the autonomous, neutral, and objective subject of knowledge, who typically fit these characteristics, observed by way of normalizing gazes that all other bodies were degenerate or less developed. Whole groups of people became to be defined as 'different' - as the Other - and members of these groups became locked or imprisoned in their bodies. This concept of 'difference' was presented as the basis of oppression (p. 67).

In the modern era, the white European bourgeois class has been able to retain its status as the dominant hegemonic force in society and thus to perpetuate an already established tradition of white racial superiority. Modernity, then, brought with it the potential for positive change but much of this potential was, and remains, unrealized. Rattansi's (2007) work, "Beyond the Pale: Scientific Racism, the Nation, and the Politics of Color," indicates that the year 1492 "is often regarded as marking the birth of Western modernity... symbolized by the expulsion of internal Others and the beginning of the conquest of and pillage of those beyond the Christian, 'civilized' world" (p. 20). The year 1492 is historically significant because it was during that year that Spain conquered the Moorish kingdom of Granada and all the Jews were expelled from Spain (Rattansi, 2007, p. 20). In connection to white male domination, the need to save and civilize non-Christian, non-white peoples became a strong element of modernity.

Christianity played a significant role in promoting racism right from the commencement of western modernity. In his work, *Moorish Spain*, Fletcher (2006) explains that the Moors were Muslim inhabitants of the Maghreb (the Arabic region of North Western Africa that included Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia), the Iberian Peninsula, Sicily, and Malta during the Middle Ages (p. 1). The Moors were Muslims comprised of mixed Berber and Arab peoples who inhabited North West Africa, invaded Spain in the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D., and occupied it until 1492 (Fletcher, 2006, p. 1). Spain was principally and fundamentally Catholic, so the Moors were very much unwanted and their presence in Spain gave rise to great racial animosity and specifically white Christian contempt for non-Christians and non-whites. Conant's (2013) work, *Staying Roman: Conquest and Identity in Africa and the Mediterranean*, states "the Latin word Maurus was derived from the Greek word for black, mauron, and at the time "Moors" were black by definition" (p. 269). Spanish contempt for Moors eventually gave rise to the white Christian view of blacks as lacking intelligence and ability, qualities that became associated with the disparagement of people with lower levels of intelligence as 'morons.' Concomitantly, Spain's overseas conquests of other lands were understood as a desirable extension of Christian civilization into barbaric regions. The disabling racism and stigmatizing of non-white peoples that was structured into modernity right from its early historical beginnings is quite evident.

Implicitly drawing attention to oppressive impacts of the dominant scopic regime of the modern era, Rattansi (2007) indicates that the foundations of racism in early modernity were grounded in the white Christian lens through which European colonizers viewed colonized peoples. Rattansi (2007) states, "European colonizers saw not the cultures of the colonized as they were, but as they expected them to be. Hence the significance of the discussion of European nightmares of monsters and wild tribes, heathens, and those of impure blood. Columbus was a

man of his times. He believed in the one-eyed, men with tails, and mermaids. He claimed to have seen the mermaids on his journey” (p. 21). The Carib and Arawak peoples who lived on the islands that were colonized by Columbus were sophisticated peoples who were “familiar with agriculture, could make pottery of various designs, and were skilled mariners” (Rattansi, 2007, p. 21). Despite this, Columbus’ white European gaze “saw a primitive people, unclothed and dark, and therefore close to nature and uncivilized... He had a passionate double mission: He had come looking for gold and to spread the word of the Christian God” (Rattansi, 2007, p. 21). Rattansi’s (2007) discussion reveals the power of the white, male European gaze to position non-white peoples within a space of barbarism and intrinsic inferiority. Columbus presumed that both his white race and Catholic religion were vastly superior to the darker skin colors and ‘primitive’ belief systems of the inhabitants of the New World upon which he landed. However, Rattansi (2007) demonstrates that much of modernity’s early scopic regime was fantastical and thoroughly fictional; it was a manifestation of racial prejudice that had virtually no grounding in reality. Despite this, modernity’s white European gaze and presumed spiritual superiority informed the growing ‘scientific’ understanding of non-white peoples.

According to Rattansi (2007), the Enlightenment period of modernity saw the emergence of a form of scientific rationality that was ostensibly grounded in the quest for empirical facts and evidence (p. 25). This approach was used to clarify and understand the differences between members of distinct racial and ethnic groups. Rattansi (2007) states that “the form of rationality that predominated in the Enlightenment was primarily classificatory and the manner in which the idea of race was increasingly pressed into service to make sense of natural variety reflected this classificatory zeal” (p. 25). European scientists of the time were not convinced that all social groups who were formally classified as human beings were actually members of the same

species. Thus, Rattansi (2007) states that the “central issue that framed the various classificatory schemes was whether all humans were one species” (p. 25). Of course, the assumption was that white European Christian peoples belonged to an altogether different species than non-white peoples, who were correspondingly viewed as barbarian savages and members of an essentially fallen order of sub-humans. The manifest and visible signatures of the fall - non-white skin color together with failure to embrace the one true religion of Christianity - could not have been more clearly inscribed by the Creator on the flesh and in the hearts of people.

Regarding the classification of members of the human species into a hierarchy of different and extremely unequal racial groups - some human and others actually lacking human status - Rattansi (2007) refers to the publication of *Systema Naturae* by Carl Linnaeus in 1735 as a significant expression of racism. Linnaeus believed that members of the different races could be categorized not only on the basis of visible bodily differences but also on the basis of the extremely different behavioral characteristics of people belonging to different racial groups. It is easy to discern in his classifications the beginnings of many of the disabling racial stereotypes that persist in contemporary society. Rattansi (2007) states:

Linnaeus proposed a four-fold classification of humans: *americanus* (red, choleric, and erect), *europaeus* (white and muscular), *asiaticus* (yellow, melancholic, and inflexible), and *afri* (black, phlegmatic, indulgent). Linnaeus’ attempt to find connections between appearance and temperament can also be [observed in] the following passages... *H. Europaei*. Of fair complexion, sanguine temperament, and brawny form... Of gentle manners, acute judgment, of quick invention, and governed by quick laws... *H. Afri*. Of black complexion, phlegmatic temperament, and relaxed fibre... of crafty, indolent, and careless disposition, and are governed in their action by caprice” (p. 26).

The binary coding at the basis of Linnaeus' racial classifications is evident in the fact that white Europeans were viewed as strong, intelligent, hard-working and given to lawful behavior while black peoples were defined as lazy, unintelligent, capricious, unreliable, inclined toward immorality and so on. It is clear that the thinking that transpired in the Enlightenment phase of modernity was quite biased against races other than the white race, which stood supreme at the top of the racial hierarchy.

Class hierarchies and inequalities that have privileged members of the upper classes while disabling members of the lower classes and subjecting them to economic exploitation also characterize modernity. Cheyette's (2005) analysis of the feudal period in Europe clarifies the hierarchical social order upon which the feudal economic system was based. The highest social class was comprised of the Monarchs. These were Kings, or Queens Regnant, followed by Barons, the Clergy, Noblemen, Knights and, at the very bottom of the social order, the Peasantry. According to Cheyette (2005), absolute power was vested in the Monarchy; the King or Queen ruled the Kingdom with absolute political power and social control over all material assets. The Barons and Noble classes were under the rule of the King or Queen and were required to swear allegiance to the Monarchs as lands were leased to them. The Barons leased lands from the Monarchy and became the second wealthiest class in the feudal order, establishing their own rules and taxation system with the Knights and the Peasantry. The Knights controlled the distribution of land to the Peasants, who then worked the land. The Peasants, of course, were the poorest class and had no rights and were not allowed to marry without the permission of the authorities above them (Cheyette, 2005, p. 828-831). Cheyette's (2005) discussion of the feudal period renders the enabling/disabling impacts of feudal class differences readily apparent. Of course, the dramatic class inequalities of the feudal system represent an element of modernity

that was abolished during the modern era, but they were replaced by the new class inequalities connected to capitalism and the Industrial Revolution.

The class inequalities characterizing the early modern period prior to the French Revolution and the abolition of the feudal order strongly resemble the race-based classifications, hierarchies and inequalities described by Rattansi (2007). Simon (1994) references class differences existing in various historical periods as described by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1848) in *The Communist Manifesto*:

In the earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold graduation of social rank. In Rome, we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journey-men, apprentices, serfs; in almost all of these classes, again, subordinate graduations (p. 159).

Marx and Engels (1848) draw attention to what appears to be an almost universal - or at least, historically prevalent - human tendency to form social groupings based on differences of rank and social status. However, the feudal caste system and its rigid inequalities demonstrate both the oppression imposed on an economic underclass such as the French peasantry and the element of change that exists within the modern period as a whole. Bell's (2007) work, *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It*, explains that the French Revolution overthrew the rigid and dehumanizing hierarchies sanctioned by the French monarchy, with the principles at the basis of the French Revolution gradually spreading to other western European nations and beyond (p. 51). Indeed, Bell (2007) asserts that the French revolution was a pivotal historical and revolutionary event in modernity that inspired liberal radicalism, supported revolt oriented toward the overthrow of absolutist powers, and resulted in a general decline in

oppressive forms of monarchical rule (p. 51). The ideals of equality, human rights, liberal democracy and representative forms of government entered history as vital aspects of modernity.

Livesey's (2001) work, *Making Democracy in the French Revolution*, emphasizes the role of the French Revolution in promoting the ideal of democracy that would become the basis of the modern western societies of today. According to Livesey (2001), "the Revolution created and elaborated... the ideal of democracy, which forms a creative tension with the notion of sovereignty that informs the functioning of modern democratic liberal states. This was the truly original contribution of the Revolution to modern political culture" (p. 19). Fremont-Barnes' (2007) analysis of political revolutions and the historical emergence of new ideologies further asserts that the French Revolution played a major role in making human rights into a major component of western civilization (p. 190). The 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen clearly represents a fundamental document in the larger arena of human rights and helped inspired the eventual writing of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 (Fremont-Barnes, 2007, p. 190). The contradictions within modernity are demonstrated by the fact that it is characterized by both deep racial and class inequalities and the revolutionary overthrow of those inequalities. Indeed, in close conformity with the view of Marx and Engels (1848) that class conflict represents a central driver of the historical process, the revolutionary process in modernity has been ongoing. As Simon (1994) states, "the Modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones" (p. 159). The battle against pervasive race- and class-based forms of inequality and oppression that began - in the modern era - in the French Revolution persists in the struggles that are still being waged against many disabling forms of oppression.

## **The Subjugation of Women**

If race and class constitute major areas where disabling forms of oppression and inequality exist within modernity, gender represents another arena of inequality in the modern era. However, it is important to recognize that modernist assumptions of female inferiority reflect a long western tradition of disparaging and oppressing ‘the fairer sex.’ Ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato (429/423-348/347 BC) and Aristotle (384-322 BC) laid the groundwork for the West’s longstanding tradition of denigrating and subjugating women. In his work, *Plato and Aristotle on the Nature of Women*, Smith (1983) indicates that Aristotle viewed women as “deformed males” who needed to be ruled by men due to their irrational and dependent nature (p. 467-478). In other words, women had no independent existence - a point that is later taken up by De Beauvoir (1952) - but were understood, judged and subjugated in relation to a male standard. Referencing Book One of Aristotle’s *Politics*, Berseth and Negri (2000) observe that the “relations of husband to wife” are basically relations of ruler to ruled (p. 8). Of course, men were the rulers and women the ruled. Men were to dominate the important arenas of public life and warfare while women remained confined in the domestic sphere as obedient reproducers of children.

Paul Schollmeier’s (2003) work, *Aristotle and Women: Household and Political Roles*, explains that the subjected and inferior nature of the female was based on her purported inability to think or behave rationally. Discussing the issue of basic male-female gender differences, Schollmeier (2003) clarifies Aristotle’s view “that a male has by nature a deliberative faculty which is sovereign, and that a female has not. We also see that someone who rules requires intellectual and moral virtue, and that someone who is ruled requires moral virtue only” (p. 25). In the eyes of Aristotle, women were not totally abject because they were capable of moral

virtue, but Aristotle understood the female of the species as lacking intelligence and the capacity for rational decision-making, and therefore as needing to be subjected to male leadership and rule. However, women's potential to embody moral virtue enabled them to perform domestic duties, care for children and obey their male masters.

Comparatively speaking, Aristotle actually had quite a favourable view of women since he did attribute to them the capacity for moral virtue. Writing a few centuries later in the period 354-430 AD, St. Augustine stripped women of any moral virtue they might have had in the eyes of ancient Greek philosophers. His Christian theology asserted that women had brought sin and suffering into the world, and would seduce men into the feminine world of sensuality and lust with their uncontrollable sexuality. Of course, Augustine's view of women was grounded in Genesis 3:14 of the Bible, which explains how Eve, lacking moral discipline and the ability to resist temptation, ate the apple offered to her by the serpent, and condemned all humankind to a history of hard labor ending in death and ultimate dissolution into dust. In her work, *Augustine: Sexuality, Gender and Women*, Reuther (2007) discusses Augustine's belief that it was because Eve surrendered to the temptations of the serpent in the Garden of Eden that all of humankind was doomed to live under the signs of the fall - sin, hard labor and death. Basically, the disobedient Eve turned human existence itself into a global death camp.

Reuther (2007) draws attention to the contrasting views of men and women that informed Augustine's thought. In stark contrast to Eve's deeply sinful disobedience in taking a bite out of the apple, Adam's decision to eat of the fruit - when invited to do so by the seductive Eve - was understood by Augustine as a demonstration of the kindness of men (Reuther, 2007, p. 47-68). An alternative reading of the apple-in-the-garden incident might view Adam as simple-minded, childishly obedient to external authority and unwilling to explore and learn about his world, and

Eve as bravely willing to indulge curiosity, venture into the unknown and discover new knowledge despite possible risks. But that is not the reading that prevailed in the mind of the upright Christian who, as it turns out, had done quite a bit of his own eating of the apple. In his edition of St. Augustine's *Confessions*, Chadwick (2008) draws attention to Augustine's admission that his own sinful youth was filled with wild, promiscuous adventures. As luck would have it, though, Augustine's youthful lust was all the fault of the temptress Eve; all Augustine had to do to save his soul from the temptations of the Devil and female sexuality was confess his sins and convert to Christianity (Chadwick, 2008, p. xxix).

The ancient Greek and Christian views of women as being intellectually inferior to men and inherently sinful have played an enormous role in western history. Raming's (2004) work, *A History of Women and Ordination*, notes that the Catholic Church has historically engaged in wide-ranging forms of discrimination against women based on the teachings of early theological writers such as the extremely influential St. Augustine. Indeed, the works and thought of St. Augustine underpinned a notorious work by Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger (1486) titled, *Malleus Maleficarum*, which explains how upright Christian men can detect and prosecute witches. Traditional prejudices regarding women are also expressed in Capellanus' (1174) work, *The Art of Courtly Love*, a didactic literary work that provides men with instructions on how to pursue 'love' with different classifications of women. Since women differ in many ways, Capellanus reasoned that different strategies were required to obtain their sexual favors. Interestingly, Capellanus (1174) cites rape as an important way for men to express their feelings toward lower class women:

If you should, by some chance, fall in love with a peasant woman, be careful to pull her off with lots of praise and then, when you find a convenient place, do not hesitate to take

what you seek and to embrace her by force. For you can hardly soften their outward inflexibility so far that they will grant you their embraces quietly or permit you to have the solaces you desire unless first you use a little compulsion as a convenient cure for their shyness. We do not say these things, however, because we want to persuade you to love such women, but only so that, if through lack of caution you should be driven to love them, you may know, in brief compass, what to do (p. 24).

Capellanus' (1174) understanding of the relations between the sexes would no doubt be quite unpopular in a contemporary context where rape is not widely viewed as a "convenient cure" for women's "shyness," but it does reflect the traditional western view that women lack independent identities and social status, and exist merely to serve the needs of men.

Frederick Locke's Introduction to Capellanus' (1174) work further demonstrates that women in the West have historically been assigned subjugated identities based on the greater physical power and fighting ability of men:

In spite of the Christian form of society, it would be misleading indeed to conceive of a status of women during the early Middle Ages which was at all comparable to that of the modern American woman. Women are not important... In the eyes of medieval men, this is a man's world, and it is only the deeds of men, particularly of warriors, that are worthy of being chronicled. Unless a woman... happens to be a saint, she is not mentioned at any length; and there is no concern with passionate love between the sexes, but rather, as in Antiquity, with the friendship of man for man, or warrior for warrior (p. iv-v).

The above quotation suggests a greater appreciation for the role of women than Augustine's traditional Christian view that women are inherently fallen and represent threats to spiritual purity that men must strive to avoid. Writing during a considerably later historical period than

Augustine, Capellanus (1174) reflects an understanding of women as being intrinsically unimportant - rather than sinful - and yet well-suited for the satisfaction of male sexual desire. Women did serve a useful purpose. However, as the quotation indicates, the notion that a man might actually love a woman in a romantic sense, or appreciate the roles played by women in family and social life, was altogether out of the question. The simple fact is that women weren't good warriors so they weren't worthy of much attention. Indeed, later writers in the western tradition warned that it was always possible that a given woman was secretly a witch.

As noted above, *Malleus Maleficarum* (also known as *Hammer of the Witches*) was written by Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger in 1486. The former was a German Catholic clergyman and the latter a Dominican friar and, following Church tradition, these men were very worried that some women - also members of other social groups, but mostly women - were witches and practiced the dark and very un-Catholic art of witchcraft. Because it was viewed as being extremely sinful in nature, the practice of witchcraft was punishable by death in the form of burning at the stake. During witch hunts, it was typically very difficult to confirm whether or not a given woman actually was engaging in witchcraft, but that did not deter Church authorities in their quest to root out and purge evildoers from the communities in which they lived. In a discussion of *Malleus Maleficarum*, Nyland (1971) explains:

Anybody with a grudge or suspicion, very young children included, could accuse anyone of witchcraft and be listened to with attention: anyone who wanted someone else's property or wife could be the accuser; any loner, any old person living alone, anyone with a misformity or physical or mental problem was likely to be accused. Open hunting season was declared on women, especially herb gatherers, midwives, widows and spinsters. Women who had no man to supervise them were of course highly suspicious. It

has been estimated... that as many as 9 million people, overwhelmingly women, were burned or hanged during the witch craze (p. 726).

According to Nyland (1971), *Malleus Maleficarum* was the preeminent Catholic guidebook for witch hunters for nearly two hundred and fifty years (p. 726). The belief that women were inherently given to immoral behaviour and hence needed to be subjected to male authority is readily apparent in the suspicion that was felt towards any woman who happened to express freedom from male domination and control. Moreover, it is quite apparent that the witch hunts manifested an extraordinary male fear of the power of female sexuality and a corresponding need to control women's sexuality. Confronted with modern expressions of female sexuality such as Victoria's Secret catwalks and scantily clad supermodels parading all over the place, it seems likely that the tops of the heads of poor Heinrich and Jacob would have blown right off!

Remarkably, the comic-tragic phenomena of male fear of female sexuality and the closely related male desperation to control the lives and decisions of females extended well into the modern era and even persist, to a disturbing extent, in the contemporary world despite the fact that many women have made great gains in autonomy, equality, rights and sexual freedom. Progress has undoubtedly been made. Indeed, while determined witch hunters like Kramer and Sprenger burned millions of women at the stake, during the women's liberation struggles of the 1960s it was women who burned their bras. Of course, as the women's movement transitioned into the 1970s and 1980s women fought for more serious gains such as reproductive rights and workplace equality. But, at the onset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century opposition - especially religious opposition - to women's equality and autonomy remained a significant element of western societies. The longstanding tradition of men seeking to control and dominate the female body and female sexuality had not come to an end.

A work by hooks (2000) titled, *Feminism is for Everybody: Passion and Politics*, discusses attempts by religious organizations to maintain control over women's bodies and to deny women's right to reproductive self-determination:

The abortion issue captured the attention of mass media because it really challenged the fundamentalist thinking of Christianity. It directly challenged the notion that a woman's reason for existence was to bear children. It called the nation's attention to the female body as no other issue could have done. It was a direct challenge to the church. Later, all the other reproductive issues that feminist thinkers called attention to were often ignored by mass media. The long-range medical problems from caesareans and hysterectomies were not juicy subjects for mass media; they actually called attention to a capitalist patriarchal male-dominated medical system that controlled women's bodies and did with them anything they wanted to do (p. 27-28).

The work of hooks (2000) on women's struggle for equality reveals the ongoing battle between women and religious authorities over the bodies of women. Indeed, this struggle continues to the present day when many conservatives in countries such as the US echo the truly bewildering male fear of women expressed by individuals such as Augustine, Kramer and Sprenger, and seek to rescind the reproductive rights that women have achieved. However, women have attained a great deal of social power and seem unlikely to surrender the gains they have made.

Gender-based inequalities that persist in the modern era have come under attack by many feminist writers. Fleski's (1995) work, *The Gender of Modernity*, argues that western cultures in the modern era are tragic "in so far as culture is composed of structures and artifacts that are objectifications of masculine ideas and values" (p. 43). These masculine ideas and values include a strong emphasis on the importance of competition, self-interest, male sexual potency, male

superiority and the victory of physical strength over emotional weakness. But for many, these so-called 'masculine' values seem like caricatures of manhood and new, more flexible and egalitarian gender norms are emerging. In his work, "Modernity and Social Movements," Eyerman (1991) asserts that the modern individual differs from the traditional one in having "a new sense of self, of subjectivity and individuality" (p. 38). Historically, men's identities have been narrowly defined in terms of the above-mentioned warrior's code while women have been denied opportunities to develop a sense of selfhood and individuality. Their confinement to the domestic sphere and exclusion from the realm of work and career has meant that their identities have remained defined by their functions within the family and reproduction. However, women's battle against disabling patriarchal views of women has been raging for centuries.

Living in the period 1759-1797, Mary Wollstonecraft had only a basic education and yet wrote boldly about women's rights at a period in history when such rights were virtually non-existent. Pennell's (2009) book, *The Life of Mary Wollstonecraft*, suggests that Wollstonecraft produced one of the world's earliest feminist discourses with her 1792 publication, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*. As a socially revolutionary character and one of the earliest feminist activists, Wollstonecraft challenged the longstanding assumption that women were to be defined in relation to male desire, the domestic sphere and women's reproductive function. She asserted that women had the right to education, the development of rational thought, and equal partnership in contracts such as marriage contracts (Pennell, 2009, p. 351). Because she wrote in the heart of the modern era, when male domination and female submission were taken-for-granted societal norms, Wollstonecraft's assertions were shocking to the public - almost heretical. As Pennell (2009) observes, many felt that it was dangerous to be associated with Wollstonecraft or even to be known as having read

her work (p. 351). Wollstonecraft was stigmatized and culturally disabled by the reigning masculine power of the particular period of modernity in which she lived which, of course, echoed the male perspectives and gender biases of writers such as Aristotle, Augustine, Kramer and Sprenger.

In the modern period taken as a whole - and to a significant extent even today - women's identities have been socially constructed as being inferior to those of men and, correspondingly, women who have asserted any kind of independence or equality have been stigmatized as abnormal. Moreover, women have been taught that sex is essentially punitive - for women anyway; men have always been free to fulfill their desires - and that they should not seek erotic pleasure. During the sex act, women were to grit their teeth and fight off any unwanted feelings of pleasure or ecstasy that might threaten to break through into conscious experience. Falk's (2001) work, "The Production of Stigma," provides a glimpse into modernity's view of women as being childish and dependent, and into the stern sanctions that were employed to suppress female sexuality and uphold female subjugation. Writing about the specific context of 19<sup>th</sup> century America, Falk (2001) states:

Common consensus held that nineteenth-century American women were to be dependent, submissive, supportive, smiling, and entirely predictable. Sex was viewed as something women disliked but had to endure. Any woman seeking to alter this rigid imprisonment was seen as abnormal and as an indication that such a woman sought to become a man. Therefore, female castration was used to eliminate such a threat. Dr. David Gilliam wrote in 1896 that female castration would return a woman to her erstwhile condition of subservience so that she would thereafter be improved... the moral sense of the patient is elevated... she becomes tractable, orderly, industrious, and cleanly returned (p. 29).

It is notable that the repression of female sexual desire and enjoyment of the erotic dimension was a major element in the effort to oppress women and reinforce their inferior social status. In order to sustain the subjugation of women, modernity had to teach them to internalize negative self-perceptions; they had to be rendered complicit in affirming their subjugated status.

To a significant extent, American women are no longer viewed as threats to male domination and, of course, they do not face castration and removal of the clitoris if they exhibit independence or abilities outside the domestic sphere. But an Islamic feminist activist, Ayaan Hirsi Ali (2007), asserts that some Muslim women remain so deeply stigmatized and oppressed by the entrenched male domination characterizing modernity - and especially highly patriarchal interpretations of the Muslim religion - that they have internalized that oppression and actually view it as freedom. Hirsi Ali (2007) states:

I wanted women to become more aware of just how bad, and how unacceptable, their suffering was. I was inspired by Mary Wollstonecraft, the pioneering feminist thinker who told women they had the same ability to reason as men did and deserved the same rights. Even after she published *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, it took more than a century before the suffragettes marched for the vote. I knew that freeing Muslim women from their mental cage would take time, too. I didn't expect immediate waves of organized support among Muslim women. People who are conditioned to meekness, almost to the point where they have no mind of their own, sadly have no ability to organize or will to express their opinion (p. 295).

One of the major problems with the pervasive white, able-bodied heterosexual male domination that is almost the defining feature of modernity is that populations which are oppressed by it - such as women, non-white males and males belonging to the lower classes or alternative sexual

groups - are vulnerable to psychologically internalizing the very social norms that cause their oppression. When this happens, members of oppressed communities can become strong proponents of their own stigmatization and marginalization. As Hirsi Ali (2007) states, the opinions of oppressed Muslim women are not really their own opinions at all but rather a parroting of what they have been taught about their own inferiority and need for punishment at the hands of males. A later section of this dissertation will explore the processes of social identity construction that take place when dominant social groups define opposition to oppressive norms as heretical and abnormal - or as infidel - resulting in a situation where prevailing understandings of psychological health and normalcy are constructed to uphold the religious or cultural biases of social gender hierarchies. Women who do not embrace female inferiority as a fact of nature face social stigmatization and ostracizing, and the dissertation will show that this oppression can result in intergenerational forms of self-denial that are passed on from one generation of women to the next.

One might expect that the historical emergence of science and an increasing emphasis on reason and rationality, rather than religion, would undermine traditional religious biases against women and support greater gender equality. But this has not always been the case in the West. In a discussion of the historical and epistemological significance of the Enlightenment, Noerr (2002) states that the Enlightenment is “understood in the wider sense as the advance of thought... aimed at liberating human beings from fear and installing them as masters. Yet the wholly enlightened earth is radiant with triumphant calamity” (p. 3). Noerr (2002) distinguishes between the modern world of the Enlightenment and the pre-modern world of “tradition” (p. 3). In Noerr’s (2002) view, one of the purposes of the Enlightenment was to “disenchant” the world by exposing the falsity of the traditional myths, mysticism and religious beliefs that were

understood as the basis of truth and reality prior to the historical transition to modernity (p. 3). Hence, Noerr (2002) states that “Bacon, “the father of experimental philosophy”... despised the exponents of tradition, who substituted belief for knowledge and... stood in the way of the happy match between the mind of man and the nature of things, with the result that humanity was unable to use its knowledge for the betterment of its condition” (p. 3). However, the rise of the natural sciences - what Bacon calls “experimental philosophy” - did not produce the expected social advances, particularly in the area of gender equality and women’s rights. Indeed, the Enlightenment resulted in a specific and enabling/disabling form of “triumphant calamity” - triumph for men and ongoing calamity for women.

An example of the way in which the disabling power of tradition persists in the modern period is the belief - still deeply entrenched in some non-western patriarchal societies and cultures - that women are not only naturally inferior to men but must be subjected to regular punishment at the hands of their morally superior male counterparts. In her discussion of the unequal gender norms that many members of the Islamic faith still attribute to the Muslim religion, Felski (1995) states that feminist thought has “clearly posed a threat to future development by calling into question the natural destiny of woman” (p. 155). From the perspective of traditional religious interpretations that sanction male domination and female subjection, any “challenge to the established division of the sexes would lead not to further progress but to the inevitable decline of the race” (Felski, 1995, p. 155). With respect to Muslim societies in particular, Felski (1995) indicates that there has been a widespread belief that for those societies to develop “women had to stay as they were... male advancement required female stasis” (p. 155). However, it would seem that this observation could be applied to modernity as a whole, including the supposedly more advanced societies of the West. Indeed, even in

contemporary western societies many women remain subjected by an inferior social status and the ongoing hegemonic domination of the white, able-bodied heterosexual male. Within this context, the concept of hegemony represents a useful theoretical tool for analyzing the intersecting structural and institutional factors that disable oppressed groups, sometimes rendering them complicit in their own oppression.

### **Hegemony and the White, Able-Bodied Heterosexual Male**

If the notion of modernity utilized in this dissertation refers to a particular historical period of time and the considerable array of social relations and institutional structures characterizing that period, the concept of hegemony is valuable for understanding and criticizing the many ways in which power and domination are implicit within modern societies. Macey (2000) indicates that the term hegemony “derives from the Greek *hegemon*, meaning leader, prominent power or dominant state or person and is widely used to denote political (and social) dominance” (p. 176). Marmura’s (2008) work, *Hegemony in the Digital Age*, further clarifies the concept of hegemony:

The concept of hegemony was famously elaborated by the Marxist Italian dissident, Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) in his *Prison Notebooks*. Gramsci’s intent was to develop a theoretical framework which could better account for the workings of power in modern capitalist societies. Like other Marxists, Gramsci was perplexed by the fact that the ruling elites were generally able to consolidate power without recourse to the use of force and with the implicit consent of the masses (p. 5).

Gramsci’s (1929-32) theory of cultural hegemony, elaborated in his *Prison Notebooks*, observes that social elites, or hegemon, frame their values, norms and interests as corresponding with those of society at large in order to create a sense that the common interest prevails within the

social collective (Marmura, 2008, p. 5). In this way, ruling elites are able to gain the consent of the masses. Thomas' (2009) work, *The Gramscian Moment*, argues that Gramsci's concept of hegemony represents his most important theoretical and intellectual contribution (p. 160). According to Thomas (2009), Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony is commonly interpreted as having the following four central features: (1) It denotes a strategy aimed at the production of consent, as opposed to coercion; (2) The terrain of its efficacy is civil society, rather than the state; (3) Its field of operation is 'the West' rather than 'the East'; and (4) It can be applied equally to bourgeois and proletarian leadership strategies, because "it is *in nuce* a generic and formal theory of social power" (p. 160). Gramsci's (1929-32) theory of cultural hegemony contains many elements, but the notion that hegemonic rulers seek to obtain the consent of the people in embracing their rule clearly represents one of its central components.

Although there may be a radical divide between the interests of social elites and those of society at large, especially in capitalist societies based on an inherent opposition between the ruling bourgeoisie class and the subjugated and exploited proletarian class, hegemonic rulers achieve great success at creating the illusion that their values and ideals are normal or natural. Discussing Gramsci's (1929-32) theory of cultural hegemony, Thomas (2009) indicates that hegemonic social groups use "subtle mechanism of ideological integration," rather than overt force, in order to secure the complicity of the masses in their own oppression (p. 161). According to Thomas (2009), the process of exerting hegemonic power in a covert manner is one of "mediated subordination" (p. 161). In this process, the ideological, institutional and cultural structures of modern society are constructed to shape social relations in ways that reinforce elite privilege while normalizing the oppression, stigmatization and marginalization that are imposed on subjugated social groups.

Civil society, rather than the state, represents the terrain in which hegemony is exerted and consent obtained because the realm of operation of state power is that of overt coercion and domination while the ideological and cultural components of civil society allow for subtle and “more pacific forms of persuasion” to be exercised (Thomas, 2009, p. 168). Thomas (2009) references Gramsci’s (1929-32) statement in his *Prison Notebooks* of May-June 1932 that hegemony operates in civil society while the state and juridical government engage in “direct domination” (p. 168). Although Gramsci’s theory of cultural hegemony represents “a generic and formal theory of social power,” Thomas (2009) emphasizes that Gramsci applied his theory of cultural hegemony mainly to the context of proletarian politics and an “anti-politics” that strives relentlessly to subvert the basis of bourgeois rule (p. 168). The binary opposition between civil society and the state is elaborated in a letter written by Gramsci in 1931 in which he states that hegemony operates through civil society institutions such as “the church, trade unions, schools and so on” (Gramsci in Thomas, 2009, p. 169). It was in organizations and institutions such as these that subordinated classes could construct counter-hegemonic strategies of resistance to oppose their subjugation at the hands of the ruling capitalist class.

Applying the theory of cultural hegemony to a Critical Disability Studies context, it is apparent that social elites use their hegemonic control of dominant ideology, as well as social, political and economic power, to define the meaning of disability and the range of persons to which the term is to be applied. The way in which disability is defined has broad implications for individuals with disabilities. According to Wendell (1996), “defining disability and identifying individuals as disabled are... social practices that involve the unequal exercise of power and have major economic, social and psychological consequences in some people’s lives” (p. 23). In order to understand how the power of definition is both exercised and experienced, Wendell

(1996) asserts that “we have to ask who does the defining in practice, for what purposes and with what consequences for those who are deemed to fit the definitions” (p. 23). Hegemonic power is used to define all those social groups that do not conform to, or embrace, dominant social norms as ‘disabled,’ which reduces their ability to pose potential threats to existing power relations. As we have seen, in the modern period social groups such as women, blacks, lesbians, gays and members of the lower classes have been effectively disabled through the exclusionary ideologies and social norms established and reinforced by the cultural hegemony of the white, able-bodied heterosexual male. Thus, hegemonic power can oppress and disable not only people with physical and mental disabilities but also all social groups that diverge from, oppose or threaten the interests and social and ideological norms promoted by ruling groups that possess hegemonic socioeconomic standing.

A major aspect of the practical imposition of hegemonic power involves the ability to construct social identities and situate them within a social hierarchy based on fundamental superior-inferior binary structures. As Wendell (1996) asserts, oppressed and marginalized social groups are effectively marginalized through the process of defining them as disabled (p. 23). Baynton et al. (2001) similarly observe that the “concept of disability has been used to justify discrimination against other groups by attributing disability to them” (p. 33). Hegemonic power defines social groups such as blacks, women, the LGBTQ community and members of the lower classes as differing from hegemonic norms and thus, in a profound sense, functions to disable these groups and exclude them from important decision-making processes within society. Clearly, the disabled identities imposed on marginalized groups may be rooted in a variety of factors such as race, gender, sexuality, religion, culture and others. Moreover, multiple factors typically intersect in reinforcing the disabled identities that are imposed on members of these

social groups. For example, once the intrinsic superiority of white, able-bodied heterosexual males has been established as a societal norm, not only females but also non-heterosexual males, and males and females of all non-white groups, are assigned an inferior status.

In the society of modernity, the white, able-bodied heterosexual male body constitutes the hegemonic ruling power and sets the standard by which all other human bodies within the social body are judged. Discussing the “Existential Paralysis of Women” in her work, *The Second Sex*, De Beauvoir (1952) comments, “woman herself recognizes that the world is masculine on the whole; those who fashioned it, ruled it, and still dominate it are men” (p. 342). Of course, it is not simply men who rule the modern world but white, able-bodied heterosexual men. It is because these males possess hegemonic power that women are subjugated as ‘the other sex,’ denied autonomy and positioned within a dependent status. De Beauvoir (1952) argues that “sometimes the “feminine world” is contrasted with the masculine universe, but we must insist again that women have never constituted a closed and independent society; they form an integral part of the group, which is governed by males and in which they have a subordinate place” (p. 344). In other words, women do not constitute a unique social group unto themselves; they form an inferior and fundamentally disabled group that is contained within the wider hegemonic structure of male-dominated society. Indeed, the constructed inferiority of women represents the necessary binary pole, or dialectical obverse, that sustains men in their superior position. Male superiority is dependent upon female inferiority.

In the modern era, the hegemonic power embodied in the white, able-bodied, heterosexual male has been reinforced through ideologies, hierarchical social structures and expressions of scientific knowledge that uphold white male power. Women have been subjected to a history of binary classifications that disable them physically and mentally. De Beauvoir

(1952) states, “Engels retraces the history of woman in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, showing that history depended essentially on techniques” (p. 54). The forceful imposition of exploitation and domination through “techniques” such as the creation of dominant ideologies and the construction of unequal social identities positions male strength as superior to female physicality and sanctions the strong male body as the ideal of physical ability. Assertions of the physical superiority of the male are then reinforced by techniques that assert the intellectual and psychological superiority of white males. As De Beauvoir (1952) effectively demonstrates, one vitally important technique of promoting the hegemonic culture of modern society involves the dominant significations that construct gendered differences and situate male and female bodies within a hierarchy of difference and inequality, privileging the former while disabling the latter as inferior and dependent. But many techniques of domination are used to create and sustain the hegemonic status of the white, able-bodied heterosexual male.

The techniques that are used to create, normalize and sanction the hegemonic power and authority of the white male in modern society disable women at multiple levels, including the level of the internalized sense of inferiority described by Hirsi Ali (2007) as well as the level of political exclusion from the levers of power and social decision-making discussed by De Beauvoir (1952). Disability and oppression that are imposed at both internal/psychological and external/political levels impact not only heterosexual women but also other social groups that modernity defines as inferior, such as gays and lesbians. Because they do not conform to the norms and expectations of the traditional, male-dominated nuclear family, gay and lesbian subcultures are defined in terms of sexual dysfunction. Dominant understandings of human psychosexual development within modernity, such as that advanced by Sigmund Freud (1910), assert that gays and lesbians exhibit incomplete psychosexual development; they have failed to

successfully pass through all the stages of human development that lead to the dominant heterosexual male and the receptive heterosexual female. A later section of this dissertation will further discuss how Freud's (1910) immensely influential theories of human psychosexual development function to judge women, gays and lesbians against an oppressive patriarchal standard. Just as the female mind and body are defined by modernity as inferior to those of the male, so the established hierarchies of the modern world impose inferiority and negativity on gays and lesbians.

In the modern era, human sexuality has been governed by a presiding male hegemony that sanctions white heterosexual male aggressiveness and a corresponding passivity in females, lesbians, gays and members of minority racial and ethnic groups. De Beauvoir (1952) describes how the interconnected historical processes of industrialization and modernization shifted gender relations from one of equality-within-difference to one of radical gender inequality and male domination. According to De Beauvoir (1952), the historical emergence of the division of labour and private property played major roles in consolidating male hegemony, and this seems to result from increasing male domination in the public sphere where socio-economic power is located. Describing the relative gender equality existing in pre-modern modes of economic production, De Beauvoir (1952) states:

In the clan the rudimentary character of the primitive spade and hoe limited the possibilities of agriculture, so that woman's strength was adequate for gardening. In this primitive division of labour, the two sexes constituted in a way two classes and there was equality between these classes. While man hunts and fishes, woman remains in the home; but the task of domesticity includes productive labour-making pottery, weaving, gardening, and in consequence woman plays a large part in economic life (p. 54).

Pre-modern, pre-industrial economic production was characterized by a significant degree of gender equality. However, as capitalism and modernity's more advanced modes of economic production began to emerge, the greater physical strength of men resulted in males playing a proportionately larger role in the public sphere of economic production while women shifted to the private sphere of domestic life and child-rearing. In De Beauvoir's (1952) words, "Through the discovery of copper, tin, bronze, and iron, and with the appearance of the plow, agriculture enlarges in scope, and intensive labour is called for in clearing woodland and cultivating fields" (p. 54). As agriculture becomes larger in scale and more physically demanding, the greater physical strength of the male ensures his role in the domain of economic production while the smaller physical stature and more nurturing nature of the female means that she plays a larger role in the domestic sphere of home and family.

De Beauvoir's (1952) thought reveals that the emergence of industrialization and the specific institution of private property were major occurrences within the modern era that caused the relations between the sexes to undergo a profound transformation. This change was grounded in the manifest wealth production activities of the male. Since men's work in the public sphere produced economic wealth while the domestic activities of the female were less overtly oriented around wealth production, the male began to assume an ownership role that extended into the realm of human relations. Having once been a partner of the female in the shared task of work and raising children, the male came to assume an ownership relationship of power over and possession of the female; his dominant power in the public sphere reached into the realm of home and family. Indeed, the power of male elites, in particular, oppressed not only women but also males in lower positions in the social hierarchy and this was associated with growing class inequality and exploitation. As De Beauvoir (1952) states:

Then man has recourse to the labour of other men, whom he reduces to slavery. Private property appears; master of slaves and of earth, man becomes the proprietor also of woman. This was “the great historical defeat of the feminine sex.” It is to be explained by the upsetting of the old division of labour which occurred in consequence of the invention of tools. The same cause which had assured to woman the prime authority in the house - namely, her restriction to domestic duties - this same cause now assured the domination there of man; for woman’s housework henceforth sank into insignificance in comparison with man’s productive labour - the latter was everything, the former a trifling auxiliary (p. 54).

De Beauvoir (1952) reveals that the ascendance of men to a position of hegemonic power took place through a long historical process. A broad range of technological and socio-economic factors - many connected to developments characterizing the modern era such as the invention of tools, the appearance of large-scale, organized agriculture, the division of labour, the growth of science and technology, and the emergence of capitalism and private property - collaborated to give the white, able-bodied heterosexual male a position of physical, mental, intellectual, sexual and socio-economic hegemony.

De Beauvoir (1952) emphasizes the historical dissolution of matriarchal authority and its replacement by patriarchy and patrilineal lines of power and property as factors sanctioning male domination. This male hegemony - and specifically white, able-bodied heterosexual male hegemony - is at the heart of modernity. De Beauvoir (1952) states, “Then maternal authority gave place to paternal authority, property being inherited from father to son and no longer from woman to her clan. Here we see the emergence of the effects of the patriarchal family founded upon private property. In this type of family, woman is subjugated” (p. 54). De Beauvoir (1952)

describes how the physical and psychological subordination of women gradually becomes reinforced by the economic subjugation of women within the patriarchal society of modernity. There is no villain in the story. The exigencies of historical development and industrialization situated the physical and mental characteristics of physically more powerful males in a position of hegemonic authority while females played the role of receptive subordinates - almost domestic servants - who gave hegemonic males sanctuary in the form of homes and children.

Like women, black populations have been categorized as inferior and subjected to systemic disabling through the hegemonic power of white male elites in the modern era. Indeed, systemic racism persists to a significant degree even in the society of today, causing mental displacement amongst many black people of both genders. Rattansi (2007) asserts that blacks have been, and still are, judged in terms of the hegemonic authority embodied in white male elites (p. 26). As a result of the domination of this particular form of hegemonic power, modern society embraces white, able-bodied heterosexual males as leaders to a much greater degree than it embraces individuals belonging to any other social group. Women, lesbians, gays, blacks and members of other minority racial and ethnic groups are categorized, denigrated, stigmatized and policed as social outcasts and misfits (Mullaly, 2010, p. 67). Indeed, inequalities in race and sexuality within modernity have been reflected in the primary binary categories - strength vs. weakness, man vs. woman, heterosexual vs. homosexual, white vs. black - that have functioned to pervasively reproduce and affirm white, able-bodied heterosexual male superiority and hegemony as a product of the natural differences between white males and all others.

One strategy or technique of power that hegemonic groups use to consolidate their privileges involves encouraging members of subordinated social groups to bicker amongst themselves, so to speak, rather than direct their anger at the social power that actually causes

their subordination. The Afro-American feminist writer Tony Morrison portrays the hegemonic domination of the white male in her novels about racism and racial inequality. Discussing the historical regulation of the human body, Morrison's works show how the demonization of the non-white body has resulted from prejudices that have been reinforced not simply by male domination but by white male domination. In her novel *Sula*, for example, Morrison (1973) depicts how the dominant culture of the modern society privileges the white human body through the social construction and dissemination of discriminatory attitudes regarding all bodies that diverge from the white norm, and especially the white male norm. Color differences between human bodies have functioned to segregate blacks from whites while creating social hierarchies based on the presumption of white superiority, but they have also caused black people to fight amongst themselves over variations in shadings of skin color.

Morrison (1973) uses the experiences of the character of Nel Wright in *Sula* to show how blacks with different shades of skin color create racial hierarchies amongst themselves. The book's author states, "Nel was the color of wet sand-paper, just dark enough to escape the blows of the pitch-black true bloods and the contempt of old women who worried about such things as bad blood mixtures and knew the origins of mule and mulatto were one and the same. Had she been any lighter-skinned she would have needed either her mother's protection on the way to school or a streak of mean to defend herself" (Morrison, 1973, p. 52). This quotation from Morrison's (1973) text makes reference to the mule, a biological mixture of horse and donkey that suggests impurity. The black characters within Morrison's (1973) text judge each other based on skin color in much the same way inter-racial mixings are viewed by some people through a racist lens that interprets these mixings as a genetic contamination of the human white body by the animal black body.

While Morrison (1973) focuses on differences in skin color, the modern era has generated highly elaborated hierarchies of superior and inferior intelligence that are supposedly connected to all aspects of bodily difference. For example, Longmore and Umansky (2001) state, “While the supposedly higher intelligence of “mulattoes” compared to “pure” blacks was offered as evidence for the superiority of whites, those who argued against “miscegenation” claimed to the contrary that the products of “race-mixing” were themselves less intelligent and less healthy than members of either race in “pure” form” (p. 37). The notion that the racially mixed human body is mentally deficient implies that members of the white community are inherently more intelligent than their black counterparts and risk contamination through racial mixing; the more black there is in a given person’s biological composition, the less intelligence that person will have. It is evident that the white male has historically used his hegemonic position to construct himself as superior while correlating all those with non-white skin pigmentations with lower levels of intelligence and ability. Morrison’s (1973) novel *Sula* reveals how people lacking a fully white skin color were viewed as inherently inferior because blended skin colors signalled both racial impurity and mental inferiority. Indeed, as noted above, *Sula* indicates that blacks manifested their own racist attitudes with regard to individuals of mixed race. Disabled by the hegemonic racial hierarchies of modern society, people of all non-white colors and shadings have sought ways to avoid being positioned at the very bottom of modernity’s racial hierarchy. However, the hegemonic white male has had tremendous success in obtaining the implied consent of members of oppressed social groups while remaining at the top of that hierarchy.

## **Postmodern Critique**

Given the wide-ranging disabling hegemonic norms and ideologies characterizing modernity, postmodern critique represents a valuable methodological tool for exposing the artificially constructed social realities that emerged in the modern era. Of course, a major aspect of modernity is the positing of the white, able-bodied male as a universal norm of human identity against which all other identities are to be measured. In contrast to the modernity's aggressive drive to position this figure as a universal norm of identity, postmodern perspectives assert that human identities are socially constructed within an arena of human identity construction that is characterized by arbitrariness, multiplicity and difference. From a postmodern perspective, there simply is no universal norm of identity against which diverse human identities can be measured. All claims to possess a universal and inherently superior identity are political acts and take place within a field of contestation where anyone can claim or refute such status.

As we have seen, one of the defining features of modernity is the Enlightenment focus on reason and the natural sciences which, on some readings, represent historical developments that enable humanity to overcome the oppressive impacts of religion, mysticism and superstition. However, just as it rejects the notion of a universal human identity that functions as a standard of perfection for the entire human species, postmodernism rejects the view that the Enlightenment ushered in an age of reason, logic and rationality with the ability to enhance human freedom. As Macey (2000) states, "most theorists regard Post-Modernity as making a break with modernity and, in more general terms, with the whole Enlightenment project" (p. 308). Modernity presumes that humanity can make ongoing social progress and overcome obstacles to human freedom through reason and scientific knowledge. In contrast, postmodernism questions whether any such progress has or is taking place and also inquires into what constitutes progress.

Asserting the central role of progress in human experience, an Enlightenment thinker such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) posits that “the first human feeling was that of existence; the first human concern was preserving that existence... It was a life of pure sensations... But, humans were eventually confronted with difficulties, and it became necessary to learn how to surmount them” (p. 207-238). The notion of the surmounting of difficulties referred to by Rousseau embodies the idea of progress itself, which is central to the modernist project. However, as we have seen, the particular forms of rationality posited by modernity as the basis of progress themselves developed into obstacles to human freedom, which in turn must be surmounted if modern ideals such as liberty and equality are to be realized. The rationality at the basis of modernity is not universal but highly exclusionary; it marginalizes and oppresses a wide variety of social groups ranging from the intellectually and physically challenged to women to gays to minority racial and ethnic populations. From the viewpoint of postmodern critique, modernity can be understood as referring to a historical period dominated not by progress but by the ongoing oppressive ideologies and social practices of hegemonic male elites.

One of the primary foundations of modernity is the notion of a universal human identity that develops along roughly unilineal lines. As previously noted, this developmental process (strongly associated with Sigmund Freud) will be elaborated in a later section of this dissertation, but for our present purposes it will suffice to indicate that in the course of transitioning from infancy to childhood to adulthood the young heterosexual male grows into a natural position of leadership and domination within both family and society. In contrast, the patriarchal male’s complement, the heterosexual female, passively succumbs to the phallic rule of the male. The dominating patriarchal male and the submissive female are the pater and mater of the modern social order. In challenging the universal norms of identity posited by modernity, postmodernism

advocates a greatly expanded notion of normal and healthy human identity that legitimates a plurality of human identities. In opposing the universalist claims of modernity, postmodern critique supports counter-hegemonic discourses in all areas of social life, including that of sexual identities. Postmodern critique can be applied to systems of thought such as the classical psychology of Sigmund Freud (1910), which defines homosexuality as a form of disability that expresses a failure in normal human psychosexual development. Postmodern thinkers such as Beasley (2005), hooks (1992) and Chodorow (1989) deconstruct Freud's (1910) grand narrative of the self, which is grounded in the notion of an oedipal resolution through which the young heterosexual male gradually assumes the father's natural position of sexual prerogative and social domination.

With the heterosexual male of the Freudian enterprise standing at the apex of the modern social order as the very image of fertility and phallic power, homosexuality has been negatively constructed as a failure of normal development that denies the fundamental procreative purpose of nature. Within this context, supposedly abnormal and unnatural sexual identities such as those of lesbians and gays have been disabled and subjected to oppression and marginalization. Of course, this oppression remains in place in many areas of the contemporary world and even persists to a significant degree in the generally more progressive societies of the West. However, in contrast to the rigid hierarchal sexual identity norms of modernity, a postmodern perspective supports plurality and diversity as a natural fact of human sexual identity (Walters, 1996, p. 836). Postmodern critique therefore has the radical potential to defend the legitimacy of sexual differences and to promote transformed social norms that include lesbians and gays as equal members of an inclusive social landscape.

Postmodernity can be contrasted with modernity with respect to any number of social, political or cultural arenas, including the arena of the arts and literature where post-modern works have rejected the dogma of modernity (Lyotard, 1992, p. 15). Postmodernity represents a contemporary movement of thought that critiques many claims of objective knowledge and promotes skepticism with regard to traditional, reified constructions of truth. Postmodernity, for example, challenges the epistemological assumptions at the root of much social science and seeks to undermine conservative notions of an underlying social stability or reality that defines our understandings of nature and normal. In his work, *The Post Modern Explained*, Jean-Francois Lyotard (1992) states:

The postmodern would be that... which refuses the consolation of correct forms, refuses the consensus of taste permitting a common experience of nostalgia for the impossible, and inquires into new representations... The postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes or the book he creates is not in principle governed by pre-established rules and cannot be judged according to determinant judgment by the application of given categories to this text or work. Such rules and categories are what the work or text is investigating (p. 15).

The critical interrogation of the rules and categories governing the modern world represents a valuable theoretical tool for asserting that the supposedly universal human identities posited by modernity are relative to specific times and places. They are contingent social constructs that can be subjected to critical challenge and then modified or even completely changed according to a whole new set of rules and criteria. By exposing the relativity of modernity's pre-established rules and categories, postmodernism can contribute to a transformation of modernity's highly disabling and oppressive articulations of social and sexual power. Postmodern critique can

support a reformulating of our cultural texts that brings about transfigured, inclusive conceptions of social and sexual power.

The incorporation of diversity into social signifiers of the normal and healthy human identity can benefit the physical, mental and socioeconomic health of populations that have been marginalized by modernity's rigid and disabling binary constructions. The pervasive binary constructions within modernity, which can perhaps be traced back to Linnaeus' (1735) *Systema Naturae*, connect to wide-ranging modern understandings regarding moral/immoral, legal/illegal, natural/unnatural, normal/abnormal, healthy/unhealthy, male/female, black/white, and so on. A postmodern critique challenges dominant norms - particularly those based on rigid and oversimplified binary oppositions - and advocates the legitimacy of a plurality of viewpoints. Thus, postmodern critique can be viewed as creating the potential for radical social and epistemological change and as supporting counter-hegemonic activism in all areas of social life, including that of sexual and racial norms of identity.

Postmodern activism is evident in the Stonewall Inn riots of 1969, which were a reaction to police harassment of members of the gay community that sparked the Gay Civil Rights Movement in the US in the late 1960s. At that time, many young gay individuals, male and female, lived in an American society that embraced modernity's universal norms of natural - that is, heterosexual - human identity and strongly opposed and disabled members of the gay community through highly negative stereotypes and that stigmatized and marginalized the gay and lesbian communities at multiple levels. Indeed, the fact that the laws in most modern western societies sanctioned wide-ranging discrimination and prejudice against homosexuals at this time reveals the influence of modernist assumptions even in the quite recent past. As D'Augelli and Patterson (1995) indicate:

For example, an individual born in 1930 was nearly 40 years old at the time of the 1969 Stonewall Inn riots which sparked the gay civil rights movement. During the pre-Stonewall era gay individuals experienced the developmental task of childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood in a very different social climate than would prevail later in history. In those years, homosexuals were viewed as “perverted” by society, “evil” by the church, “sick” by the medical and psychiatric professions, and “criminal” by the police (p. 217).

In the 1960s and 70s, the aggressive disabling of gay and lesbian identities pervaded the family, the church, the healthcare establishment and the legal system. Viewed as criminal by the police and police vice squads, homosexuals were controlled by a police authority that was largely dominated by white males (D’Augelli & Patterson, 1995, p. 217). Of course, this dissertation has clearly established that white, able-bodied heterosexual males represent modernity’s ruling hegemonic authority.

In their analysis of the Gay Civil Rights Movement, D’Augelli and Patterson (1995) demonstrate that hegemonic masculinity represents a form of social power that empowers the dominant heterosexual group to expand its influence over less powerful groups within society by framing these groups as illegitimate (p. 217). In this way, the force of law can become an expression of disabling social power that affirms some social identity constructions as legitimate while delegitimizing and marginalizing others. Postmodern counter-hegemonic strategies can function as a means to achieve greater equality and inclusion for oppressed or disabled groups such as the gay community. But if such strategies are to be effective it is necessary to understand the subtle workings of hegemony, and especially how the hegemonic social power connected to heterosexuality has situated sexual identities in modern society. While some hegemonic practices

are overt, others are subtle or invisible since they appear as naturalized, everyday norms that most people simply assume to be 'the way things are.' Hetero-normative values and beliefs that are largely taken-for-granted within modern society function to reinforce and maintain the dominant social, cultural and sexual ideological apparatus of hegemonic heterosexuality.

The notion of naturalized practices refers to social attitudes, activities and conceptions of reality that are so pervasive in society that they come to appear as natural - the way it is - rather than as historically situated social constructions that are subject to criticism and change. Forgacs (2000) asserts that "many of these conceptions are absorbed passively from outside, or from the past, and are accepted and lived uncritically" by society at large (p. 421). The general lack of conscious critical awareness of the historically contingent factors contributing to oppression makes many forms of inequality and marginalization appear to be natural and to 'make sense.' Postmodern critique can effectively challenge modernity's common sense norms. With regard to Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, Forgacs (2000) states, "many elements in popular common sense contribute to people's subordination by making positions of inequality and oppression appear to them as natural and unchangeable" (p. 421). However, popular notions of what constitutes common sense typically contain many contradictions. As Forgacs (2000) further elaborates, "everyone, for Gramsci, has a number of 'conceptions of the world', which often tend to be in contradiction with one another and therefore form an incoherent whole" (p. 421). Since the social common sense in the modern world of capitalism and entrenched inequality is contradictory, Forgacs (2000) believes that space exists for the creation of competing hegemonic formulations as to what constitutes normal or common sense social realities (p. 421). Thus, Gramsci's (1929-32) theory of cultural hegemony incorporates elements of contradiction and

incoherence that facilitate postmodern critique and the possibility of competing hegemonies that challenge the dominant hegemonic power within modern society.

The prevailing hegemonic power of modernity privileges white, able-bodied males while disabling and marginalizing all other social identities, but it is the multiple entrenched social hierarchies within capitalist society that reinforce this inequality. Much of Gramsci's work is informed by the writings of Karl Marx on topics such as class inequality and conflict, and Jary and Jary (1995) indicate that Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony links power and domination within modern society to the class basis of capitalist society. Moreover, many social structures and institutions within modern society reinforce class inequalities. Jary and Jary (1995) state, "Gramsci argued that the domination of ideas in the major institutions of capitalist society, including the Roman Catholic Church, the legal system, the education system, the mass communications system, the media, etc., promoted the acceptance of ideas and beliefs which benefited the ruling class" (p. 279). As a result, any effective critical challenge to the disabling hegemonic power within modern society has to address the many different structures of power within capitalism, and specifically the ideological foundations of capitalism.

Jary and Jary (1995) emphasize the role of ideological struggle in Gramsci's thought, and specifically the need for members of the oppressed classes to understand and criticize the role played by ruling ideas in upholding dominant social, political and economic power:

Gramsci concluded that before winning power the working class would have to undermine the hegemony of the ruling class by developing its own alternative hegemony. As well as exercising leadership, this required a cultural and ideological struggle in order to create a new socialist 'common sense,' and thus change the way people think and behave. It followed, therefore, that a subordinate and oppressed class, in addition to

organizing to resist physical coercion and repression, had to develop a systematic refutation of ruling ideas (p. 279).

Gramsci's examination of hegemonic power within modern society scrutinizes the capitalist basis of the economy but focuses specifically on the normalization of the ideological assumptions at the basis of capitalist class inequalities and exploitation. Since one cannot change what one does not understand, education and the growth of conscious awareness regarding the role played by ideology in creating and sustaining socioeconomic realities, including dominant notions of what constitutes common sense, is paramount. Counter-hegemonic discourses and challenges to popular conceptions of the common sense represent the fundamental basis of a postmodern critique of the assumptions underpinning modern society - a society, Gramsci reminds us, that is firmly grounded in the ideological roots of capitalism and the historical emergence of an industrial society based on rigid class differences and inequalities.

In order for postmodern critique to mount an effective challenge to the disabling hegemonic basis of capitalism, it is necessary to account for the fact that the capitalist class gains approval for its hegemonic status by framing the values of the more powerful bourgeoisie class as being identical with those of the working or proletariat class. In this way the capitalist class is able to generate a common sense view of the world that appears, as Forgacs (2000) expresses it, as natural and inevitable (p. 421). Postmodern critique shows that in a capitalist society power relations of all kinds are rooted in multiple, intersecting and mutually reinforcing inequalities; the hegemonic socioeconomic power of white male elites under capitalism translates into hegemonic sexual power as well as the hegemony of the white population and the domination of the wealthy capitalist class. Thus, the coercive power of capitalism creates not only unequal bourgeoisie and proletariat socioeconomic classes but also entrenched social hierarchies that give

dominant power to white heterosexual males while subordinating and disabling women, members of non-white racial and ethnic communities, and all non-heterosexual articulations of human sexual identity. In the extreme case, the disabling inequalities connected to modernity and capitalism can result in the radical dehumanization of social groups that are defined as abnormal or 'other' if they are also constructed as serious threats to social stability and racial purity.

## CHAPTER TWO: HIERARCHY, INEQUALITY AND DEHUMANIZATION

### Hierarchy, Rationality and Master Status Identity

In the modern era, dramatically unequal identities are socially constructed through social-psychological processes that impact individual's understandings of themselves and their place in society in relation to others. In the process of social identity construction, the individual's important ability to make cognitive discriminations concerning differences becomes transformed, or disfigured, into a hierarchal system in which differences become connected to social relations based on inequality. Within this system of social identity construction, individuals who do not conform to dominant conceptions of normalcy, such as individuals with disabilities, become subject to stigmatization, exclusion and, in extreme cases, to dehumanization. In *Missing Pieces: A Chronicle of Living with Disability*, Irvin Kenneth Zola (1982) addresses the issue of children's perceptions of the types of differences connected to disability. Zola (1982) suggests that children, prior to becoming subject to aggressive processes of social indoctrination and identity construction, observe differences between members of human social groups without attributing an inferior status to individuals who differ from others due to attributes such as disabilities (p. 200). Their minds do not naturally interpret human differences in terms of binary oppositions or invidious comparisons that privilege some while subjugating others.

Zola (1982) suggests that when children observe a person using a wheelchair or wearing a brace, they may express curiosity and ask innocent questions about the disability. In Zola's (1982) words, "the limp, the cane, the wheelchair, the brace - is quite visible and of great interest to the child" (p. 200). However, modern society inculcates children with interpretative faculties - forms of thinking and rationality, if you will - that divide people into classifications and assign them differential social status in accordance with broad social stereotypes. As a result, the child's

important ability to make cognitive discriminations becomes distorted into artificially constructed categorizations that label the members of some social groups - such as the disabled, women, gays and blacks - as inferior and therefore as justly subjected to marginalization. Other groups, of course, are positioned within a hegemonic status which entitles them to privileges and the power to dominate those beneath them in the social hierarchy. These groups are granted what has been called “master status identity” (Siegal & McCormick, 2010, p. 275). Returning to Zola’s (1982) example, in the processes of socialization and education characteristic of modern society, children lose their ability to recognize that an individual with a disability is “someone who has a handicap rather than someone who is handicapped” (p. 200). According to Zola (1982), children are “quickly socialized out of” their ability to recognize the fundamental humanity and equality of members of social groups who differ from dominant social norms of the healthy body, such as those with disabilities (p. 200).

Particular forms of rationality are required in order for the modern society to construct some social identities as inferior and rightfully subjected to domination while others are assigned social identities that represent a standard of superiority or perfection against which all other identities are measured. Opposing any notion of a universal rationality, Kellner (2004) adopts an implied postmodern perspective when he asserts that what modernity calls “rationality” is not based on a universal or pre-existing “metaphysical substance” but instead represents a historically contingent social construct (p. 83). Rather than gaining a capacity to think rationally as he or she matures into an adult, the modern individual is “subjected to rationalizing forms of thought and behavior” that function to reinforce the existing power relations within society (Kellner, 2004, p. 83). Thus, human mental and intellectual development is not grounded in the development of a rational faculty or capacity to think rationally but in learning how to rationalize

socially sanctioned biases and prejudices. It is through this process that hegemonic power is able to generate broad social consent for its dominant status. Kellner (2004) suggests that, from a practical standpoint, what we understand as reality is constituted by the totality of society's "requirements, norms and prohibitions" (p. 83). Reality is a social construct shaped by the norms of identity and behaviour and, more importantly, by the power relations that exist within modern, capitalist societies.

From a postmodern perspective, modernity's social reality is not based on universal norms that emanate from within, so to speak, but rather is founded on a system of socially constructed norms that are imposed upon the individual from the "outside" (Kellner, 2004, p. 83). Of course, this "outside" refers to the interests, ideologies, epistemologies, ontological assumptions and prejudices imposed by hegemonic groups. Wide-ranging hegemonic norms within modern society construct the individual's thought, behaviour, desires, needs, language and consciousness. What this means is that human identities and dominant processes of thought and interpretation that are defined as rational are not 'rational' in a universal sense; they are merely social constructs that reflect and *rationalize* the processes of socialization and identity construction that reinforce the existing power relations within society. Arbitrarily defined as rational, these processes sanction some identities as hegemonic social identities while other identities are defined as inferior and subjected to domination, marginalization and exclusion. One might say that hierarchy, inequality and exploitation represent fundamental markers of the identities that are performed on the modern stage.

Goffman's (1959) work, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, implicitly affirms the socially and historically relative nature of human identities by describing individuals as actors who play roles within the various dramatic scenarios created by society. The entire world is a

stage, so to speak, and we all play our assigned roles. This viewpoint further entails a mutual dependence between individual actors and the external audiences that confirm the value and validity of their roles and performances. Goffman (1959) states:

When an individual plays a part he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them. They are asked to believe that the character they see actually possesses the attributes he appears to possess, that the task he performs will have the consequences that are implicitly claimed for it, and that, in general, matters are what they appear to be (p. 17).

Goffman's (1959) view of human identity as social performance shares much in common with Kellner's (2004) assertion that rationality and reality do not reflect some kind of universal reason, substance or essence, but rather are formed through a socially relative system of power relations. Identity is grounded in social performances where confirmation of validity comes from without - from an external audience. The wide range of inferior and marginalized social identities - non-white races and ethnicities, women, gays, disabled individuals and so on - are dependent upon society's willingness to continuously produce and reproduce a given set of social norms and power relations. Thus, Goffman (1959) confirms the postmodern assertion that social identities have no essential reality.

Interactionist theories of identity strongly resemble Goffman's (1959) notion of the self as presentation because they emphasize the arbitrary social assumptions at the basis of social labels. As Stebbins' (2004) interactionist perspective asserts, social labels represent little more than "interpretations" (p. 366). Nevertheless, these interpretations have the power to shape society by creating a hierarchy of identities that correlates with inequalities in social power. In their work, *Criminology in Canada: Theories, Patterns and Typologies*, Siegal and McCormick

(2010) reference the concept of “master-status identity” associated with the sociologist Everett Hughes, who defines master status identity as “an identity that overrides all others” (in Siegal & McCormick, 2010, p. 275). In the western capitalist societies of modernity, of course, it is white, able-bodied heterosexual males who enjoy the hegemonic status of master status identity. This specific social group is positioned at the apex of modernity’s social hierarchy while all other social groups are defined as inferior and confined to the lower levels of the social hierarchy. However, the exact nature of the power relations reinforcing this hierarchal organization of unequal identities is complex rather than simple; it goes beyond one group somehow managing to impose its singular will on all the others.

In a process resembling the well-known Stockholm syndrome through which abducted individuals develop emotional attachments to their captors, social groups suffering exclusion and marginalization can become inadvertently complicit in, and even emotionally attached to, their own oppression (Mackenzie, 2004, p. 5-21). This suggests that the master status identity within a society reflects a particular social hierarchy and a corresponding set of power relations through which those at the lower end of the social hierarchy become complicit in the very power relations that oppress them. This process accords with Gramsci’s (1929-32) previously mentioned view that hegemonic power exists through the consent of the oppressed masses. On the one hand, master status identity represents a social fiction that grants hegemonic power to a small group of elites while assigning a lower and marginalized status to all other social groups; on the other hand, the master status identity within a society depends on the passivity and submission of the oppressed. Transformations in the inequalities and exploitative power relations characterizing hierarchical social orders can take place within this dynamic. Since the audience which sanctions the performing self - including the presiding master status identity - has the power to offer or

withhold approval, master status identity and hegemonic power are subject to change in accordance with changing audience expectations or preferences.

Any social group that seeks the power and authority associated with master status identity within a specific social order must obtain hegemonic status in order to perpetuate itself. This may entail possession of dominant political, cultural, legal and economic power, although, as we have seen, Gramsci's (1929-32) theory of cultural hegemony emphasizes civil society as the locus of more subtle expressions of hegemonic power. However, a specific assemblage of physical and mental characteristics also acts to position master status identity as a hegemonic agency within society and in a variety of different arenas through which agency can be expressed and power sanctioned. A variety of factors generate the "overriding" aspect of master status identity (Siegal & McCormick, 2010, p. 275). For example, physical prowess - such as the skill of an Olympic vaulting champion - may be socially marked as a signature of superiority. Indeed, many such social signifiers of superiority, some physical and others mental, can contribute to the attainment of master status identity. However, in modern society the factors of race (white), gender (male), sexuality (heterosexual) and class (middle to upper) represent the dominant markers of master status identity. Groups and individuals that lack these particular social signatures of superiority - such as women, non-whites, gays and people with physical or mental disabilities - are located in lower positions within a social hierarchy where hegemonic status is related to a comprehensive system of binary codes.

The binary codes characterizing the modern era construct certain human traits not merely as different from other traits but as opposite to other traits. Differences are transformed into invidious comparisons. Thus, the entrenched binary codes of the modern society define the healthy human mind or body as 'able' while the unhealthy or impaired human mind or body are

defined as 'disabled.' Of course, disabled status with modern society can occur in many arenas beyond those of the impaired mind or body. Factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation, class, culture, religion and bodily characteristics can all function as markers of superiority and inferiority within modernity's binary system of social signifiers. Moreover, these factors can overlap or intersect while creating complex hierarchies of inequality and exclusion. In an article titled, "Gay and Lesbian Identities and Mental Health," King and McKeowan (2004) argue that prejudice against the gay and lesbian communities persist despite the advances that have been made in our "more liberal, modern society" (p. 150). What King and McKeowan (2004) call modern society - by which they mean contemporary liberal democratic society - remains modern in the sense that it is a product of modernity with its entrenched binary codes and classifications. At the level of sexual orientation, modernity positions homosexuals as under-developed in comparison to heterosexuals and thus as the inferior or disabled pole in that particular social binary. As women, lesbians have a lower status than gay men, while black lesbians are located at an even lower position in the social hierarchy. Literally and symbolically, dominant conceptions of hegemonic agency within modernity accord master status identity to the white heterosexual male, the royal carrier of the fertile phallus, while the opposite pole in that particular binary system, the homosexual male, is perceived as fundamentally infertile and therefore defined as an inferior and disabled expression of sexual identity.

In addition to sexual identity, the factors of race and gender represent major elements determining people's social status within the interconnected hierarchies of modern society. The race-based and gender-based binary classifications in modern society not only position white heterosexual males as the dominant master status identity but also define all other identities in relation to that norm. Mahowald's (1998) article, "A Feminist Standpoint," observes that

feminist standpoints exist within a set of social norms that position white male viewpoints as the hegemonic agency. Mahowald (1998) states, “In general, the dominant perspective of white, middle-class, able, heterosexual males who predominate in positions of social power defines the rules and practices that are applied to everyone in society” (p. 209). This point recalls De Beauvoir’s (1952) assertion that “woman herself recognizes that the world is masculine on the whole; those who fashioned it, ruled it, and still dominate it are men” (p. 342). The patriarchal component of modernity establishes what might be called a symbolic missionary position as the social norm of dominant gender relations, with the white male on top of the social hierarchy and woman beneath, embracing man as her dialectical opposite and as the means to fulfilling her reproductive purpose within modern society in the subordinated role of wife and mother.

The ideas presented by writers such as Mahowald (1998) and De Beauvoir (1952) imply that one of the characteristic features of the master status identity within modernity is the fact that other identities are denied separate status and independent agency, and must therefore define themselves in relation to dominant hegemonic signifiers. As hegemonic agency, white heterosexual males represent a standard against which other identities are measured, while women are forced to orbit around men as the “other” or “second” sex, inherently bound to males and yet subordinate and subjected to masculine social and sexual imperatives. Indeed, as we have seen, De Beauvoir (1952) denies that there is a “feminine world” and asserts that women are forced to define themselves within the “subordinate place” assigned to them by the world of men (p. 344). De Beauvoir (1952) describes the social and cultural text of modernity, which writes white, physically and mentally able, heterosexual males into the role of protagonist. Dominant, intellectually superior, rational, penetrating and fertile, this master status identity stands over the inferior intellect and emotional passivity of the sexually receptive female. Various ‘others’ - such

as non-whites, gays and people with physical and mental disabilities - also live in subjection to the hegemonic authority of modernity's master status identity. Mahowald (1998) and De Beauvoir (1952) show how modernity's binary coded identity classifications have denied women independent existence and positioned them in subjection to men, but their point applies equally to all groups that are subordinated by the hegemonic power of master status identity.

De Beauvoir's (1952) observations on male domination within society reflect modern understandings of what constitutes master status identity. While members of minority racial and ethnic communities are vulnerable to internalizing negative self-conceptions, dominant white males, particularly those who belong to the privileged classes, internalize a sense of superiority and hegemonic authority. Popular consciousness may not use specific terms such as 'master status identity,' but the social power and prestige of this group is continually expressed and reproduced within modern society regardless of the language used to describe it. Today, the power of social elites tends to be hidden within the pervasive norms that construct the social reality most people take for granted. But there are examples of highly overt expressions of white male domination. For example, during WWII the Nazi leadership created a vast quantity of propaganda which asserted the superiority of white males, stating that "if the Aryan bearers of civilization were to die out, no culture could continue to exist, at least not a culture that would match the intellectual level of the advanced peoples" (Hitler, 2009, p. 328). This overt linkage of white male supremacy with master status identity exemplifies modernity's persistent and ongoing disablement, to varying degrees, of all other social groups.

Language plays an important role in the creation and perpetuation of white male master status identity as a fundamental feature of the modern world. The signifying power of language functions to disable marginalized social groups such as the black community. Franz Fanon

represents one of the most important critical theorists in the black community's struggle to escape the disabling impacts of hegemonic power, and he discusses how the language and culture of those possessing master status identities position members of other social groups within the confined spaces of subjected identities. Speaking of colonization - one of modernity's more recent defining accomplishments - Fanon (1967) describes how French colonialists created false racial stereotypes that reinforced the socio-economic inequalities imposed on blacks. He observes that language extends the power of white hegemony by reinforcing a cultural climate and a concept of the 'civilized' that sanctions white colonial norms as ideals to which all should aspire (Fanon, 1967, p. 20). For Fanon, language is a medium of meaning-making that creates a persona and gives social power an aura of power and authority. He therefore associates language with the creating of masks.

In his work, *Black Skin, White Mask*, Fanon (1967) demonstrates how a society's dominant language structures power relations and creates a division between those with the power to speak and be heard and those who remain basically voiceless and excluded from social power. With reference to his personal experiences with the specific language and culture of France, Fanon (1967) indicates that mastery of the dominant language (in this case French, of course) represented an important first step on the road to gaining some degree of agency and voice within French society (or societies colonized by France). Communicative competence, he observes, can help to mitigate some of the inferiority which hegemonic power imposes on minority identities such as black people living in white or white-dominated cultures. During his time in the Antilles, blacks were regarded as being inherently inferior to French whites, but Fanon (1967) states, "In any group of young men in the Antilles, the one who expresses himself well, who has mastered the language, is inordinately feared: keep an eye on that one, he is almost

white. In France one says, 'He talks like a book.' In Martinique, 'He talks like a white man'" (p. 20-21). That is, blacks who learn to deny their own cultures and identities and instead emulate the behaviour and language of whites improve their social status. Blacks and other non-whites living in white-dominated societies and cultures can find some measure of empowerment if they can master the language of hegemonic power and authority. That type of language ability marks 'others' as civilized because it suggests they are amenable to assimilation by hegemonic norms.

Although communicative competence is an identifiable signifier of social acceptability for those who have the ability to learn the dominant language in a society, language can represent a powerful exclusionary barrier that reinforces the specific social norms sanctioned by master status identity. Hegemonic power imposes a fundamentally disabled status on all those who do not conform to dominant linguistic norms. In *Culture and Equality*, Barry (2002) discusses language in connection to the issue of diversity. Barry (2002) notes that language is so central to the establishing and perpetuating of social and cultural identity that even people and cultures which support multicultural diversity draw the line at language diversity (p. 107). Barry (2002) states, "any language will do as the medium of communication in a society as long as everybody speaks it. This is the one case involving cultural attributes in which 'This is how we do things here' - the appeal to local convention - is a self-sufficient response to pleas for the public recognition of diversity" (p. 107). Language represents a vital source of the self-sustaining power and identity of unique cultures and specific ways of life. That is why the recovery of lost languages is so important to the restoration of Indigenous cultures and identities in countries such as Canada. And that is why hegemonic authorities do not desire linguistic diversity; such diversity has the potential to dilute the primary communicative medium through which social power is expressed and sanctioned as "how we do things here."

As a non-white man, Fanon discovered that his proficiency with the French language - his manifest literacy - represented a marker of social exceptionality, especially on the island of Martinique where a more colloquial dialect was prominent. Thus, in the colonial contexts that are characteristic of a certain period of modernity the language of power did not have to be the dominant language. The necessity for members of majority linguistic groups to conform to the linguistic norms associated with a minority master status *colonial* identity reveals just how central language is to the project of expressing and sanctioning hegemonic power. On the island of Martinique, Fanon was viewed in a positive light to the extent that he manifested assimilation to the hegemonic French, white culture of the colonizing power. His embrace of hegemonic discourse enabled him to obtain socio-cultural approval from the island's minority-yet-dominant French population in Martinique.

Such is the power of the colonizer that local dialects spoken by a *majority* of people became subjected to French culture and users of those dialects were assigned subordinated and inferior identities as members of black, and therefore uncivilized, sub-communities. In other words, a colonizing minority was able to dominate a subjected majority. Fanon's work ably demonstrates how language constitutes a major medium through which hegemonic indoctrination becomes ingrained in the social fabric of a given culture or society. It is not only the physically and mentally able status connected to the white heterosexual male but also high levels of proficiency in the language of master status identity that shape the way differences between social groups are viewed within particular social contexts. According to Fanon's (1967) work, "The Negro and Language," conformity to hegemonic language norms results in enhanced social status while divergence from the language norms of the hegemon reinforces a socially inferior and subjected status (p. 17-25).

Although multiple factors have created and perpetuated the hegemonic power of master status identity within the modern era, and correspondingly defined members of other social groups as inferior and subjected, manifest physical disability has remained a fundamental marker of invalid social status. Describing his personal experience as an individual with a physical disability, Zola (1982) states “being in a wheelchair overshadowed all other features... [with respect to] how the outside world chose to think of me. It did not matter whether I was a paraplegic, a spastic, someone with muscular dystrophy or multiple sclerosis. I was handicapped and ‘invalid’ first and foremost” (p. 199). Zola’s (1982) comments emphasize the impact of visual horizons - or dominant scopic regimes - in the image-based society of modernity. In a modern world characterized by what Jay (1988) has referred to as a “scopic regime” in which the manifest appearances of the phenomenological world supplant the essential realities of religion as the arbiters of reality, the visible features of the human body become a significant determinant of human identity and worth. Indeed, Jay’s (1988) emphasis on modernity’s narrow focus on visual signifiers that tend to be linked to the quantitative elements of reality strongly resembles Goffman’s (1959) emphasis on the roles played by self-presentation and audience approval in social identity construction. In both cases, external images and visual presentations of identity are prioritized while the qualitative aspects of social identity and meaning creation processes receive much less attention.

Zola’s readily visible “invalid” physical status rendered him socially inferior, but the potential for the exclusionary social norms connected to hegemonic power to become radically dehumanizing was most powerfully expressed in the denial of his individuality. Zola (1982) states, “in the eyes of the able-bodied, I and all others [with disabilities] looked alike!” (p. 199). The scopic regime of modernity creates a society of people who see only what they have been

indoctrinated into seeing and simply do not recognize the individuality and humanity of people with visible disabilities, or of people who differ significantly from dominant social norms of acceptable identity. Zola's (1982) work draws attention to the power of modernity's scopic regime to shape what people literally perceive with their eyes and also emphasizes the potentially dehumanizing impact of the exclusionary social norms advanced by modernity's hegemonic master status identity.

### **Master Status Identity, Eugenics and Dehumanization**

Extreme examples of sociological phenomena can bring into view social realities that might otherwise remain unseen. The ability and techniques used by the master status identity of the white heterosexual male to impose disabling expressions of stigmatization on marginalized social groups is brought into sharp relief by the example of the Nazi construction of Jewish identity. Indeed, it seems likely that no social group has faced such a disabling denial of equality, human rights and even status as a human population. Adolph Hitler's Nazi Germany sought the consolidation and worldwide spread of an Aryan master race that would lead the world in progress toward human perfection (Hitler, 2009, p. 328). In this sense, Nazi Germany strove to perpetuate modernity's focus on social progress. Hitler's hope was to eventually create a world state dominated by the perfect, Aryan master race. His fanatical idealism and assertion of white supremacy had a basis in the science of eugenics and the hope was to achieve physical perfection on the basis of genetics (Burleigh & Wipperman, 1991, p.136-137).

A strong argument could be made that the focus on eugenics characterizing the Nazi movement and supporting the notion of a white master status identity, or master race, has deep roots in the thought of western writers who posit, or assume, a hierarchy of human worthiness based on genetic distinctions. Plato (380 BC), for example, believes that those possessing

undesirable traits and genetic defects should be made to refrain from procreation (negative eugenics) whereas those who possess desirable genetic traits should be encouraged to reproduce (positive eugenics). Plato's (380 BC) *Republic* incorporates conversation between Socrates and interlocutors such as Glaucon and Thrasymachus, and their discussion involves an inquiry into what constitutes an ideal Republic. Plato's notion of a class of citizens that is best suited to rule society due its inherent intellectual and moral superiority contains the basic elements supporting the notions of a master status identity and a master race. Moreover, he expresses a particular concern that men of intelligence and virtue should reproduce for the good of the state. Book V of the *Republic* contains the passage, "much as owners breed only their best animals together so must the rulers aim to see that the best members... breed as frequently as possible." Indeed, the assumption that there is a genetics-based hierarchy of human beings ranging from the very 'low' to the very 'high' appears to pervade Plato's work.

In Book V of the *Republic*, Plato (380 BC) suggests that children who are born healthy should be raised in a nursery where they will receive a proper upbringing while those with genetic defects should be hidden "in an unspeakable place." This wording strongly suggests a dehumanizing of infants and children who manifest various forms of disability. The literal hiding of genetically defective individuals is deemed necessary to avoid any kind of visual disruption, confusion or challenge to the social order. For Plato (380 BC), then, the everyday life of society is to be dominated by a superior ruling class that upholds and reproduces social hierarchies for the good of the state. The translator of the *Republic*, Desmond Lee, draws attention to Plato's (380 BC) view that parents should not be allowed to know who their children are and, conversely, that children should not be permitted to know the identities of their biological parents (Book V, p. 246). What matters is not family lines but rather the basic distinction

between those who are genetically superior and those who are genetically inferior. Indeed, Lee indicates that ancient Greek peoples embraced genetics-based hierarchies to the point where they saw “nothing very shocking” about infanticide and the murder of children of inferior genetic stock. The Spartans, for example, exposed both children with genetic defects and illegitimate offspring to death (*Republic*, Book V, p. 246).

The work of another highly influential western thinker, Charles Darwin, also contains elements that have been and still are being used to support the notion of a eugenics-based social inequality that promotes the social domination of a white master status identity and a corresponding dehumanization of people with genetic ‘defects.’ Bergman’s (2011) work, *The Dark Side of Charles Darwin: A Critical Analysis of an Icon of Science*, points out that Darwin’s (1859) *On the Origin of Species* contains a notion of the ‘survival of the fittest’ which has been used to justify genetics- and race-based social inequalities. The fundamental assumption at the basis of this view is brutally dehumanizing - those who are genetically superior will rise to the top in all areas of social and economic life and thus drive evolution forward, while those who are genetically inferior have not been selected for survival. According to Bergman (2011), Darwin’s work helped lay the foundation for the work of eugenicists in constructing a white racial ideal and in disabling the identities of members of non-white races. Bergman (2011) observes that the presumption of inherent racial inequality dominates Darwin’s writings:

The topic of racism is very important to understanding Darwinism because Darwin’s theory of biological origins appears to have reflected his personal attitudes toward non-Caucasian races. Darwin’s attitude toward non-Caucasians was hinted at very early in his life. In the early 1800s, for example, Darwin was concerned that his brother, Erasmus, might marry Harriet Martineau (1802-1876). Charles Darwin wrote to his sister Caroline

about his concerns, stating that if Erasmus married her, he would not be “much better than her nigger. Imagine poor Erasmus a nigger to so philosophical and energetic a lady.” Darwin concluded that “perfect equality of rights is part of her doctrine. I very much doubt whether it will be equal in practice” (p. 212).

Reflecting the racial assumptions of his time, Darwin was concerned that in comparison to the highly intelligent and accomplished Harriet Martineau, his brother Erasmus would have been just as inferior as a “nigger” when compared to white people. It must be acknowledged that the word “nigger” was commonplace in Darwin’s time and does not by itself reflect any particular racial bias. Indeed, Darwin refuted slavery. However, Bergman’s (2011) discussion makes it abundantly clear that Darwin assumed the genetic inferiority of black peoples. The full title of Darwin’s (1859) work is, *On the Origin of the Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*, and Bergman (2011) asserts that this wording clearly reveals Darwin’s view that the white race is inherently superior (p. 213). Additionally, Bergman (2011) indicates that Chapter 7 of Darwin’s (1871) work, *The Descent of Man*, “covers in detail his clear racist conclusion about humans” (p. 213). With non-white peoples located in an inferior biological and social space, modernity incorporated Darwin’s assumption that the master status identity of white peoples is firmly grounded in the indisputable facts of human biology.

Darwin’s half-cousin, Francis Galton (1869), wrote a work titled *Hereditary Genius* which elaborates the view that the genetically fittest members of the human species are best suited for reproduction and social leadership. The word “eugenics” is derived from the Greek *eu* which means “good” or “well” and *genes* which means “born.” Based on these Greek roots, it was Galton who coined the term “eugenics” and he published many works on the subject. One work,

Galton's (1833) *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development*, played a significant role in supporting the notion of a linkage between genetic superiority, the white race and the ongoing evolution of the human species. The assumption was that human evolution depended on the social domination of the members of the genetically superior white population; members of non-white races were deemed to be closer to their animal origins and therefore as lacking the intellectual capacity to drive the species forward. This notion has had a powerful influence in the modern period, extending not only into the well-known horrors of the eugenics efforts of Hitler and Nazi Germany, but also into eugenics campaigns in states such as the US, Canada and Australia. Indeed, scientific work on selective breeding has taken place in these states.

Black's (2012) work, *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race*, indicates that nations become tempted by eugenics when dominant social groups feel threatened by the presence of growing numbers of non-dominant peoples within their societies. In a chapter titled, "America's National Biology," Black (2012) observes that America explored a eugenics approach to breeding in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century "because the most established echelons of American society were frightened by the demographic chaos sweeping the nation. England had... witnessed a mass influx of foreigners during the years leading up to Galton's eugenic doctrine. But the scale in Britain was dwarfed by America's emotions" (p. 22). Black (2012) asserts that "America's melting pot notion was a myth" as the nation sought to reinforce a clear division between the 'superior' white members of its population and 'inferior' non-white populations (p. 22). Of course, genetic inequalities correlated with racial inequalities and Black (2012) further asserts that, historically, class divisions in the US have corresponded with racial and ethnic inequalities (p. 21). The notion that intrinsic genetic inequalities result in natural and inevitable race- and class-based inequalities continues in contemporary America.

Indeed, the rise to power of Donald Trump in the fall of 2016 exposed the ongoing presence of powerful strains of white supremacist thought in the US which relentlessly promote the view that white people deserve the social and economic advantages associated with membership in the privileged classes. That said, racial inequality must be distinguished from dehumanization and it seems clear that the Jewish people in Nazi Germany were subjected to the most radical, eugenics-based dehumanization that we have seen in the modern era.

In accordance with modernity's emphasis on binary codes and hierarchical divisions between social groups, Hitler's view of a world community taken to the highest degree of development through eugenics needed a dialectical opposite as the basis for confirming Aryan perfection. It was primarily, but not exclusively, the Jewish people who filled this role. Measured against the supposed perfection of the Aryan master status identity, the Jewish identity was defined by Hitler and the Nazis as inherently inferior and basically sub-human, as were other 'different' social groups such as people with disabilities, gypsies, homosexuals and persons of color (Lewy, 2000, p.15). But, when the Nazi movement developed to its most horrific extreme and sought to justify the extermination of millions of Jewish people, Hitler had to find a way to define the Jewish identity not only as less than human but, more importantly, as an *enemy* of social progress and the grand project of the perfection of the human species. In order for the Aryan master status identity to reign supreme, the Jewish people had to be radically disabled, dehumanized and forcefully removed from German society.

As a skilled politician, Hitler was a master manipulator of human emotions and he drew upon state propaganda mechanisms, state institutions, the power of language and highly distorted expressions of scientific medicine to prepare the German national psyche for his project of exterminating the Jewish people (Hitler, 2009, p. 169-70). The Nuremberg Laws were an

important part of this plan. Noakes and Pridham (1974) indicate that these laws were anti-Jewish statutes enacted by Germany on “September 15, 1935,” marking a major step in clarifying racial policy and removing Jewish influences from Aryan society (p. 463). The Nuremberg Laws denied Jewish people equality and rights, and can be accurately described as a political construction that sought to disable the entire Jewish population in Germany. Ultimately, of course, the world would witness the Third Reich of Nazi Germany committing some of the most horrific atrocities against human beings in all of human history. While legal tools such as the Nuremberg Laws facilitated Nazi atrocities, language also played a key role in creating Nazi Germany’s radical racial policies. Keane (2001) suggests that language plays a large role in constructing “differences in social identities, statuses, value systems, and so forth” (p. 268). The language used by Hitler relentlessly defined the Jewish people in negative terms that supported the denial of equality and human rights, and ultimately justified the radical disabling process of the Holocaust.

One of the strategies used by hegemonic groups to assert their power and domination over others involves the social construction of targeted groups as enemies. It is well known that governments facing domestic struggles typically strive to find external enemies in order to deflect public attention away from their own failings and, in a process of displacement, focus public anger on some kind of designated scapegoat. However, the mere fact that a scapegoated social group differs from dominant social norms is not enough for the public to justify and accept the committing of violence against the scapegoated group. When hegemonic authorities seek public legitimacy in committing violent atrocities against designated scapegoats, the masses of people must be convinced that the scapegoat poses a serious threat to the safety and well-being of the state. Accordingly, the wording and language of the Nuremberg Laws were designed to

construct the Jewish people as fearsome enemies of the German people and state. As Noakes and Pridham (1974) state:

On September 13, 1935, Hitler called on the desk officer for racial law in the Reich Ministry of the Interior (RMI), Bernhard Loesener, and on others... to formulate the legal language of the laws. Hitler wanted to present these new laws at the Nuremberg Party rally on September 15... Hitler made no pretense of basing these laws on any “scientific truths” discovered by his “racial scientists.” *His driving force was not reason but rather the need for an enemy.* Hitler had said that if the Nazis had not had Jews, they would have had to invent them (p. 463-467).

Hitler’s efforts to stoke fear amongst the German public by constructing the Jewish people as enemies of the German state were very successful. In accordance with the basic goals of the Aryan master status identity, Hitler’s construction of the Jewish identity as a sub-human threat effectively stigmatized and disabled the Jewish people at multiple levels simultaneously.

Ostensibly, Hitler and the Nazi movement sought racial conformity - and hence purity - within German society, but this required the consolidation of the power and domination of Germany’s master status identity as constructed by Hitler and his Nazi collaborators. This, in turn, required an official enemy - the Jewish people. A variety of German social institutions played important roles in disabling the Jewish people. Noakes and Pridham (1974) indicate that the legal system in Germany was used to support Hitler’s cause. The Nuremberg Laws “prohibited marriages and extra-marital intercourse between ‘Jews’ (the name was now officially used in place of ‘non-Aryans’) and ‘Germans’ and the employment of ‘German’ females under forty-five in Jewish households” (Noakes & Pridham, 1974, p. 463). These measures were deemed necessary to ensure Germany’s racial purity. When speaking to the public, Hitler

asserted that the Nuremberg Laws would enable the German people to find a tolerable relation with the Jewish people. But Noakes and Pridham (1974) indicate that this assertion was a blatant deception aimed at the outside world and designed to prevent potential “economic reprisals” (p. 460). In point of fact, Hitler implemented the Nuremberg Laws as part of the larger process of eliminating Jewish people from German society. Far from enabling the German and Jewish peoples to live together in a relatively harmonious state, the Nuremberg Laws constituted a legal tactic in support of Hitler’s effort to disable the Jewish identity and create a racially pure Aryan society. Hitler’s real goal - which had to be implemented cautiously and gradually due to its radical nature - was to construct the Jewish people as a sub-human people who were fundamentally incompatible with the true Germans of his racial vision. As Noakes and Pridham (1974) state, “the Nuremberg Laws helped Hitler take the first step toward the Nazi purification of Jews from Germany. The introduction of the Nuremberg code read: “Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour, 15 September 1935” (p. 463).

In addition to German legal institutions, the German media played a significant role in Hitler’s project of stigmatizing, dehumanizing and disabling the Jewish people. Hitler controlled the German press in order to prevent the dissemination of ideas that challenged his purposes (Kaplan, 2009, p. 121). Additionally, the Jewish press and Jewish publications were eliminated by the summer of 1935. As Kaplan (2009) indicates, “the Gestapo forbade the publication of leading German-Jewish papers, sending clear signals that the regime would no longer tolerate the papers” (p. 121). The suppression of Jewish voices in Germany enabled Hitler to isolate the Jewish people and prevented them from communicating in public forums. This strategy of power reflects Fanon’s (1967) view that control over language facilitates the power of the dominant groups (or master status identities) within a society by disabling opposition to dominant cultural

norms and social power (p. 20-21). Since language and discourse play large roles in the transmission of culture - “parents speaking to children, individuals speaking to peers, educational institutions and churches communicating to their students and parishioners, messages from texts and the mass media, the reading of literature and so on” - the denial of a group’s ability to engage in the free expression of ideas functions to oppress and de-legitimate a culture (Mullaly, 2009, p. 114). In Nazi Germany, the government’s control over the media in general, and the Jewish media, was part of the process of disabling and dehumanizing the Jewish people.

Like the country’s legal and media establishments, the German medical establishment became complicit in Hitler’s wide-ranging efforts to disable the Jewish people. Spitz (2005) references Weisel’s observation that German doctors acted “without conscience” in their treatment of Jewish people, which contributed to the mass murder of Jews and others (p. xvii). According to Weisel, those targeted by Hitler and his colleagues included people with health problems and those with physical and mental disabilities:

One day, Hitler and Himmler’s Health Minister made it known to leaders in the medical field that, according to a secret decision made at the highest level, it was necessary to get rid of ‘useless mouths’ - the insane, the terminally ill, children, and elderly people who were condemned to misfortune by nature and to suffering and fear by God. Few in the German medical profession believed it worthy or good to refuse. Thus, instead of doing their job, instead of bringing assistance and comfort to the sick people who needed them most, instead of helping the mutilated and the handicapped to live, eat, and hope... doctors became their executioners (Weisel in Spitz, 2005, p. xvii).

Hitler and his Nazi collaborators defined individuals and groups with mental and physical health problems as people who threatened to compromise the presumed purity of the Aryan master

status identity. It therefore appears that the “need for an enemy” was connected to the Nazi conception of human perfection. Nazi Germany’s contempt for human diversity was justified on the basis of a narrow and highly exclusionary understanding of human progress and purity that dehumanized and disabled all social groups that diverged from the view that Aryan peoples manifested human perfection. In order to avoid seeing their own imperfections, Hitler and his Nazi colleagues needed to project their own inferiority onto external ‘others.’

Hitler and his Nazi collaborators had a lengthy list of outsiders who they defined as imperfect and as enemies to the progress of the human race, and therefore wanted to cleanse from German society. In order to understand the nature of the exclusionary elements inherent within modernity, it is important to note that these groups not only *differed* from dominant German social norms but were also constructed as active *threats* to the racial purity of the German people and German society. Absent the construction of divergent identities as active threats, these people could not be subjected to the dehumanization the Nazis sought to impose on them. Mondimore (1996) states:

Using a confused melange of degeneracy and “racial” theories, Nazi propagandists earmarked various outsider groups for elimination. Homosexuals, Jews, Gypsies, Slavic peoples, criminals, the mentally ill, the retarded, and the physically handicapped were homogenized into a monolithic group that threatened the Aryan race. Words like inferior, abnormal and degenerate appeared repeatedly in new policies and laws dealing with these groups. Once they were dehumanized in this manner, their elimination became morally acceptable. The man who directed the Nazi war against homosexuals was Heinrich Himmler... Himmler’s obsession with racial purity made him the perfect person to carry out Hitler’s “Final Solution” against the Jews (p. 215).

Mondimore (1996) indicates that the denial of the basic humanity of all the above-mentioned social groups was needed as justification for moving forward with the extermination of the social groups that had been defined by Hitler and his Nazi colleagues as impure. But Hitler's main focus was the Jewish people, who became the primary target of the "final solution" (Paskuly, 1996, p. 27). It was the Jewish people, above all other 'impure' social groups, who were deemed as threatening to the racial purity of German society.

Paskuly (1996) indicates that as the Nazi movement expanded the Jewish people transitioned from being "enemies" to being "eternal enemies of the German people" who represented such a grave threat to German racial purity that they had to be exterminated (p. 28). Hitler and other leaders in the Nazi movement strongly insisted that the Jews would "destroy the German people" unless the German government and military "destroyed the biological foundation of Jewry" (Paskuly, 1996, p. 28). Despite the obvious absurdity of this claim - or perhaps because of it? - disabling uses of language such as this were used to construct the Jewish people not only as a threat but as a mortal enemy posing an existential threat to Germany's survival. On the basis of this linguistic and political construction arose the ultimate form of the disablement of a people - the notion of a complete eradication of the Jewish people from German society. However, the Nazi leadership hid its genocidal intentions behind a veil of deception. As Lacquer's (1980) work, *The Terrible Secret: Suppression of the Truth about Hitler's "Final Solution"* indicates, "The Nazi authorities, moreover, made a determined effort to spread misleading information about the fate of the Jews" (p.17). Indeed, the genocide committed against the Jewish people in Germany would eventually be presented to the German people as a measure that was necessary in order to sustain Germany's ongoing progress toward the goal of a racially pure society.

The eventual goal of the Nazi movement was the dehumanization and extermination of social groups - especially the Jewish people - that were constructed as threats to Aryan purity. Indeed, the goal of committing genocide required that its victims be constructed as sub-human. Thus, one of the main issues raised by the processes of disablement that took place within Nazi Germany is the psychology associated with public perceptions of some social groups not only as sub-human threats to public well-being but as dire threats or even as existential threats. In order to generate public fear and paranoia amongst the German people, the Nazis became masters in the employment of techniques of propaganda. However, Hitler's (1925, 1926) two volume work, *Mein Kampf*, explains that the effectiveness of Nazi propaganda was directly correlated with the intellectual and emotional simplicity of the German masses:

All propaganda must appeal to the common people in tone and in form and must keep its intellectual level to the capacity of the least intelligent person at whom it is directed... the intellectual level must be lowered as the mass of people it is intended to reach grows... Understanding the emotional patterns of the great masses and using proper psychology to get their attention and touch their hearts is the true art of propaganda (p. 169-170).

Hitler's remarks indicate that the validation of master status identity requires an acceptable level of receptivity amongst the people in a nation. Since the masses of people desire a strong sense of order and predictability, and fear having to confront complex cognitive and emotional situations, Hitler's propaganda sought to construct some social groups as direct threats to the German people's high valuation of a sense of law and order.

Nazi propaganda constructed the Gypsies as a people who posed a threat to the rigid order and security of the society Hitler and his colleagues were striving to create. Lewy's (2000) work, *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies*, exposes the changing view of the Gypsies that took

place as Hitler's movement developed:

When Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933, Gypsies constituted a small minority of approximately 26,000 people of no particular interest to the Nazi leadership... In a political and social climate that stressed law and order, Gypsies long regarded as asocial and given to crime drew increased hostility. Many of them were itinerants and as such did not fit into the new society of stable social relations that the Nazis sought to build (p. 15).

Hitler was ultimately successful in stigmatizing the Gypsies as a threat to public order and security, and he was able to achieve this goal through the appeal of propaganda that was intellectually and emotionally simplistic. In some ways, the example of Hitler's Germany confirms Gramsci's (1929-32) view, expressed in his *Prison Notebooks*, that hegemonic power requires the consent of the subjugated masses. The example of Nazi Germany suggests that governments, especially radically tyrannical governments, must have a high degree of public support if they are to succeed in stigmatizing and disabling some groups of citizens while sanctioning others as legitimate possessors of master status identity. It would appear that an educated and critical public is anathema to this process because such a public is unwilling to embrace simplistic and false expressions of state propaganda.

Multiple German institutions such as the law, the media and the medical establishment were all co-opted into supporting Hitler's quest to construct a master race and a master status identity that was superior to all others. Perhaps the seductiveness of delusional feelings of superiority and power contributed to this process? Be that as it may, Hitler's (1925, 1926) work, *Mein Kampf*, reveals how deeply he believed that the Aryan race was superior to all others and had to play a leadership role in human historical development:

The state is indispensable when it comes to forming a higher human civilization, but the state is not the cause of that higher civilization. The civilization depends exclusively on the existence of the race capable of creating that culture. There might be hundreds of states on earth which are excellent models of government, but if the Aryan bearers of civilization were to die out, no culture could continue to exist, at least not a culture that would match the intellectual level of the advanced peoples of today (p. 328).

Hitler's resolute conviction in Aryan racial superiority and his desire to strive toward a "higher human civilization" created what might be termed its own unique epistemology. Science played a large role in legitimating Nazi ideology and propaganda because the Third Reich believed that the prestige associated with scientific knowledge would help in the process of indoctrinating the German psyche with the notion of its own absolute racial and genetic superiority. As Linton (1998) states in her work, *Claiming Disability Knowledge and Identity*, "determinist ideas that explain human behavior and achievement in terms of biology" can be used by those wishing to impose an ideological perspective on others, and these ideas are especially pernicious "since they carry the stamp of scientific credibility" (p. 142).

The Nazi bio-medical establishment was able to legitimate Nazi ideology because it viewed issues of race as taking priority over human rights. Lifton (1986) references the view of a German geneticist, Fritz Lenz, who stated that "race was the criterion of value" and, further, that "the state is not there to see that the individual gets his rights, but to serve the race" (p. 24). In Nazi Germany, there were many ways to serve the master race and Hitler was especially fond of the notion that the Aryan race was not only intellectually and culturally superior but also physically and athletically superior. It was a great disappointment to him when the black American athlete, Jesse Owens, won the 100-meter dash at the 1936 Berlin Olympics

(Shenkman, 2010, n. p). Overall, however, the 1936 Olympics supported Hitler's vision of German racial superiority. As Shenkman (2010) states in his work, *Adolf Hitler, Jesse Owens and the Olympic Myth of 1936*, "despite the great achievements of Jesse Owens, and of other athletes of all races, Germans captured more medals than any other nation, thus "winning" the Olympics" (Front Page, n. p.). For Hitler, Germany's Olympic victories proved the physical and biological superiority of the German people and encouraged him to further advance his ambitions for asserting the superiority of the master race.

Hitler and the Nazis used their belief in a biologically superior Aryan race to justify the imposition of dehumanizing and disabling social policies on a range of social groups. Linton (1998) indicates that expressions of scientific or empirical knowledge can be used to support discrimination and disablement when they objectify members of social groups and lead to the negation of their identities (p. 142). Indeed, within the context of the field of CDS, Linton (1998) asserts that the objectification of disabled people is supported by the "empiricist approaches that have dominated the study of disability" (p. 142). According to Linton (1998), common usages of the word "they" represent an example of how language can construct disabled people as separate or other - excluded from "we" - and thereby reinforce the objectification and devaluing of people with disabilities (p. 142). Linton's (1998) discussion of the linkages between knowledge, identity and disability emphasizes the manner in which supposedly empirical scientific discourses can function to dehumanize and disable targeted identities within society. In accordance with this view, it is clear that Nazi Germany used science as a disabling tool of dehumanization.

Science, religion and concepts of spiritual purity all contributed to the creation and perpetuation of Nazi beliefs, ideology and practices. Lifton's (1986) work, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*, asserts that Nazi ideology drew upon both

scientific medicine and religious or mystical concepts of spiritual purity and salvation for inspiration:

The Nazis developed the medical purification method *par excellence*, applied to purification of genes and race - that of selection. The pivotal statement that 'National Socialism is nothing but applied biology' could be even more pivotally understood: 'National Socialism is nothing but applied biological purification.' It was from this standpoint that one Nazi writer declared that the doctor had been 'restored to the priesthood and to the holiness of his calling'; and that another writer held forth the vision that the 'physician could be the true savior of the human race' (p. 484).

An almost Biblical sentiment is evident in this use of language, and it reveals that a sense of religious truth and spiritual perfection was a vital component of Nazi beliefs and ideology. The Nazis viewed doctors and medical science broadly speaking as a force of salvation that could exercise its divine power through eugenics. Their unique combination of eugenics, medicine and religious mysticism constituted a potent mix - a deadly ideological witch's brew, so to speak - that enabled Nazi leaders to disseminate Nazi ideology and place many German people under their spell. Within the Nazi propaganda machine the figure of the physician and the science of eugenics became central because they were wedded to the notion of a supreme supernatural authority that was inexorably shaping human history in accordance with a plan to achieve divine perfection - or, at least, the domination of the Aryan race. In the view of the Nazis, it seems that it was God, ultimately, who demanded the marginalization or extermination of those who did not meet the high racial, biological and spiritual ideals of the Aryan race.

Propagandists who can convince their followers of God's support for their cause enjoy a decided advantage. While Hitler's wrath descended with greatest force on the Jewish people, we

have seen that many other ‘divergent’ social groups were also in his sights. Stiker’s (1997) work, *A History of Disability*, explores disability and the Nazi phenomenon within the context of the Bible and the “Cult of God” (p. 24). For the Nazis, “disabilities as a whole were judged as impurities, disqualifying their bearers from active participation in the cult” (Stiker, 1997, p. 24). The Nazis invoked Biblical notions of cleanliness and uncleanness in order to link Nazi ideology with the power of religious belief systems. Stiker (1997) states:

The Bible also reveals the social exclusion of certain illnesses. This is illustrated... in Leviticus 13 and 14 dealing with leprosy. It may be summarized as follows: Those whose skin is afflicted are examined by a priest, and if the symptoms are found to be those of leprosy (or a serious disease of the skin) he must deliver a judgment of ‘unclean.’ The priest functions... as a specialist who determines whether there is actually an impurity or not (p. 24).

Under the Nazi regime, medical doctors became High Priests in the cult of Nazism and had the power to legitimate eugenics and lend medical-scientific sanction to the dehumanizing of any social groups deemed as unclean. It appears that the race-based duality that was constructed between ‘Aryan purity’ and the ‘impure other’ was at the basis of a form of thought and rationality that enabled the Nazis to commit the atrocities of the Holocaust. However, Nazi expressions of thought and rationality may be viewed as predictable outcomes of the modern era.

Bauman (1989) asserts that the Holocaust represents a product of modernity; it arose out of the very “solid” social and institutional structures of modernity, as shown by the example of the dehumanization stemming from modernity’s bureaucratic rationality (p. 13). Commenting on Bauman’s (1989) view that modernity’s definitive or solid identity gave rise to the holocaust, Lee (2005) states:

In *Modernity and the Holocaust*... Bauman... seemed to give modernity a solid touch in order to demonstrate that sanctions for evil did not arise out of thin air but were a corollary of the very structures of modernity itself. Modern civilization was not the Holocaust's sufficient condition; it was, however, most certainly its *necessary* condition. Without it, the Holocaust would be unthinkable. It was the rational world of modern civilization that made the Holocaust thinkable. The Nazi mass murder of the European Jewry was not only the technological achievement of an industrial society, but also the organizational achievement of a bureaucratic society. The implication is that the mass destruction of an ethnic group could not have been possible if modernity had merely been comprised free-floating structures. Only in a solid context can modern structures intermesh to produce the kind of killing machine meant for a genocidal program. Thus, in referring to a human tragedy of vast proportion, Bauman implicitly attributed to modernity a solid character (p. 64).

We have seen that writers such as Berman (1982) and Gusfield (1967) attribute contradictory qualities to modernity such as oppression, joy, inequality, vitality, tradition, hierarchy, transformation and change. However, Bauman (1989) argues that beneath the appearance of modernity's contradictory nature lurks a highly defined, stable, bureaucratic and dehumanizing social order. Hitler, Nazi Germany and the systematic murder of millions of Jewish people provides a chilling example of the way in which the hegemonic master status identity within modernity functioned to dehumanize and disable the Jewish people, and also demonstrates the role of the masses in offering their implied consent to such processes of disablement.

## **Critique of Master Status Identity**

An effective critique of the systematic disabling of social groups conducted by groups possessing master status identity must be grounded in the creation of counter-hegemonic discourses that deconstruct the ideological and institutional bases of social power. Among other things, critics of hegemonic power must expose the political motives hidden within truth claims. Foucault's (1997) work, *The Politics of Truth*, asserts that critical spaces represent vital aspects of the quest to achieve meaningful change within society. According to Foucault (1997), social spaces that are oriented around the development and expression of critical thought have the ability to "give rise to the invention of new forms of inter-relations, new forms and spaces of struggle" (p. 15). Foucault's assertion suggests that critical theoretical discourse need not be limited to abstract intellectual environments but can function together with active social struggle to achieve positive social change. Moreover, Foucault's emphasis on critical discourse implies that the desire or emotional wish for change is not enough; a desire to improve the well-being of oppressed or disabled social groups must be accompanied by the rigorous critical thought needed to understand oppression and to develop effective strategies for achieving change.

Like Foucault (1997), Ingstad (1995) emphasizes that an emotional desire to confront the disabling oppression imposed by groups with the hegemonic power of master status identity is not adequate to drive real change. Ingstad's (1995) work, "Mpho ya Modimo - A Gift from God: Perspectives on 'Attitudes' toward Disabled Persons," observes that support for people with disabilities is sometimes grounded in the emotion of sympathy (p. 246). To provide an example of this, Ingstad (1995) states that when disability activists from the West shifted their attention to the needs of people with disabilities living in the developing world they sought to fundraise by evoking "sympathy" (p. 246). In order to manipulate the emotions of those from whom they

sought financial support, “a picture of disabled people living in a state of utter misery and neglect was presented to the world” (Ingstad, 1995, p. 247). However, this picture undermined the agency, humanity and ability of the disabled populations that activists were trying to assist. As Ingstad (1995) states, the attitude of disability activists toward the disabled was that of a “caretaker” (p. 247). Although the emotional desire to help the disabled is valuable in and of itself, activist measures to promote change are ineffective unless positive emotional impulses are complemented by critical examination and awareness of the multiple social factors that construct disability, such as poverty, lack of access to necessary healthcare services, inadequate government support programs and so on (Ingstad, 1995, p. 247).

Murphy (1990) argues that charity represents a way for privileged people to pretend they are contributing to the well-being of the recipients of charity - and thus to help alleviate their guilt over complicity in the societal causes of oppression - while avoiding any substantive involvement in addressing the disabling social factors that place people in positions of need. In his work, *The Body Silent*, Murphy (1990) states:

As for the injunction that the handicapped should be helped, we do this from a safe distance, by contributing to such organizations as the March of Dimes and the Muscular Dystrophy Association or by dropping coins in a beggar’s cup. In this way the abled-bodied lull their conscience without getting too close; they stress their own separation and intactness by an act of charity. These contradictory reactions of kindness and rejection help make the treatment of the disabled the arena of an enormous conflict of values (p. 130).

In contrast to an ineffective charity approach to disability, Foucault’s (1997) argument in support of critical thinking that explores the multiple social factors that create oppression has the

potential to address the multiple sources of disability, and particularly the role of hegemonic master status identity in imposing varying degrees of oppression on marginalized social groups. That said, it would appear that effective critical thought and discourse requires the simultaneous existence of two interrelated elements: self-examination in order to increase self-knowledge and social criticism in order to increase social awareness.

Schwarzmantel's (2009) book, *Gramsci and Global Politics: Hegemony and Resistance*, argues that Gramsci's work on hegemony draws attention to the need for both self-knowledge and social awareness if efforts to achieve social change are to have any chance at success. Schwarzmantel (2009) accepts Gramsci's view that the struggle to change society is not an abstract process but rather entails practical political engagement, but he also argues that Gramsci's goal was to "widen the scope of the political" beyond the emotion-driven action that often passes for political activism to include an emphasis on striving to achieve self-knowledge (p. 82). It was not enough to understand the workings of hegemony in society; individuals also had to understand themselves and their own motives. As Schwarzmantel (2009) states, Gramsci's thought included the goal of an increase in "individuals' own understanding of their situation" (p. 82). From this perspective, individuals seeking to achieve social change would focus not only on criticism of oppressive social factors such as the impact of those possessing master status identity, but also analyze the biases and personal interests driving their own political projects and desire for change. There are multiple reasons for the focus on self-knowledge as an important component of processes of social change.

One reason for pursuing self-knowledge is to understand the many ways in which social factors shape our identities and actions, including the desire to fight disabling forms of oppression through political activism. London's (2012) work, *Renewing Our Sense of Wonder:*

*An Interview with Sam Keen*, references Keen's view that "unless we understand our lives as a kind of autobiography in the making, we're likely to take refuge in other people's stories, in ready-made ideologies, and in unexamined systems of belief" (p. 1). If we devalue the quest for self-knowledge, we increase the chances of engaging in forms of political activism that are destined to fail or even to result in highly negative outcomes. We try to observe other people's lives from the outside, and then feel driven to adopt the forms of activism we think they need. In this process our own ideologies and systems of belief remain unexamined and we naively assume that we have truth and justice on our own side. But we may unknowingly be the ones who give our implied consent to those people holding master status identity.

Due to the popular embrace of unchallenged assumptions about our social, political, economic and cultural worlds, many people unconsciously internalize the ideologies and values of those possessing master status identities despite the fact that these ideologies and values directly oppose their own interests. In other words, our unexamined ideological systems of belief may support the hegemonic and oppressive power of the master status identity within our society. The power of ruling elites is enabled when citizens passively internalize and live according to the discriminatory and exclusionary norms of master status identity. In the modern era, of course, this hegemonic status has been held by white, able-bodied heterosexual males whose main goal is to advance their own interests at the expense of all other social groups. In order to oppose being passively assimilated into the oppressive social norms advanced by the holders of master status identity, individuals seeking to work towards positive social change must systematically explore and refute *their own* entrenched belief systems.

Honest self-examination can contribute to both self-renewal and social critique. In his work, *Stigma*, Goffman (1963) states that "the person with a shameful differentness can break

with what is called reality, and obstinately attempt to employ an unconventional interpretation of the character of his social identity” (p. 10). Goffman (1963) implies that individuals who are socially stigmatized due to the impact of dominant social norms can reject the social identities imposed on them from without - through the workings of master status identity - and affirm new identities and a new social reality rooted in equality and inclusion. The linkage hegemonic social power draws between *different* identities and *inferior* identities can be broken if stigmatized persons reject and redefine hegemonic power as oppressive and illegitimate. Like a bully who dissolves in shame once he has been called out, the master status identity that was once a guarantee of social domination and privilege is vulnerable to being exposed as being based on little more than naked self-interest. However, stigmatized persons and groups must understand and reject the negative identities that have been assigned to them as part of the process of engaging in effective social action to achieve change. The ‘inner activism’ of self-knowledge represents a necessary aspect of effective social activism. The social disfiguration and inferiority imposed by master status identities can then be transfigured - or reinterpreted, to use Goffman’s (1963) words - such that stigmatized, disabled and oppressed groups are redefined as ‘differently-able’ and reinstated as equal, valued and contributing members of society.

Many writers within and outside the field of CDS refute master status identity’s construction of itself as superior to all other identities by critically challenging the existence of a singular, universal identity against which all other identities are to be measured. These critical challenges to the hegemonic position of modernity’s presiding master status identity take many forms. For example, hooks (1992) opposes the domination of master status identity through an oppositional gaze that exposes and criticizes social constructions of reality that are rooted in inequality, exploitation and domination. For hooks, the oppositional gaze represents an active

process of social participation in which the act of seeing itself signifies a movement towards justice, progressive political change and the emergence of new perspectives. In her work, *Black Looks, Race and Representation*, hooks (1992) discusses the “power in looking,” asserting that the act of viewing involves not merely seeing objects in the environment but also the emergence of a space of critical spectatorship through which traditional social signifiers of human difference can be re-evaluated or re-viewed (p. 115). According to hooks (1992):

The “gaze” has been and is a site of resistance for colonized black people globally. Subordinates in relations of power learn experientially that there is a critical gaze, one that “looks” to document; one that is oppositional. In resistance struggle, the power of the dominated to assert agency by claiming and cultivating “awareness” politicizes “looking” relations - one looks a certain way in order to resist (p. 116).

For hooks (1992), the act of looking can incorporate a form of critical viewership that awakens consciousness and enables marginalized groups to understand how they have been disabled by the prevailing master status identity within a society. However, the act of looking must be accompanied by knowledge of the factors creating inequality and exclusion.

The emphasis on critical spectatorship and the transforming of reified social identities advanced by hooks (1992) strongly resembles Goffman’s (1963) above-mentioned view that stigmatized individuals have the power to reinterpret the negative identities that have been forcefully imposed on them by hegemonic social power. For hooks (1992), active viewing is akin to active critical thinking as both processes support the deconstruction of the ablest ideals and presuppositions that drive discriminatory forms of social identity construction. The historical analysis methodology employed in this dissertation emphasizes the need to look backwards at the past, at the roles played by many aspects of modernity in shaping contemporary processes of

oppression and disablement. But hooks' (1992) work adds that past injustices must be repositioned through the active workings of a present critical gaze that lays the groundwork for a renewed future. If oppressed and disabled groups are to gain control of their identities and futures, hooks (1992) seems to imply, they must reject discriminatory expressions of master status identity that consign them to the margins of society. Historically persistent inequalities must be re-viewed and replaced by a new vision of a future of equality and inclusion.

The oppositional gaze promoted by hooks (1992) resembles Gramsci's (1929-32) focus on cultural hegemony as both writers promote active political and ideological struggle oriented around understanding and opposing the factors within society that enable the privileges of master status identity while disabling marginalized social groups such as blacks, women, gays, the lower classes and the disabled. However, Gramsci appears to have a more defined sense of the future we should be fighting for. According to Jary and Jary (1995), Gramsci promotes "a cultural and ideological struggle in order to create a new socialist 'common sense' and thus change the way people think and behave" (p. 279). While hooks (1992) affirms the need for critical opposition to oppressive and disabling social norms, the strong element of Marxism in Gramsci's thought inform his support for new ways of thinking and understanding the world that specifically support a socialist political transformation. Jary and Jary (1995) make reference to Gramsci's assertion that subordinated social groups must not only systematically refute ruling ideas but also strive toward the development of a socialist state (p. 279). Gramsci advances a vision of a socialist society of the future that empowers all citizens, rather than prioritizing the interests of a small hegemonic elite that has managed to obtain master status identity. Gramsci and hooks utilize different words, concepts and approaches, but both writers imply the similar idea notion that opening one's eyes to the domination and injustice imposed by master status identity also

means opening one's mind to new ideological affirmations that can create a more just and inclusive social order.

A critique of the oppressive power and hegemony of the specific master status identity characterizing modernity can be connected to the Social Model of Disability (SMD) because this model reflects the concepts of the oppositional gaze and ideological critique advanced by hooks (1992) and Gramsci (1929-32). In the later modern period incorporating contemporary society, one of the central factors reinforcing master status identity is broad public acceptance that hegemonic power - and specifically capitalist relations of production - is a product of natural superiority and fitness to rule rather than a product of artificial sociopolitical constructions that are rooted almost entirely in the self-interest of elite social groups. In other words, promoters of the hegemonic status held by possessors of master status identity claim that dramatic inequalities between social groups are given and must be accepted, for better or worse; they deny that the inequalities and stigmatized identities imposed on some social groups are arbitrarily constructed phenomena that are subject to critique, subversion and transformation. It seems imperative to inquire into the psychological foundations of a master status identity that aggressively asserts its own right to domination while disabling and subjugating countless other social groups.

## CHAPTER THREE: CONSTRUCTING THE DOMINATING PHALLUS

### Freud and Phallic Manhood

Just as modernity is rife with contradiction and cannot be defined in a clear or unambiguous manner, Sigmund Freud's (1910) *Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis* expresses ideas about human psychosexual development that reflect, support and undermine the processes of social identity construction characterizing modernity. As we have seen, during the modern era the white, able-bodied heterosexual male has been constructed as a master status identity with hegemonic power over the members of all other sexual groups. To a significant extent, this phallic heterosexuality maintains its domination and disabling power in contemporary society. For example, Price (2005) argues that the anti-gay sentiment and denial of gay rights that is frequently expressed in the United States reflects the assumption that the gay community represents a minority group that does not belong to normal society (p. 1). The June 2016 massacre of roughly fifty members of the gay community in Orlando, Florida also provides a stark reminder that historically disabling attitudes around sexual identities that diverge from the heterosexual norm remain pervasive in America (Dale, 2016, p. 1). The negativity imposed on the gay community in the US persists despite the nation's extraordinary attachment to the ideals of freedom, liberty and individual choice.

The dominant social construction of the gay community as abnormal and deviant both results from and sustains the domination of the heterosexual class, creating what might be called a form of ideological identity-based oppression that parallels the notion of economics-based class oppression. In modern societies, unequal power relations characterize the different sexual classes, generating a sociopolitical context where the oppressive power of the ruling capital class stands in a relationship of mutual reinforcement with the hegemonic status of the heterosexual

class, and especially the white, able-bodied heterosexual males who hold hegemonic power within that class and within wider society. One might say that money and prejudice against non-heterosexuals combine to reinforce the hegemonic positioning of master status identity and its disabling impact on many social groups.

One of the significant disabling aspects of modernity is the specific way in which the construction of sexual identities is connected to social power broadly and enables hegemonic heterosexual elites to gain the social and political support of diverse members of the lower classes. With heterosexuality sanctioned as modernity's approved sexual identity, heterosexual members of different races, religions, ethnicities, cultures and socio-economic classes can all gain a sense of belonging to the dominant sexual group despite the many factors that assign them to subordinate status. Katz (1995) references Duggan's view that since "lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals are born, not made, then the wish to ban or punish them is itself against nature and thus wrong as well as mean" (Duggan in Katz, p. 195). However, there is a profound sense in which a shared heterosexual identity binds the lower classes to their capitalist masters and this sense of shared identity and common membership in the 'normal' world is reinforced through collective opposition to the gay community as well as all other minority sexual or asexual groups.

Since members of all economic classes combine to form a unified heterosexual class that constitutes a very large majority, the best that members of the LGBTQ sub-culture can hope for is tolerance. "What they can't do is change the notion that 'heterosexuality' is 'normal' for the vast majority of people and shift social, cultural, political practices based on that assumption" (Duggan in Katz, 1995, p. 195). The basic human need for a sense of social acceptance and belonging seems to be at the root of this phenomenon, but it is a form of belonging that contains inherently disabling and exclusionary elements. Despite many forms of diversity and class

differences based on factors other than sexuality, members of communities that support hegemonic heterosexuality gain a significant degree of social acceptance and belonging merely because they embrace heterosexuality as a dominant social norm. In accordance with the binary coding that informs modernity's ideological and institutional norms, members of non-heterosexual groups are then defined as 'abnormal' and, having been banished from the fundamental classification of 'normal,' face multiple forms of social disabling and exclusion.

From the standpoint of exclusionary ideologies, the construction of human identity classifications that differentiate between 'normal' and 'abnormal' are grounded in the natural facts of life. For example, Radford and Park (1993) discuss the view of the eugenicist Sir Francis Galton that "prominent among the "problem populations" were people with low intelligence, especially those marginally "subnormal" and lacking physical stigmata - a group newly identified as "feeble-minded"" (p. 11). Radford and Park (1993) indicate that Galton's understanding of what constituted a normal state of human being led him to further believe that unless the presence of people who diverged from hegemonic understandings of normalcy in society "was remedied by assisting nature in weeding out the 'unfit,' society would continue to be plagued by poverty, prostitution, slums and other problems" (p. 11). Drawing upon scientific classifications that purportedly revealed the facts of the natural world, individuals such as Galton created a devastating foundation for the ways in which members of marginalized social groups would be defined and located within the social order of modernity. Members of all social groups that diverged from dominant understandings of normalcy - but particularly sexual minorities - would be stigmatized, disabled and marginalized as inferior, deviant and abnormal.

In *Constructing Normalcy*, Davis (2006) indicates that the eugenicist perspective advanced by Galton and others like him links the notion of social progress to the ideal of

physically and mentally able citizens. Conversely, individuals with disabilities represent barriers to progress. When hegemonic social groups come to view themselves as embodying the very best of what humanity can be, it is a short step to believing that “the only way to keep a nation strong mentally and physically is to see that each new generation is derived chiefly from the fitter members of the generation before them” (Davis, 2006, p. 9). In the modern era, social progress is not only a matter of generational transmission but also one of genetic transmission; only those with the best genes - the healthiest and most able bodies and minds - are capable of driving human progress and improvement. Davis (2006) indicates the obvious fact that even the healthiest and most able society - from the perspective of a eugenicist like Galton - can make room for those who diverge from dominant ideals of human perfection - “as if a hunchbacked citizenry would make a hunchbacked nation” (p. 9). Despite this fact, “the eugenic notion that individual variations would accumulate into a composite national identity was a powerful one” (Davis, 2006, p. 9). Thus, a significant strain within modernity is the notion that social groups differing from hegemonic understandings of normalcy, natural sexuality, ability, health and intelligence somehow pose a threat to ongoing social progress.

In order to understand the many intersecting forms of oppression that have functioned to disable members of minority social groups in the modern era, it is necessary to understand the politics of human identity and perhaps the fear of a loss of identity that compels some social groups to develop hostile and exclusionary attitudes toward groups that differ from dominant social norms. Historically, modernity’s dominant heterosexual hegemonic authority has used the tools of psychiatric medicalization and criminal sanction to stigmatize, disable and oppress the gay identity. Arguably, Sigmund Freud (1910) provided the most powerful, relatively recent theoretical support for the hegemonic domination of heterosexuality because his work

normalized the view that the chaotic or polymorphous sexual impulses of the developing child had to be repressed and sublimated until they took adult form in the dominating phallic male and his receptive female counterpart. In his text, *Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Freud (1910) refers to homosexual individuals as having “failed to accomplish some part of normal sexual development” (p. 134). Freud’s (1910) view of human psychosexual development can be connected to the medical model of disability because his discourse defines homosexuality as a mental illness requiring a cure through professional intervention. Indeed, Freud’s (1910) discourse suggests that phallic heterosexual masculinity exists as a kind of fundamental substrate within all males; it simply remains latent in under-developed individuals who fail to achieve mature adulthood. Freud (1910) states, “whether a man is a homosexual or a necrophilic or a hysteric suffering from anxiety, the impelling motive of his condition is that he wishes to assert himself... to remain ‘on top,’ to pass from the feminine to the masculine line” (p. 176). By nature, man belongs on top and seeks to achieve this position with woman subjected beneath him ‘on the bottom.’

Apart from the linking together of homosexuality, necrophilia and hysteria as similar categories of abnormal and under-developed male identity, Freud’s (1910) discourse of human psychosexual development positions homosexuality as an infantile and undeveloped expression of sexual identity. The gay identity is symptomatic of a sexually dysfunctional psyche. The inability of the gay identity to function on all cylinders, so to speak, is caused by unsuccessful resolution of what Freud (1910) calls the Oedipus complex, and Freud believes that such resolution is an essential accomplishment on the pathway to achieving hegemonic and fertile manhood (p. 51). Since homosexual impulses are part of the infant’s polymorphous sexual constitution that need to be repressed and transformed into adult phallic male identity, adult

expressions of homosexuality require restorative therapeutic or psychiatric treatment. If treatment is successful, Freud's (1910) thought implies, the archaic conflict will be resolved and the developing male's phallic sexual desire will shift away from men and towards the male's natural counterpart - women. If his skin color is white, he will then take his place in society as a hegemonic and fertile heterosexual male.

A central component of Freudian discourse is the notion that in order to develop into a healthy male at the head of the family unit and with dominant social power, young males need to successfully resolve the Oedipus complex, which drives them away from incestuous maternal attachments and toward hegemonic heterosexual manhood. Interestingly, this notion draws upon a myth. As Freud (1910) states, "The myth of King Oedipus who killed his father and took his mother to wife expresses, with little modification, the infantile wish, which is later opposed and repudiated by the barrier against incest" (p. 51). According to Freud (1910), it is the experience of "castration anxiety" which drives young boys away from incestuous desire for the mother and toward identification with dominant social signifiers of manhood (p. 18). Freud (1910) states:

The danger is the punishment of being castrated, of losing his genital organ. Our boys are not castrated because they are in love with their mothers during the phase of the Oedipus complex. But the matter cannot be dismissed so simply. Above all, it is not a question whether castration is really carried out; what is decisive is that the danger is one that threatens from the outside and that the child believes in it (p. 119).

In Freud's (1910) view, young boys resolve the Oedipus complex by surrendering their incestuous, infantile sexual desire for their mothers, which can be described as a repression of their underdeveloped sexuality. Concurrently, young boys psychologically identify with the hegemonic masculine and heterosexual behavioural norms and ideals embodied in their fathers.

In everyday parlance, they give up the ‘sissy-like’ or effeminate behaviour that is stereotypically associated with gay males and internalize a competitive male drive toward domination and leadership that pushes them into social roles as hegemonic heterosexual males within the family as well as in social arenas such as the economy, culture, intellectual life and politics. If the normal course of psychosexual development is unimpeded, they naturally transition into the hegemonic position of modernity’s master status identity.

Although Freud’s (1910) thought pays some attention to the developmental stages and challenges faced by the female, it reflects modernity’s focus on hegemonic heterosexual masculinity by manifesting a clear emphasis on the psychosexual development of the hegemonic male. After all, men stand at the pinnacle of family and social power. Accordingly, once the growing male attains adolescence and begins to emerge in the world of adult sexuality, his incestuous desire for his mother becomes displaced onto an appropriate sexual object, or female, through a psychological process that Freud (1910) refers to as transference:

Transference arises spontaneously in all human relationships just as it does between the patient and the physician. It is everywhere the true vehicle of therapeutic influence; and the less its presence is suspected, the more powerfully it operates. So psychoanalysis does not create it, but merely reveals it to the consciousness and gains control of it in order to guide psychical processes towards the desired goal (p. 57).

In the process of developing into the “desired goal” of the hegemonic heterosexual male of modernity - phallic manhood - the growing boy transfers his inherently incestuous and polymorphic sexual desires onto an appropriate female sexual object. Of course, the adult female has internalized sexual identity norms that complement those of the phallic male and she assumes an appropriately passive and receptive disposition regarding the male’s sexual advances.

As the dominating hegemonic power of the modern world, the enjoyment of the pleasures of her sexuality is his prerogative.

When the hegemonic phallic male and the receptive female join in marriage, the normal and healthy heterosexual adult relationship of the modern society is achieved, a new family unit based on the nuclear model is established, and sexual reproduction within the traditional family can take place in a new generation. Whatever its weaknesses or oversights may be, Freud's thought is extremely informative because it reveals how the identity norms of modernity perpetuate themselves. Following in his father's patriarchal footsteps, the developing male gradually comes to embody modern society's moral and behavioural standards, and thereby achieves the dominant social status of the hegemonic heterosexual male. He achieves phallic manhood. The basic terms and concepts of Freudian discourse articulate a process of gender development and differentiation that assumes a dominant male and a complementary and therefore passive female partner. The successful resolution of the Oedipus complex positions the heterosexual male phallus not only as the ultimate symbol of societal power but also as the ultimate source of actual hegemonic social and reproductive power.

While Freud's (1910) theory of human psychosexual development is quite dominant in the western cultures most closely associated with modernity, it can clearly be subjected to critical challenge. The Oedipus complex that is so central in Freud's (1910) theory of human development is overtly based on a myth, but is it just that - a myth? The Freudian perspective holds that young boys must repress and sublimate their incestuous erotic desires for their mothers while simultaneously identifying with the ideals of patriarchal manhood in order to develop into healthy and well-adjusted men. This resolution or overcoming of the polymorphous desires of the "id" is achieved when they come under the control of the "reality principle" embodied in the

“ego,” and all this is governed by the dictates of the “super-ego” (Freud, 1910, p. 104). As Freud (1910) posits, “these then, are the three realms, regions, provinces into which we divide an individual’s mental apparatus” (p. 104). Freud’s tripartite model of the so-called “mental apparatus” (id-ego-superego) and understanding of human development assume that human beings become productive members of society through repression and transformation of the erotic, pleasure-seeking principle of the id, which operates even in childhood and stands firmly opposed to the reality principle. Freud (1910) states, “Children’s relations to their parents, as we learn alike from direct observations of children and from later analytic examination of adults, are by no means free from elements of accompanying sexual excitation” (p. 51). However, “direct observations” of the type described by Freud inherently involve an element of subjective interpretation, so how would Freud (or anyone) distinguish between a child’s natural responses to expressions of physical affection and supposed evidence of “sexual excitation”? It can be questioned whether young children actually experience some kind of compelling sexual desire for their parents.

The notion that the resolution of the Oedipus complex represents a universal stage or event in human development that propels young males into patriarchal, phallic manhood would appear to be manifestly misplaced since it is a clear fact that many men living in modern societies do not embrace patriarchal models of manhood. Indeed, there is substantial reason to believe that the Oedipus complex does not exist at all as a developmental phase. For example, some of the assumptions at the basis of the notion of the Oedipus complex are quite difficult to grasp or believe at the level of lived experience. Do young boys really experience intense sexual desires for their mothers while simultaneously fearing castration - or the implied threat of castration - at the hands of their fathers? Is it somehow natural for males in particular to develop

into the leaders of families and society, or does it make more sense for adult men and women to share responsibility for managing families and society? Is there anything about gay sexual identities that would prevent members of the gay community from having families and raising children or from participating in political power and the running of society in a responsible manner? In many ways, Freud's (1910) use of the myth of the Oedipus complex in his theory of human psychosexual development appears to distort reality and justify the false collective beliefs and oppressive social institutions that modernity has historically used to stigmatize, marginalize and disable women, gays and members of minority racial and ethnic social groups.

Freud's (1910) views regarding human development are more convincing when he argues that developing males psychologically identify with their fathers and, in the process, internalize the ideal of the hegemonic father figure as the dominant power in both the private and public realms. The male ego then comes to assume that men's socially constructed position of domination is natural and that the pleasure principle embodied in female sexuality must be subjected to male control. However, this male ego structure appears to be very fragile. Evidently, it results in male fear of being completely overwhelmed by the power of female sexuality and a corresponding compulsion to place women - and female sexuality in particular - under the strict patriarchal control characterizing many forms of modern society (and western history). Further, the language of Freudian discourse seems to be aligned with patriarchal efforts to construct social identities in ways that disable all sexual 'others.' Freudian (1910) terminology and discourse appears to express the inequality and hetero-normative values of modernity, with phrases such as "castration fear" and "penis envy" acting as lingual signifiers of heterosexual privilege (p. 119-21; 158-61). Moreover, this language is based on a binary discourse of domination and submission in relation to sexual characteristics, and it is conveyed through a

masculine, patriarchal interpretation of the development of natural sex and gender identities. The gendered binaries expressed within Freud's language position the male as an active phallic agency while females are constructed as passive, receptive and vaginal. Freud's thought thus sanctions the social order of modernity at the level of sexual identity.

De Beauvoir's (1952) analysis of the historical developments leading to the progressive subjugation and dependence of women exposes the social and historical determinants of Freud's (1910) understanding of human psychosexual development. As previously noted, De Beauvoir (1952) reveals that the rise of men to a position of hegemonic power in the home and in society took place through a long historical process. Multiple technological and socio-economic factors characterizing the modern era - such as the invention of tools, the appearance of large-scale, organized agriculture, the division of labour, the growth of science and technology, and the emergence of capitalism and private property - gave the white, able-bodied heterosexual male a position of physical, mental, intellectual, sexual and socio-economic hegemony. Thus, rather than presenting a universal theory of natural human psychosexual development, Freud's thought reflects historical processes and developments within modernity that rendered men dominant and women submissive.

The classical psychology of Freud (1910) is representative of modernity and continues to strongly influence contemporary societies despite the advances that have been made in areas such as sexual inclusion and the rights of the gay community. Power relations are strongly implicated in the politics of social identity construction. Like all social institutions, medical and psychiatric institutions seek to perpetuate their power. In his work, *The Politics of Disablement*, Oliver (1990) indicates that professionals working in healthcare organizations may be motivated by interests other than the well-being of clients, such as "the interests of the establishment, the

careers of the professional staff or the personal aggrandisement of key individuals within such organizations” (p. 112-30). However, the interests existing within workplaces and institutions also reflect broader social interests linked to modernity’s dominating discourse of hegemonic heterosexuality. That discourse positions the nuclear family at the basis of the social order, with the heterosexual male at the head of the family unit. Since it is constructed in this fashion, the heterosexual family operates as a foundational expression of masculine power in the modern world. Male authority becomes intergenerational when sons develop into dominating fathers and daughters develop into females who are submissive and receptive to phallic authority. Modernity’s idealization of the hegemonic, phallic male and the nuclear family discriminates against other forms of the family. Modernity’s rigid construction of the family fails to recognize the fact that diverse families outside the heterosexual norm can not only engage in biological reproduction but also raise healthy, well-adjusted children.

Despite the tremendous power and influence that Freudian discourse continues to have within the contemporary period of modernity, D’Augelli and Patterson (1995) indicate that increasing numbers of gay and lesbian parents are having and raising children (p. 246). They state that “children are being brought up today in a diverse array of lesbian and gay families” (D’Augelli & Patterson, 1995, p. 246). New technologies such as donor insemination are contributing to this phenomenon, but gay men and women can, of course, also have children through normal processes of biological reproduction, or they can adopt children. It is therefore apparent that the biases informing Freud’s (1910) view of human psychosexual development obscure the multiple forms that the healthy family can take. Beasley (2005) describes modernity’s hegemonic heterosexual male as “the most valued and most rewarded form of masculinity... legitimating masculine social dominance” (p. 251). However, D’Augelli and

Patterson (1995) state the obvious when they assert that non-traditional families such as lesbian and gay families are equally capable of raising healthy, well-adjusted children (p. 246). One must therefore question the extent to which the rigid gender binary constructs that inform Freudian discourse reflect reality. It seems indisputable that individuals of both genders manifest a complex and highly variable combination of character traits that are traditionally associated with the categories of male and female. Indeed, lesbian parents are perfectly capable of raising healthy heterosexual sons despite the absence of a father figure in the family, a fact which repudiates Freud's (1910) assumption that a dominating patriarchal father represents a necessary element in male psychosexual development.

### **Deconstructing Phallic Desire and Power**

While there are many ways in which Freud's (1910) psychoanalytic ideas regarding human psychosexual development reflect and reinforce the social identity norms of modernity, some writers assert that the enormous body of thought created by Freud, taken as a whole, not only relativizes desire but denies a biological basis for heterosexual articulations of adult sexuality. For example, Chodorow (1989) states:

We clearly live an embodied life; we live with those genitals and reproductive organs and capacities, those hormones and chromosomes that locate us physiologically as male and female. But, as psychoanalysis has shown us, there is nothing self-evident about this biology. How anyone experiences, fantasizes about, internally represents her or his embodiment grows from experience, learning, and self-definition in the family and culture. Such self-definition can be shaped completely by non-biological considerations, which may also shape perceptions of anatomical "sex differences" and the psychological development of these differences into forms of sexual object choice, mode or aim; into

femininity or masculinity; into activity or passivity; into one's choice of the organ of erotic pleasure; and so forth (p. 101).

Chodorow (1989) observes that there is a strong element of subversion in Freud's work since it situates human psychosexual development within specific family and cultural contexts. Rejecting the modernist assumption that heterosexuality and male domination represent natural expressions of human biology and psychology, Chodorow (1989) asserts that individual gender identities are formed, to a very large extent, through self-definition and historically contingent cultural norms (p. 101). It is not even possible to imagine what forms human sexual identities might take outside of the social and cultural contexts that shape them. According to Chodorow (1989), "we cannot know what people would make of their bodies in a non-gender or non-sexually organized world, or what kind of sexual structure or gender identities would develop" (p. 101). From Chodorow's (1989) perspective, then, modernity's normalizing of heterosexuality and male domination within the nuclear family represents a cultural bias that is contradicted by aspects of Freud's total body of thought and also subject to historical change.

Conservative readings of Freudian discourse result in broad generalizations of human sexual development that sanctify heterosexuality while delegitimizing and disabling other expressions of sexuality. However, Chodorow (1989) envisions a future that is free of rigid and oppressive norms of sexual identity. Interestingly, she embraces the notion "core gender identities" which are either "male or female" (Chodorow, 1989, p. 109). However, her basic argument is that gender identities and relations are socially constructed historical and cultural phenomena rather than being universal or innate, which further implies that people who differ from dominant social norms of sexual identity should be incorporated into broader and more enabling social understandings of normalcy.

Since she believes that sex and gender identities are not given by nature or biology, Chodorow (1989) argues in support of fluid sexual identities and practices that are not grounded in rigid, biologically-based understandings of human identity. Acknowledging the fact that there is no clear linkage between biological sex differences and sexual identity, she asserts that human life is characterized by “a multiplicity of sexual organizations, identities, and practices, and perhaps even of genders themselves” (Chodorow, 1989, p. 102). Chodorow (1989) argues for transformed social norms of identity where “bodily attributes would not necessarily be so determining of who we are, what we do, how we are perceived, and who our sexual partners are” (p. 102). This vision of a society that embraces sexual diversity recalls Foucault’s strategy for overcoming the oppressive impacts of heterosexual hegemony. Foucault (1987) states, “the rallying point for the counterattack against the deployment of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures” (p. 157). Like Chodorow (1989), Foucault (1987) supports more inclusive social norms that are not based on exclusionary understandings of the form sexual desire ought to take, but rather on the broad range of bodily and sexual pleasures that human beings actually experience.

The Social Model of Disability (SMD) supports a critical approach that locates the disabling impacts of classic psychology, such as that of Freud, within the context of the power relations that uphold the differential power status of various players within social institutions. In his work, *The Politics of Disablement*, Oliver (1990) asserts that the structures of power existing within modern medical institutions privilege doctors while denying patients, and especially disabled persons, access to power (p. 114). Oliver (1990) comments, “the social model is not an attempt to take power away from the doctors and give it to the disabled, but a prescription for sharing power” (p. 114). Highly trained medical authorities provide much-needed expertise, but

the SMD seeks to equalize power relations by empowering members of all disabled groups including the blind, the lame, the hearing impaired, sexually disabled groups and all those constructed as disabled. However, the notion of equalized power relations opposes the emphasis on hierarchy and inequality that pervades most aspects of the modern world, including major social institutions such as the medical establishment. The SMD therefore represents a paradigm of thought that undermines modernist assumptions by asserting that power relations can be equalized and that differences between members of diverse social groups can be incorporated into expanded constructions of what constitutes normalcy.

As we have seen, Jay (1988) argues that modernity represents a scopic regime in the sense that its dominant empiricist epistemology interprets reality through exploration of aspects of the physical world that can be accessed through the sense of sight. Garland Thompson (2001) similarly asserts that “the role of seeing - both figuratively and literally - influences how modern America imagines disability and disabled people” (p. 336). If modernity’s obsession with sight and the image are inherently bound to disabling social power relations based on inequality, then hooks’ (1992) oppositional gaze would appear to provide an apt critical tool for deconstructing modernity’s false assumptions. The “power in looking” that hooks’ (1992) connects to the oppositional gaze signifies both a visual fact and a metaphor for critical observations and insights into the ways in which oppression is imposed on marginalized social groups. Non-traditional men, women and families represent such groups. While modernity posits the universality of heterosexuality and masculine hegemony, critics of modernity such as Chodorow (1989) support gender relations and family types other than those that conform to modernity’s rigid norms and expectations. The oppositional gaze holds up a mirror to the scopic regime of the modern world and forces it to observe its own biases and discriminatory assumptions. This has resulted in new

ways of seeing which have facilitated critical discourses and viewpoints, such as those expressed by Oliver (1990) and the SMD, that expose how dominant constructions of social identity function to marginalized and disabled members of all social groups who do not conform to hegemonic heterosexual norms.

Analysis of heterosexual masculinity reveals the linkages between human sexuality and hegemonic power in all its forms. In modern society, a dominant hetero-normative masculine identity functions as the preeminent social agent, or master status identity, of hegemonic power and authority. This power projects its sexual rule and socioeconomic domination as a natural prerogative to which all other identities must submit. Indeed, hegemonic masculine identity has been defined in terms of a relentless, driven sexuality that constructs women and various others - such as members of all non-white races and ethnicities - as objects of phallic socio-economic domination. Accordingly, Nelson and Robinson (2002) state that “hegemonic masculinity is defined through work in the paid-labour market, the subordination of women, heterosexism and the driven and uncontrollable sexuality of men” (p. 325). Because it is socially normalized, hegemonic masculinity is largely invisible. And yet, hegemonic phallic masculinity pervades - or, more to the point, penetrates - most major social structures and institutions within modernity, beginning with the family. Modernity entrenches the patriarchal male or father at the head of the family table, with wives, daughters and sons located in various states of subordination. Young males are expected to assume the power and privileges of hegemonic masculinity as they mature and develop into phallic rulers like their fathers. Moving from the family into the educational system and then into the labour market and the worlds of culture, politics and economics, hegemonic males obtain dominant positions of leadership in corporate boardrooms and state institutions of all kinds.

Some theoretical standpoints assert that the power relations within a society are likely to obtain public support if there is broad social acceptance that they create stability and thus serve the interests of society as a whole. Linden (2004), for example, explains that the “consensus perspective assumes that the effective maintenance of a particular form of society is in the common interest of all its members” (p. 292). From this perspective, the dominant social norms and structures within a society will persist if there is an implied consensus that they meet the fundamental need for stability and order. This consensus can even take the form of a citizenry that shows its implied support for the existing order through apathy. If people were seriously unhappy with the power governing them, they would rebel. However, Davis (2006) indicates that “one group of people may have the power to call itself the paradigm of humanity and to make the world suit its own needs and validate its own experience” (p. 251). As a result, the apparent consensus and stability existing within a society can be essentially artificial in the sense that it is coercively imposed on groups whose interests it does *not* meet. Using the United States of America as an example, hooks (1992) asserts that groups with dominant social and cultural power can create forms of artificial consensus within a society that do not reflect the interests of all citizens but rather negate the interests of minority groups (p. 117). She uses the example of dominant media representations to support her argument that these media representations function to uphold white supremacy in the US:

When most black people in the United States had the opportunity to look at film and television, they did so fully aware that the mass media was a system of knowledge and power reproducing and maintaining white supremacy. To stare at the television, or mainstream movies, to engage its images, was to engage its negation of black representation (hooks, 1992, p.117).

The black population in the US now has a greater media presence than it did at the time when hooks (1992) was writing, but the exclusion of black identity from dominant mass media representations that has traditionally characterized the US constitutes a form of negation, imposed by multiple expressions of hegemonic social power including the mass media, that reduces the black population as a whole to the status of ‘others’ who exist outside the boundaries of normal and legitimate human society. Of course, increased media representations of blacks in the form of negative stereotypes also function to diminish black identity.

Davis (2006) argues that the pervasive ‘othering’ process characterizing western societies transforms people with minority identities into objects (p. 251). According to Davis (2006), “When we make people ‘other’ we group them together as the objects of our experience instead of regarding them as fellow subjects of experience with whom we might identify” (p. 251). Even an acclaimed modern television show such as *The Simpsons* subtly reinforces the hegemonic power of the white heterosexual male while locating ‘others’ within the space of inferior objects. The character of Homer Simpson - husband to Marge and father of Bart, Lisa and Maggie - is the clear center of the show and, since he is a white, patriarchal heterosexual male, all other identities depicted in the show revolve around him like secondary and essentially dependent planets orbiting around the shining sun of the modern universe. So great is Homer’s symbolic power and gravitas as the phallic head of a middle-class nuclear family that, in one episode which is titled, “Two Bad Neighbors,” he lays a solid physical beating on American ex-President George H.W. Bush! (*The Simpsons*, Jan. 14, 1996). True power, the show appears to suggest, is not located in political offices of any kind so much as it is embodied in the figure of white, able-bodied phallic manhood. *The Simpsons* incorporates a wide array of diverse characters, such as black, Indian and gay characters, but all have a clearly subordinated and secondary status in

relation to Homer. Notably, Homer's very portly body type, countless moral imperfections and extreme love of donuts, potato chips and beer do not detract from his dominant phallic status. He doesn't need to be perfect to form the center of the show; he needs only to be male, heterosexual and white.

In order to understand the articulations of power manifested in hegemonic masculinity it is necessary to recognize that human identity is shaped by interconnected individual, historical and social determinants. As C. Wright Mills (1959) observes in his work, *The Sociological Imagination*, "neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both" (p. 1). Mills' (1959) point implies that the dialectical interconnections between the personal, the historical and the social must be apprehended if we are to grasp how major social structures - in this case hegemonic masculinity - perpetuate modernity's dominant systems of social control, inequality, hierarchy, privilege and exclusion. Mills (1959) further states that human beings "do not possess the quality of mind essential to grasp the interplay of man and society, of biography and history, of self and world" (p. 1). What Mills (1959) appears to mean by this statement is that many of the "personal troubles" experienced by individuals are caused by enormous and entrenched structural forces beyond their knowledge or control. But perhaps Mills (1959) underestimates the ability of marginalized groups and individuals to understand, challenge and transform the social structures that cause oppression? For example, hegemonic masculinity represents a major structural cause of oppression in modernity because it constructs gender identities in terms of rigid binary classifications that privilege white heterosexual males while assigning all other identities an inferior status. This particular expression of hegemonic power can clearly be exposed, challenged and changed.

The coercive phallic power of the hegemonic masculinity entrenched in modernist assumptions of normalcy has been, and is being, challenged through various social movements such as the Black Civil Liberties movement, the Feminist movement, the Gay Liberation movement and many other battles that are constantly being waged by oppressed groups seeking equality, opportunity and inclusion. Kaufman (1987) draws particular attention to the struggle of the women's movement to oppose hegemonic constructions of phallic manhood that are inherently grounded in the assumption that women deserve to receive punitive violence at the hands of men. He states, "With a sense of immediacy and anger, the women's liberation movement has pushed the many forms of men's violence against women - from the most overt to the most subtle in form - into popular consciousness and public debate" (Kaufman, 1987, p. 1). Kaufman (1987) further observes that dominant social norms include many ritualized expressions of male violence against women that subtly confirm male power while oppressing women and locating them within an inferior social position. He notes that "acts of violence are like a ritualized acting out of our social relations of power: the dominant and the weaker, the powerful and the powerless, the active and the passive... the masculine and the feminine" (Kaufman, 1987, p. 1). Indeed, the very word 'penis' suggests 'penal' and for some men and women the act of intercourse can become one in which the male punishes the female. As Catherine MacKinnon (1983) asserts, under conditions of male dominance it is difficult for women to distinguish between rape and intercourse (p. 647). Does the traditional 'missionary position' manifest and reinforce the subjugation of women? Reflecting the view of MacKinnon (1983), Kaufman (1987) confirms that ritualized expressions of phallic violence against women are inherent to modernity and express its grounding in social relations of inequality through which hegemonic masculinity perpetually reconfirms its power and domination.

Katz (1995) indicates that male heterosexuals retain their hegemonic social position by shifting the focus of attention away from themselves and onto stigmatized sexual identities such as those of homosexuals. Stating that “the terms heterosexuality and homosexuality signify historically specific ways of naming, thinking about, valuing, and socially organizing the sexes and their pleasures,” Katz (1995) claims that the stigmatizing labels that are attached to specific sexual behaviors are historically contingent (p. 12). Like Chodorow (1989), Katz (1995) asserts that heterosexuality and homosexuality are assigned different meanings in different social and cultural contexts. Since heterosexuality represents a social norm that is rendered invisible by the pervasive extent of its domination, its status as the dominant expression of sexuality within modernity has not been subjected to adequate critical scrutiny. According to Katz (1995), “Unless pressed by the powerful, insistent voices, we fail to name the “norm,” the “normal,” and the social process of “normalization,” much less consider them perplexing, fit subjects for probing questions. Analysis of the “abnormal,” the “deviant,” the “different,” the “other,” “minority cultures” has seemingly held much greater charm” (p. 16). Heterosexual phallic domination is so omnipresent that its presence as a social norm within modernity tends to remain undetected and unchallenged.

It is perhaps not so surprising that phenomena which diverge from general social norms, and thus gain ‘other’ status, elicit curiosity. But Katz (1995) argues that the domination of heterosexuality is based on the sexual divisions - or sexual ‘othering’ processes - that exist at the basis of assertions of phallic heterosexual power (p. 13). These othering processes separate male from female and construct them as absolutely distinct categories of identity. From a conventional heterosexual viewpoint, the gendered differences between the male and female sexes represent the very ground of human desire and erotic attraction - Eros itself - and the desire for sexual

communion with that which is other and desirable simply because it is other arises and intensifies as the unsurpassable differences between males and females become increasingly anchored in the minds, emotions and instincts of men and women. Katz (1995) states, “The intimidating notion that heterosexuality refers to everything differently sexed and gendered and erotized is... one of the conceptual dodges that keeps heterosexuality from becoming the focus of sustained, critical analysis” (p. 13). Katz (1995) asserts that there is a need to critically explore heterosexuality’s invisible status as a dominant social norm because it represents an expression of power that disables and marginalizes other sexual identities. While this appears to be true with respect to heterosexuality in general, it is especially true of hegemonic phallic heterosexuality.

### **Interpretation, Critique and Human Worthiness**

Critical discussions of phallic male hegemony must incorporate the issue of interpretation and the role played by socially constructed meanings in shaping human norms of thought, perception, behavior and value. In modern societies, hegemonic constructions of meaning have idealized a specific able-bodied mentality and physicality as the basis for understanding human worthiness. Hegemonic authority has explicitly rejected the notion that all human beings are of equal intrinsic worth, instead creating a hierarchy of human worthiness. Of course, the white male heterosexual viewpoint provides the lens through which human bodies are perceived and situated in modernity’s hierarchy of worthiness. Elkins’ (1999) work, *By Looking Alone: Pictures of the Body, Pain and Metamorphosis*, reveals how the human body is subjected to a process of interpretation and evaluation that takes place in the very act of observing the phenomena of experience. Although factors internal to the observer such as individual preconceptions determine how objects of perception are understood, the artist can represent objects of observation, such as art works, in ways that shape human perception. For example,

when examining Sandro Botticelli's (1482-1486) portrait, *The Birth of Venus*, Elkins (1999) observes that the painter situates the shape, form and the size of the human body within the medical context of pathology and thus consciously places the body in a compromised location concerning its degree of ability or worth (p. 156).

The type of viewing described by Elkins (1999) involves a process of interpretation that categorizes all human bodies that diverge from the ideal of the healthy white male body - such as the bodies of women, non-white persons and people with disabilities - as different and therefore as inherently less worthy than the healthy white male body. Of course, the white female body is judged as a suitable receptacle for male desire despite its inherent inferiority, particularly when the body in question conforms to dominant notions of feminine beauty. Since the social meanings connected to different bodies depend on the lens through which they are viewed, significant power resides in the ability to shape or manipulate visual regimes. Elkins (1999) suggests that Botticelli's images speak particular truths, but it is clear that the images can sustain multiple interpretations of truth. All images are to some extent constructed by the viewer, which is another way of saying that there is an intimate relationship between the knower and the known. The individual has no way of knowing whether there is a correspondence between 'the truth' and 'his or her truth,' or even whether or not all 'truths' are relative to individual viewpoints. Such are the inherent limitations of human knowledge.

Since many individuals are passive recipients or followers of the viewpoints constructed by others, individuals possessing hegemonic power enjoy substantial scope within which to manipulate social meanings and images in conformity with their own perspectives. For example, artists working in the aesthetic dimension have significant power to determine how their images will be viewed. Hence, Elkins (1999) speaks of the power of the artist to shape perceptions of his

or her work in terms of a “projected and arranged meaning” (p. 156). Similarly, hegemonic authorities working in the political sphere can frame debates and set policy agendas in accordance with their socio-economic priorities. In the society of modernity, public meanings are shaped, in general, by a coercive masculine hegemony that creates wide-ranging hierarchies in accordance with its own narrowly defined conceptions of value and worth. This may be viewed as a form of visual art since the meanings associated with diverse human bodies and sexual orientations are highly dependent upon the power of hegemonic authority to shape vision; the oppositional gaze notwithstanding, a large number of people see only what the hegemonic power wants them to see and permits them to see. However, critical discourses and alternative interpretations of visual phenomena mean that counter-hegemonic perspectives also exist within the various realms of meaning creation. Images and interpretations are subject to change and transformation. Concepts like beauty, ugliness, race, ability, disability, man, woman, black, white, sexual normalcy and so on can be understood from the perspectives of constantly changing interpretative modalities.

Despite the existence of alternative ways of seeing and understanding phenomena, hegemonic power in modern society retains significant power to shape public perceptions in ways that privilege some social groups while disabling members of other groups. For example, African-Americans and blacks in Canada are still understood, categorized and marginalized, to a significant degree, through a racist lens. Although racial inequality in Canada is formally rejected by human rights protections such as the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, many blacks are still judged accordingly to their physical appearance. This can be observed in a *Toronto Star* report on the contemporary and persistent phenomenon of racial profiling in Canadian society:

Blacks arrested by Toronto police are treated more harshly than whites, a Toronto Star analysis of crime data shows. Police are forbidden, by their governing board, from analyzing this data in terms of race, but the Toronto Star has no such restriction. The findings provide hard evidence of what blacks have long suspected - race matters in Canadian society, especially when dealing with police (*Star*, Oct. 19, 2002).

Police interactions with blacks in Canada show that blacks are judged differently and presumed to be more socially dysfunctional and less worthy than members of other racial groups. Elkins (1999) suggests that “the body becomes a fact, an object, or even a specimen, which can express itself merely by being seen” (p. 155). But it would appear that there is no “merely being seen” since a black body does not so much “express itself” as find itself passively categorized and stereotyped though powers that are wholly alien to its own agency. Bodies are defined and located by the power of hegemonic authority. In the case at issue, the hegemonic power of the police, the penal system and dominant white society views blacks as highly prone to asocial behaviour, violence and criminality. Accordingly, police forces reflect and reinforce hegemonic authority by assuming a sub-human or demonic criminal disposition based on black skin color and impose a social disability on all blacks without regard to individual differences. The black population as a whole is deemed less worthy than other social groups.

As with women and members of non-white racial groups, individuals with disabilities are subjected to a process of social interpretation within modern society that defines, stigmatizes and marginalizes them as abnormal and inferior. However, unlike visual artists, individuals with disabilities have minimal power to shape how others perceive them. Social discourses, on the other hand, have significant power to shape perceptions and the dominant medical discourse of disability fails to affirm the intrinsic equality, abilities and worth of individuals with disabilities.

In the capitalist society of modernity, economic discourses are even more powerful than medical discourses. Individuals who may have a lesser ability to perform an economically productive function, such as some people with disabilities, must struggle to assert their worth as human beings in much the way that women, gays, lesbians and members of minority racial and ethnic groups are forced to fight for their equality and rights. Increasingly, notions of human worth have been co-opted by capitalism's economic dictates of efficiency and productivity.

Crip Culture struggles to reclaim equality through 'talking back' and creating counter-hegemonic discourses. In the documentary film *Vital Signs*, Mary Duffy asserts the fundamental equality and worth of individuals with disabilities. A white female, Duffy has no arms and, from all appearances, embodies a physicality that is very different from the normal body of hegemonic modern society. And yet, Duffy asserts her equality, worth and feeling of being normal despite her different physicality. She states, "The words you use to describe me are: 'Congenital malformation.' Those big words those doctors used - they didn't have any that fitted me properly. I felt even in the face of such opposition that my body was the way it was supposed to be. It was right for me, as well as being whole, complete and functional" (Duffy in Mitchell & Synder, 2000, p. 209). Although she doesn't say so explicitly, Duffy reveals how a combination of capitalist and medical discourses entrench the healthy, able body as the hegemonic norm, in the process enacting an exclusionary social power grounded in the pervasive hierarchies and inequalities of modern society. This exclusionary power denies that members of 'different' social groups embody equal human worth.

In opposing the hegemony of modernity's ideal of the worthy body - the white male, able body - marginalized individuals and social groups such as women, blacks, gays and members of the disabled community tell a different story. They feel normal and of equal worth in spite of the

ways in which their bodies may differ from hegemonic social norms. As we have seen, Mary Duffy asserts that a body without arms felt normal, whole and complete to her (in Mitchell & Synder, 2000, p. 209). Indeed, many people who manifest differences based on factors such as gender, race and sexuality also feel right about their bodies despite the pervasive hegemonic discourses telling them they should not feel right because they do not have equal worth. When hegemonic discourses make social groups feel a sense of discomfort and unworthiness about their identities, members of those groups become vulnerable to feeling alienated from themselves and may even become complicit in the hegemonic structures and institutions that deny them a full sense of equality, worth and social belonging.

In modern society, the gay population represents a sub-cultural group that has been stigmatized and marginalized due to sexual orientations that diverge from hegemonic male heterosexuality. Modern society's psychological, verbal and even physical attacks force gay individuals to inwardly question their personhood and worthiness. White heterosexual masculinity maintains its hegemonic social status by constructing heterosexuality not only as a norm but as an exclusionary norm with the power to confer or deny human worthiness. While ideologies and discourses play large roles in the assertion of any form of hegemonic authority, the sexual classifications that modernity has used to define and marginalize the gay community have also emphasized a simplistic moral/immoral binary code that stigmatizes all those who do not fit into the heterosexual norm as unnatural, and therefore as being of lesser moral worth. Referencing the work of Goffman (1969), Davis (2006) states that individuals or groups may face social exclusion due to a range of traits or behavioral characteristics such as "blemishes of individual character perceived as weak will, domineering or unnatural passions, treacherous and rigid belief, and dishonesty, these being inferred from a known record of, for example, mental

disorder, imprisonment, addiction, alcoholism, homosexuality, unemployment, suicide attempts, and radical political behaviour” (p. 132). This quotation shows that hegemonic heterosexuality not only stigmatizes homosexuality as unnatural but seeks to confirm its less worthy status by associating homosexuality with wide-ranging forms of dysfunctional and criminal behaviour.

Given the hegemonic power of the phallic heterosexual male, social signifiers of domination and subordination represent political markers within modern society that differentiate between the sanctified heterosexual majority and any minority sexual group. With phallic domination and seminal power established as social orthodoxy, modernity disseminates labels and stereotypes that relegate homosexuality to the status of disability and stigmatize all non-heterosexual identities as deviant or even as criminal. However, Linden (2004) indicates that “deviance is not a quality of the act but of the label that others attach to the act. This raises the question of who applies the label and who is labelled. The application of the label and the response of others to the label may result in a person becoming committed to a deviant identity” (p. 348). In short, identities that are assigned deviant status represent the arbitrary social constructions of a given social order. They embody or assert the interests of dominant social groups but, of course, they can be subjected to critique, challenge and alternative interpretations. And yet, what is surprising is not so much the well-known challenges to heterosexual hegemony that have been put forward within contemporary society but the ongoing ability of hegemonic phallic heterosexuality to continually reconfirm its pre-eminence as a dominant social norm of worthiness against which all other expressions of human sexuality are judged.

The perpetuation of phallic heterosexual hegemony in modern society relies upon the imposition of intersecting forms of oppression on divergent groups. For example, in a discussion of sex differences connected to criminal behaviour, Linden (2004) reveals the astounding ways

in which women remain defined by an inferior and submissive identity. According to Linden (2004), “In general, when sex differentials in crime are considered by the mainstream theorists, the tendency has been to rely on stereotypical constructions of masculinity and femininity: men are aggressive, independent, daring, and adventurous; women are submissive, dependent, and compliant. In the process, female offenders are classed as a rather “dull lot”” (p. 171). Not only are women perceived to be inferior to men in most aspects of everyday life; female criminals are viewed by mainstream theorists as inferior to male criminals to the point of being boring! Linden (2004) further states, “Even in their deviance [women] are less interesting than men. Moreover, such stereotypical depictions of women have been considered so obvious that they require no further discussion - let alone theoretical or empirical concern” (p. 171). However, these stereotypes of women have received theoretical concern. In contrast to the view that women are inferior to men, even as criminals, Kendall’s (1998) work, *Beyond Grace: Criminal Lunatic Women*, suggests that incarcerated women have inspired a sense of fear and threat because “the blending all at once of femininity, insanity and criminality appeared incongruous. In blurring the boundaries of categorical oppositions, criminal lunatic women defied attempts to be contained, both physically and metaphorically, and thus threatened the social order” (p. 114). It is perhaps an odd way of asserting the equal worthiness of the genders, but Kendall (1998) makes it abundantly clear that incarcerated female criminals are just as interesting and worthy - if not more so - as incarcerated male criminals!

Linden (2004) indicates that the dominant understanding of fundamental male and female gender identities in modern society has been associated with race and class-based inequalities:

Relying on “common-sense,” anecdotal evidence, and circular reasoning - that is, “things are as they are because they are natural, and they are natural because that is the way

things are”... the early theorists failed to call into question the structural features of their society and the gendered nature of the roles of men and women. Instead, sex (a biological difference) and gender (a cultural prescription) were equated as one and the same, with the “ladylike qualities” of the middle- and upper class white woman used as the measuring rod for what was inherently female. In the process, the theories constructed were not only sexist, but classist and racist as well (p. 167).

In the societies of modernity, many middle and upper-class white women have embraced the superior status of the phallic heterosexual male because this helps to sanction their position of social superiority over black women and women of the lower classes. Within the intersecting hierarchies and inequalities of modern society, inferiority to white males is the price that white middle and upper-class females have been forced to pay in order to achieve superiority over women belonging to other racial and ethnic groups. The power of modernity’s white hegemonic heterosexual ideology is such that many people fail to observe the artifice embedded within social relations that are put forward as natural and grounded in universal common sense. As a result, even in contemporary western societies the dominant phallic norms and ideologies that sanction the hegemonic status of the white, able-bodied heterosexual male continue to impose intersecting forms of oppression that disable all other identities as inferior and less worthy.

## CHAPTER FOUR: MODERNITY, AMERICA AND DISABILITY

### Disabling the Gay Community

In the contemporary world of late modernity, social norms, laws and, especially, social policies, can impact vulnerable societal groups due to their content or due to their absence. While laws and policies may be overtly discriminatory, social groups that diverge from dominant norms may also face disabling forms of stigmatization and exclusion through the lack of substantive social policies to support their equality, rights, worth and inclusion. In Canada, the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* has played a significant role in advancing equality and legal rights, leading to progressive legislation such as the legalizing of same-sex marriage. An amended Civil Marriage Act known as Bill C-38 was introduced in 2005 and expanded “on the traditional common-law understanding of civil marriage as an exclusively heterosexual institution. Bill C-38 defines civil marriage as ‘the lawful union of two persons to the exclusion of all others’ thus extending civil marriage to conjugal couples of the same sex” (Hurley, 2005, Bill C-38).

But the dominant political culture in the United States continues to manifest, to a significant degree, an ingrained denial of the equality rights of social groups that do not conform to America’s white, hegemonic heterosexual Judeo-Christian norms. Expressions of religious discrimination still occur in the US. For example, in December 2015 presidential candidate Donald Trump called for a ban on all Muslims traveling to the US based on the wrongful actions of a very small number of Muslim extremists (Diamond, 2015, p. 1). Indeed, the social hegemony of the white, heterosexual male master status identity has long defined the general American identity and this has resulted in a situation where the battle for gay rights in the US faces powerful resistance from conservative groups that are determined to oppose progressive laws, rights and social policies that promote equality and inclusion for all social groups.

The persisting presence of a conservative ideology in modern American society that is firmly opposed to the rights, freedom and equality of what might be called divergent social groups represents a particularly problematic reality because the US is characterized by a form of hegemonic power that is unlike hegemonic power in any other context. As with other nation states, there is a hegemonic power or dominant ruling class within America, but America, with its vast and overwhelming political, economic and military power also constitutes a hegemonic authority in the world as a whole. The influence of American society and culture extends around the globe and permeates major international institutions such as the UN, the World Bank and the IMF. Edgar's (2005) work, *American Foreign Policy in a Unipolar World*, confirms that in the unipolar world of the contemporary period of modernity, America's power is expressed in the economic, social, political, cultural and military arenas (p. 1-4). However, the US has not made the fight for universal human rights into a priority and many influential American actors seek to use their hegemonic status in order to deny the rights of some social groups, especially minority groups that do not conform to America's dominant social norms of identity and behavior. The US's unwillingness to play a leading role in advancing universal equality rights and human rights has global consequences.

Many nations around the world have social policies that exclude members of the gay community from gaining access to equality rights such as the right to same-sex marriage. The existence of discriminatory and disabling expressions of social policy throughout the world is made evident in a 2009 pamphlet for overseas travellers that was distributed by Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs. Titled, "Bon Voyage, But... Essential Information for Canadian Travelers 2009/2010," this document warned members of Canada's gay community about potential problems they might encounter when travelling abroad:

Although same-sex marriages are legal in Canada, they are not recognized in many countries, apart from Belgium, the Netherlands, South Africa, Spain... Same-sex unions are more widely recognized, for example, in Denmark, France, Iceland and the United Kingdom. Attempting to enter another country as a same-sex married couple may result in refusal by local officials. In addition, homosexual activity is a criminal offence in certain countries and could result in a prison or a death sentence (p. 9).

*“A death sentence.”* These words clearly show the degree of irrational fear that continues to exist in many countries around social identities that do not conform to heterosexual orthodoxy. As Herek (2004) indicates in his work, “Beyond “homophobia”: Thinking about sexual prejudice and stigma in the twenty-first century,” it is irrational expressions of fear “that perpetuate sexual stigma by denying and denigrating any non-heterosexual form of behaviour, identity, relationship, or community” (p. 16). However, some progress is being made.

In 2011, New York State introduced a “Marriage Equality Act” that sanctioned same-sex marriage (New York State, 2011). From the most optimistic perspective, one can hope that this inclusive new policy marked the emergence of a significant shift in America’s social policies related to the rights of minority social groups such as the gay community. Indeed, in 2015 the US Supreme Court made same-sex marriage legal across the US in the landmark case of *Obergefell et al. versus Hodges, Director Department of Health et al.*, in a five to four split vote (U.S., 2015, p. 576). Despite this, the contemporary modern world is characterized by a paucity of social policy and human rights protections for members of the gay community. This dissertation has examined the systematic processes of dehumanization that were imposed on Jewish people by the Nazi regime in Germany as an extreme example of the disabling inequality and social hierarchies characterizing the modern world. The events of the Holocaust may seem too horrific

to happen again but in countries such as Uganda members of the gay community are still vulnerable to receiving the death penalty just for being who they are (Domi, 2011, p. 1). This denial of gay rights - and the corresponding denial of the ability to make free choices - is facilitated by a lack of US leadership in promoting universal human rights around the globe. By failing to take the lead in this important area, America inhibits efforts made by marginalized groups around the world to oppose entrenched hegemonic power and to implement enabling and inclusive social policies.

The misuse of America's hegemonic power in the contemporary modern world is demonstrated by the fact that religious extremists from the US appear to be actively involved in spreading homicidal forms of hatred, prejudice and, indeed, terrorism, against members of the gay community in countries around the world. In an article titled, "UN Vote Allowing Gays to be Executed Result of Political Religious Fundamentalism," Domi (2011) states:

The most blatantly destructive policy outcomes of pervasive Christian fundamentalist proselytizing in Africa has been in Uganda, where 'The Family,' also known as 'The Fellowship,' a Christian and political organization based in the United States, played a key role in advising its parliament to adopt legislation last year that called for the death penalty of known homosexuals (p. 1).

The efforts of American religious extremists to support the legally sanctioned murder of gay people in Africa may appear to reveal an Americanization of the global psyche that is taking place under the process of globalization. However, Domi (2011) indicates that American evangelists must act covertly while disseminating a message of hatred, intolerance and murder against gays in order to avoid being publicly exposed as promoting the murder of innocent citizens simply because their identities differ from hegemonic norms:

As I wrote in, “UN Vote Allowing Gays to be Executed Result of Political Religious Fundamentalism,” since the 1980s massive numbers of Christian fundamentalist missionaries, many if not most from the United States, have flooded the African continent in search of new converts to their regressive and narrow beliefs. ‘The Family’ - also known as ‘the fellowship’ - is a powerful and covert sect of American Christian evangelical politicians and ministers who seek a decidedly extreme anti-gay agenda both at home and abroad and through its word puts the hammer in the hands of all potentially intolerant Ugandans (p. 1).

This extension of American hegemonic norms of sexual identity and the family into a global context represents a serious problem because it contains strong elements of the dehumanization processes enacted by Nazi Germany. Of course, it also mirrors the violent religious extremism of terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda and ISIS. In other words, it seems possible that the extreme wing of the anti-gay evangelist movement in the US manifests the most dangerous homicidal sub-currents that exist within the present stage of modernity.

Although modern American society contains violent Christian religious extremists, it is important to emphasize that they are forced to import their terrorism to other nations because it would not be tolerated by mainstream American society. The consent of the masses is simply not available to this particular expression of hegemonic power. Moreover, the long-term implications of America’s wide-ranging hegemonic influence on other nations remain unclear since American society also has the modern characteristics of being unpredictable, contradictory and amenable to constant internal change (Stein, 2007, p. 18). In other words, the long-term influence of America *on itself* is still unknown and unpredictable, let alone its influence on other nations. Indeed, the fact that American religious extremists must preach their gospel of hatred, murder and terrorism

covertly and in other nations suggests that a cultural reversal may be taking place in the US through which hatred-fueled evangelicals will inevitably be exposed as no different than any other religious extremist terrorists and, accordingly, assigned a marginalized identity as one of the most perverse and dangerous terrorist groups in the country.

The disabling of minority social groups that has characterized modernity - culminating, perhaps, in the Holocaust - is grounded in binary constructions of logic that generate false dichotomies which privilege hegemonic groups while stigmatizing and marginalizing other social groups. In her article, "Night Side of Life: Analyzing Cancer Literature from a Feminist Perspective," Deschazer (2005) discusses what she calls "the binary foundations of discriminatory processes" (p. 20). Referencing multiple forms of discrimination, Deschazer (2005) states:

Systemic discrimination and cultural marginalization to which women, people of color, the poor, gays and lesbians, people with disabilities and the seriously ill are all vulnerable has its philosophical roots in binary logic that posits them as inferior Others, as "pure body" rather than mind or spirit, irrational rather than rational, as necessarily subjugated and in need of governance rather than self-serving and free (p. 20).

Within modernity, the binary logic described by Deschazer (2005) reaches into all areas of human experience and generates specific understandings of what constitutes natural and healthy human 'desire.' Cook's (2003) work, *London and the Culture of Homosexuality: 1885-1914*, provides some historical context for the type of discrimination described by Deschazer (2005). According to Cook (2003), social policies which discriminate against minority groups such as the gay community are rooted in a basic superior/inferior binary logic of desire that originated in the Victorian period (p. 7). Cook (2003) states, "the late Victorian newspapers, court cases,

science and fiction were important in the genesis and consolidation of modern ideas of ‘homosexual’ identity” (p. 7). The Victorian period “saw the emergence of the homosexual as a ‘species’ and set in chain the binary heterosexual/homosexual logic of desire which maintains its power today” (Cook, 2003, p. 7). In this specific binary construct, heterosexual desire is deemed as fertile and natural while homosexual desire is stigmatized as being infertile and unnatural. On this basis, members of the gay community are understood by extremist religious groups as being rightfully subjected to oppression and marginalization by the heterosexual majority. Since members of the gay community are viewed as lacking in spirit and rationality they are also understood, as Deschazer (2005) expresses it, as “necessarily subjugated and in need of governance rather than self-serving and free” (p. 20).

Beasley (2005) links the logic of heterosexual domination to masculine hegemony within all arenas of social power in the society of modernity. From this perspective, the inseminating phallus of the white heterosexual male represents the preeminent social signifier of power, authority, penetrating intellect and creativity in general. As Beasley (2005) states in his work, *Gender & Sexuality: Critical Theories, Critical Thinker*, hegemonic masculinity represents “the most valued and most rewarded form of masculinity, which provides a widely accepted model legitimating masculine social dominance” (p. 251). The binary logic which disables the gay community and many other social groups is therefore a gendered logic which positions phallic heterosexual masculinity as the legitimate basis of social power. Women, gays, and members of non-white social groups are all subjected to the phallic domination of the ruling master status identity. However, this logic is being challenged by a new logic that is grounded in the democratic values at the root of American society, and specifically America’s sacred values of equality and freedom. This new logic of equality and freedom strongly supports inclusion and

rejects the simplistic dichotomies at the basis of phallic heterosexual domination. It also threatens to expose the past logic of domination and exclusion as perverse, anti-social and, perhaps most importantly, as deeply anti-American.

One of the most salient features of contemporary American society is the strong emphasis that is placed on individuality and the freedom to make individual choices. This characteristic of American society can be corrupted to promote greed and naked self-interest as a social good or even as the supreme social good and the fundamental basis of the American Dream. Watters (2010), for instance, is an American writer who argues that the modern world has positioned America in a hegemonic role within the globalization process that enables the US to aggressively impose its own individualistic and essentially “crazy” social norms on the world as a whole. Watters’ (2010) work, *Crazy Like Us: The Globalization of the American Psyche*, states:

We promise other people in other cultures that mental health (and a modern style of awareness) can be found by throwing off traditional social roles and engaging in individualistic quest. These western ideas of the mind are proving as seductive to the rest of the world as fast food and rap music, and we are spreading them with speed and vigour (p. 4).

Although he effectively draws attention to the element of “craziness” within American culture and social norms, Watters (2010) may fail to adequately appreciate the fact that “individualistic quest” can be interpreted in different ways, some of which are socially divisive and destructive, others of which bring creative energy and continuous change to society. The powerful strain of individualism in American society can be linked to materialistic acquisitiveness and a narrow focus on private financial greed, but it can also promote acceptance of differences and individual expressions of personality and identity. Thus, American style “individualistic quest” can produce

and support the ability of the nation's citizens to criticize dominant societal norms while affirming differences in identity and viewpoints as a positive social and cultural value.

Waldschmidt's (2005) work, "Who Is Normal? Who is Deviant?," asserts that American society is experiencing a kind of quiet revolution at the level of social identity construction that is relentlessly undermining the conservative hope to sanction a single hegemonic identity as a dominant US social norm (p. 191). This viewpoint implicitly challenges Watters' (2010) claim that America is engaged in a process of exploiting the globalization process in order to impose its "craziness" on other nations. Waldschmidt's (2005) perspective implies that the individualism at the basis of American society has created - or is in the process of creating - a cultural milieu in which the American people are quickly setting aside any attachment to a singular, hegemonic American identity and embracing diversity as the new norm of American society. In other words, Waldschmidt (2005) reveals the transformational potential that exists within America's societal emphasis on individual freedom and choice. Waldschmidt (2005) uses the phrase "flexible-normalism" to describe how American individualism has generated a socio-cultural milieu that encourages individual Americans to think independently and to affirm their equality as Americans regardless of ways in which they diverge from traditional or hegemonic norms of identity (p. 191). According to Waldschmidt (2005), the American public's understanding of normality "is no longer an external constraint that society imposes on its members: it is formed and shaped by acting members themselves. The conception of normality that currently prevails could, in other words, be termed *flexible-normalistic*" (p. 191).

To further indicate the revolutionary potential implied by the notion of flexible-normalism, Waldschmidt (2005) draws upon Foucault's views on government and bio-power, and specifically his view that modern society employs "statistical" conceptions of normality that

contrast the “judicial” norms that have characterized past expressions of state authority (p. 191). Judicial norms have functioned to create and sustain a socially dominant understanding of normality, but statistical norms are required to grasp the diverse identities that exist within the social totality of modern US society. On this view, modern American society is not characterized by a specific hegemonic identity with the power and master status identity needed to oppress other social groups. Rather, western capitalist states such as the US govern “primarily by freedom, not repression, and... reign over people by regulating and positioning them, not excluding and institutionalizing them” (Waldschmidt, 2005, p. 191-192). Waldschmidt (2005) appears to take the optimistic view that modern society - or, at least, some contemporary modern societies - has cast aside hegemonic master status identities that dominate all other identities.

Waldschmidt’s (2005) argument and references to the work of Foucault also seem to make the interesting point that apparent social inclusion can be a form of subtle social exclusion. In modern western societies such as the US, minority social identities are, to a significant extent, included but also regulated and positioned in ways that reinforce existing social inequalities. The conflict between Watters’ (2010) view that America is in a process of using its power as a global hegemon to impose its “craziness” on the entire globe and Waldschmidt’s (2005) observation that the power to define what constitutes ‘normal’ is no longer in the hands of hegemonic groups in America appears to reflect a contemporary American society that is torn by a longing for the security of the past that exists alongside the inevitability of increasingly rapid, unstoppable and unknowable change. Perhaps there is a frightening element of chaos and identity loss in late modernity (modernity understood as continuing into the present)? Conservative groups in America cling desperately to a past where they enjoyed hegemonic status and a delusional sense of superiority while progressive groups and, indeed, the unstoppable momentum of a neoliberal

globalization process that is bringing diverse people from around the world into closer and closer proximity, are creating new social norms where diversity represents a positive social value rather than something to be feared and disabled.

Jackson Katz's (2002) documentary film, *Tough Guise, Media, Violence, and the Crisis in Masculinity*, addresses homophobic language that continues to define gay men as "Pussy, Bitch, Wuss, Queer and Fag" (Part 1). While such language persists to some extent, many contemporary media expressions represent members of the gay community as being very much like all other people, and certainly not as divergent identities to be feared or rejected. For example, America's influential CNN news station includes openly gay news anchors such as Anderson Cooper and Don Lemon. Popular American television shows such as *Will and Grace* and successful movies such as *As Good As It Gets* (1997) feature gay characters living within a diverse American social reality where gays and straights live together as equals without fear of each other. *As Good As It Gets* (1997) is particularly instructive because the movie's narrative depicts Jack Nicholson's character, Melvin Udall, transitioning from being highly derogatory toward gays to embracing a gay man as a friend he supports and values. If the modern world has been characterized by a hegemonic identity that positions heterosexuality as a dominant norm and gay identity as a negative state of being or a punitive condition, popular cultural productions like *As Good As It Gets* (1997) would appear to confirm Waldschmidt's (2005) assertion that the late modern world of today is rapidly creating a new American society where flexible-normalism has become firmly entrenched and is in the process of sanctioning diverse identities as the new hegemonic norm.

The conflict between a modern world characterized by a dying and disabling past and a modern world based on diversity and inclusion can be observed in many aspects of contemporary

American society and politics. In many ways, the experiences of the gay community have been at the center of this conflict and this may be the case because the question of sexual identity is so close to the heart of the question of human identity as such. It is easier, perhaps, to accept others who differ merely on the basis of skin color or cultural traditions than it is to embrace others who embody a qualitatively distinct sexual orientation? Be that as it may, it seems very clear that American society is undergoing the many contradictions and reversals that have been described as central characteristics of modernity as it strives to deal with the loss of past certainties and the emergence of a new and unknown society. Change is happening quickly. In 1996, the federal *Defense of Marriage Act* (DOMA) affirmed marriage as an exclusively heterosexual social institution. By July 2012, however, a US District Judge ruled the DOMA unconstitutional. In an article titled, “Defense of Marriage Act ruled unlawful by US Judge,” Dolmetsch (2012) reported, “US Judge Vanessa L. Bryant said today that Section 3 of the Act is discriminatory because it denies federal benefits to same-sex couples who were married in states where such unions are lawful” (p. 1). As previously noted, in 2015 same-sex marriage was ruled legal across the US in the landmark case of *Obergefell v. Hodges*.

Further demonstrating the contradictions of modern America regarding hegemonic identity norms, a *Wall Street Journal* article by Lee (2012) stated, “President Barack Obama said he supported gay marriage, reversing his position on the controversial social issue just six months before the November election and adopting a stance fraught with uncertain political implications” (p. 1). President Obama’s decision to reject discrimination and offer support for gay rights reinforced the social momentum of flexible-normalism. Although there are still regressive social groups in America that seek to deny individual freedom as a fundamental American value, President Obama’s support for same-sex marriage rights appears to represent a

movement away from the disabling of minority social groups at the hands of hegemonic power and toward new social norms grounded in equality, inclusion and the freedom to be one's self. It seems accurate to suggest that the gay community is winning the battle against groups that claim individual freedom and liberty for themselves but deny access to those basic values for gays, women, lesbians, non-whites and all social groups that diverge from traditional identity norms.

A work by Cameron and Kulick (2003) titled, *Language and Sexuality*, asserts that members of the gay community have achieved greater acceptance due to the fact that identities that were once understood as medical abnormalities are now interpreted as parts of a diverse social reality (p. 76). Cameron and Kulick (2003) thus confirm Waldschmidt's (2005) argument that the oppressive and disabling normalism characterizing modern society is in the process of being replaced by a new "flexible-normalism" that incorporates diverse social identities into an expanded view of normalcy. Since the Victorian period (or earlier) the hegemonic forces within modernity have created binary classifications that stigmatize gays as unnatural, infertile and threatening to social order. As a result, gays, women and all other minority groups that do not conform to the norms of white, hegemonic heterosexual masculinity have been oppressed by disabling social norms and policies. However, new discourses and what might be called an 'inclusive logic of enablement' have arisen to challenge the anti-egalitarian, anti-democratic basis of oppression. Of course, the future remains open and unknown. Inspired by the work of Marshall McLuhan, Levinson (2001) states, "We look at the present through a rear-view mirror. We march backwards into the future" (p. 173). However, by looking backwards at the exclusionary social norms and institutions at the basis of modernity, we can gain some certainty about the many disabling forms of oppression that must be rejected as part of the process of creating a more democratic and inclusive society of the future.

## **Disabling the Black Community**

While the gay community has historically been subjected to disablement and oppression at the hands of modernity's hegemonic heterosexual authorities, the experiences of black people in the US exemplify the way in which modernity disables social groups which manifest bodily differences through labelling them as deviant. It is common knowledge that African-Americans have historically faced social environments that coerce them into internalizing negative identities and self-conceptions, in contrast to the positive identities that have been - and still are to a large extent - connected to the bodily ideal of the hegemonic white male. Describing nineteenth and twentieth century America, the great African-American writer W.E.B. Dubois observes that the pervasive white supremacy, and particularly white supremacist theology, in American culture associated whiteness with godliness and blackness with moral corruption (in Blum, 2007, p. 63). This disabling construction of black people as sub-human, primitive, lacking in intelligence, and genetically disposed toward deviant criminal behaviour continues in contemporary American society despite the valiant efforts of writers such as Du Bois to show that "white society, not black society, was morally corrupt and that people of color possessed souls that had much to teach humanity" (in Blum, 2007, p. 63). America continues to neglect those teachings.

Relatively recent events such as the highly publicized police killings of Michael Brown, Walter Scott and Freddie Gray reveal the persistence of a generalized devaluation of black lives in the US. The cultural devaluing of black people, and especially young black males, is explored in an article by Pratt-Harris et al. (2016) titled, contained in a special issue of the *Journal of Human Behaviour in the Environment* titled, "Police Shooting of Unarmed African American Males: Implications for the Individual, the Family and the Community." According to this article, negative stereotypes have been imposed on the black community as a whole based on

public fear of the minority criminal element within the black community, causing serious disruption in the lives of black people at all levels (Pratt-Harris et al., 2016, p. 327-389). Indeed, black identity has been reduced to a status that is below that of ordinary humanity. The processes of stigmatization and dehumanization that modern society imposes on blacks in the US are not new; they represent strategies of oppression and disablement that hegemonic social groups have historically utilized to perpetuate their own power and privilege while exploiting and marginalizing other social groups.

Black people living in the US have been subjugated and exploited through interconnected processes of race-based stigmatizing and disablement from the time when slavery emerged in colonial America. In a discussion of the cultural construction of black identities, Hughes' (1958) work, *Men and their Work*, indicates that white Americans have trouble embracing black professionals because, from a white perspective, they embody the impossible contradiction of being both black and educated, competent professionals (p. 74). The race-based disablement of America's black population continued through American history into the 1960s Civil Rights Movement led by Martin Luther King Jr. and, in many ways, continues unabated in a contemporary American society that is characterized by powerful racial tensions that often reverberate throughout most of the country. Hegemonic social norms of race in the US have long constructed blacks as being morally and intellectually inferior to whites and therefore as being justly subordinated to the hegemonic authority of the white population. As Gould (1981) notes in his work, *The Mismeasure of Man*, the dominant view in the US "held that blacks were inferior and that their biological status justified enslavement and colonization" (p. 63). This understanding of black identity as inherently inferior and sub-human has been the basis of denying equality and rights to members of the Afro-American community. Indeed, Gossett's

(1965) work, *Race: the History of an Idea in America*, notes that Thomas Jefferson - a founding father, principal author of the 1776 Declaration of Independence and the third President of the US (1801-09) - stated, "I advance it, therefore as a suspicion only, that blacks, whether originally a distant race, or made distinct by time and circumstance, are inferior to whites in the endowment of body and mind" (p. 44). A closer look at the issue suggests that blacks were judged to be inferior in mind but not in body.

The dehumanizing conditions of slavery were rooted in the belief that black people were barely above animals in the evolutionary scheme of things, but since many black males were physically strong, like other large mammals, they were viewed as being ideally suited to labour market exploitation. Indeed, while the factor of purported biological racial differences has contributed to the disabling of black people by hegemonic authority in the US, it is important to recognize that economic factors have also contributed strongly to the oppression and disabling of black Americans. Black people have been viewed as morally and intellectually inferior to whites but since many black males were physically strong and able white entrepreneurs sought to exploit them economically as a source of cheap labour that could increase the wealth of whites. Indeed, US whites were even willing to collaborate with black people if that promoted the exploitation process. Negro and Caucasian Northerners both participated in the Civil War (1861-1865) against the white South in order to abolish the institution of slavery in the US. (Britannica, 2015, p. 1) Faust (2008) states that many black soldiers entered the battle "not just deeply invested in the war's outcome but strongly motivate to kill in service of their cause. Already victims of generations of cruelty in slavery... they were fighting, they repeated again and again, for "God, race and country" - for righteousness, equality and citizenship" (p. 53). In contrast, many of the white soldiers had economic motives for going to war against the South.

While black soldiers fighting in the American Civil War were sacrificing their lives for a better future free of slavery and racial oppression, many of the white Northern soldiers were motivated less by an egalitarian hope to achieve racial equality and more by a self-interested desire to achieve more advantageous economic conditions. Seeking the long-term economic growth of the nation, many white Northerners believed that the rapidly expanding capitalist economy of the time would be more profitable if it was fully industrialized than it would be if the manual labour performed by slaves - which Southerners sought to maintain - was allowed to continue without change and modernization (Faust, 2008, p. 3). The complex and sometimes contradictory linkages between modernity, industrialization, science, technology, capitalism and hegemony must all be understood as parts of a historical process that is deeply contradictory - disabling in many ways and progressive and enabling in others. Although industrialization and the growth of a capitalist economy represent aspects of modernity that have perpetuated inequality, exploitation and disablement, they have also driven forms of change that, in some instances, have had the unintended effect of creating greater social inclusion. Capitalism seeks profit maximization above all. This drive may have many adverse effects, but during the American Civil War it motivated white Northern soldiers to fight together with Blacks in a ferocious battle that eventually did succeed in abolishing the racist institution of slavery in the US. Faust (2008) confirms that the blood that was shed in the fight against slavery nurtured the growth of capitalism and an invigorated industrial economy in America (p. 4-5).

If modernity privileges its white male hegemony, all other social identities have been vulnerable to internalizing of the negative identities imposed on them by dominant society. In the US, slavery has been abolished and blacks have equal status under the Constitution, but many forms of racial inequality persist. In many ways, the disabling attitudes and practices that defined

black people as less-than-human and sustained slavery remain evident in contemporary American society. The recent 2015 police killings of black males in New York, South Carolina, Baltimore, Missouri, Ohio, Phoenix and other places provide testimony to the devaluing of black lives (Pratt-Harris et al., 2016, p. 327-389). However, it is a fact that black people who are murdered are murdered overwhelmingly (more than 90%) by other black people (Lee, 2015, p. 1). Many factors contribute to this intra-racial violence such as poverty, low education levels, absent fathers and the involvement of disenfranchised black youths in gang culture and the criminal underground. However, the extraordinary levels of black-on-black crime and murder also reveal the extent to which the devaluing and disabling of black lives in American society has been internalized by some members of the black community. As Schissel and Brooks (2004) observe, “deviant behaviour is not so much controlled by fear of punishment as by an internal logic or “morality” [which is] the “natural” result of internalizing the rules and norms shared and valued by most people in society” (p. 12). Thus, some members of the black community appear to have internalized the racist attitudes of the hegemonic law enforcement establishment and impose violence and hatred on themselves and each other.

Since the vast majority of the violent crimes experienced by blacks are inflicted by other blacks, the law enforcement establishment in the US - and, arguably, the majority of people within American society - continues to view the loss of black lives through violent crime as a matter that is largely internal to the black community. Police killings of black males who have committed crimes or who are under suspicion of having committed crimes are justified on the grounds that the use of police force is necessary to uphold law and order within society, and especially within black neighbourhoods characterized by high crime rates. Police and justice system officials assert that the aggressive actions of police within these neighbourhoods are not

narrowly focussed on protecting white citizens from black deviance, but rather seek to protect law-abiding members of the black community from the threat of crime posed by the black criminal element (Lee, 2015, p. 1). This viewpoint stems from modernity's assumption that black people - or, at least, a substantial black criminal element - are inherently morally inferior to the white majority. From this perspective, the aggressive policing of black neighbourhoods with high crime rates - occasionally accompanied by tragic outcomes - does not constitute institutionalized racism and a denial of the value of black lives but, completely to the contrary, an exercise of state power that is intended to uphold the equality and security of the law-abiding black majority.

Public outrage over the significant number of police killings of black males that has taken place in America in recent years seems to be gaining the attention of the media and justice system officials. In South Carolina, a white police officer named Michael Slager killed an unarmed black man, Walter Scott, and Slager is now facing murder charges. Slager had been pulled over by the officer due to a broken tail light on his car, making it clear that the police killings of black males often do not involve police taking necessary actions to defend themselves from threats posed by violent criminal predators. Thus, police actions have raised controversy. As Laughland (2015) reports, "The murder charges against Slager come amid a national debate on police practices after a spate of high-profile police killings around the country" (p. 1). Another police killing involved a black man named Freddie Gray, whose spine was almost totally severed while he was in police custody. Race riots erupted in Baltimore after his death. As Lynch (2015) reports, "Gray's death sparked violence in parts of Baltimore on Monday following his funeral. More than a dozen buildings and at least 140 cars were torched in the chaos, prompting the city to impose a 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew through May 4 and Maryland Governor Larry Hogan to call in the state's National Guard" (p. 1). Although the deaths of Scott

and Gray have led to charges being laid against police, it is not clear that wider American society views the deaths of blacks as a serious matter or whether modernity's devaluing of members of non-white communities continues to exist as an unspoken yet extremely powerful sub-current within the American psyche.

Within the modern mind, inequalities of all kinds are rationalized on the assumption that they represent a natural consequence of human differences. From this perspective - which is closely linked to the nature side of the nature-nurture debate - the impacts of social factors on human behaviour are of minimal importance. However, many writers argue to the contrary that many social factors contribute to inequalities that are not natural or inevitable. Baynton's (2001) article, "Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History," indicates that "historians and other scholars in the humanities have studied intensively and often challenged the ostensibly rational explanations for inequalities based on identity - in particular, gender, race and ethnicity" (p. 33). The dominant assumption within American society is that a hugely disproportionate segment of the black community is naturally inclined toward criminality and innately less intelligent than most members of the white race. This represents a common rationalization for the inequality and marginalization that is imposed on the black community as a whole. Indeed, this inequality is defined as being self-imposed, rather than as a product of broad-based, disabling social and economic inequalities. However, writers such as Sellin (1938) have long since argued that the over-representation of blacks in the criminal justice system results "from their differential treatment by police and the criminal justice system" (p. 97-103). More to the point, the intersecting inequalities and lack of educational and employment opportunities imposed on the black community position too many young black males in subordinated social locations where criminal activity is their only pathway to survival.

The emphasis on genetic or biological explanations of human behaviour that characterizes the modern mind overlooks the manifest socioeconomic causes of much of the criminal behaviour that can be observed in the black community. Indeed, most crimes committed by members of the black community are motivated by poverty and the need to survive at the level of basic material needs. Lacking equal access to educational and workplace opportunities, marginalized black males turn to the underground economy for a sense of belonging and to financially support themselves and their families. Economic inequalities are particularly damaging to the black community. Drawing upon institutional-anomie theory, Messner and Rosenfield (1994) indicate that institutionalized economic inequalities and power imbalances are “particularly conducive to crime” (p. 1396). The oppressive nature of institutionalized slavery is obvious. But the ongoing systemic processes of racial disabling that characterize many modern American institutions, including critical educational and economic institutions, have evolved and mutated to the point where the precise sources of oppression are now complex, intersectional and difficult to name. In order to address the forms of racism that continues to exist within modern institutions, it is necessary to explore the ways in which modern social power continues to disable members of the black community by defining them as outsiders.

### **Power, Ideology and the Outsider**

In the society of modernity, power plays a central role in the social construction of disability because it enables dominant groups to position minority groups in spaces of marginalization and exclusion. Human differences do not have to be associated with inequality - there can be equality within difference - but hegemonic social authority in the modern world imposes negative labels on members of social groups whose characteristics diverge from dominant social norms. The mere fact of difference is processed through multiple arenas of

power such as politics, education and the media such that those who are merely different become defined, labelled and disabled as inferior or even as deviant. Siegal and McCormick (2010) describe the relationship between power - or lack of power - and deviant social status:

Labelling suggests that the less personal power and fewer resources a person has, the greater the chance of becoming labelled. In this view, a person is labelled deviant primarily as a consequence of the social distance between the labeller and the person labelled. Race, class and ethnic difference influence the likelihood of labelling. For example, a poor or minority-group teenager may run a greater chance of being officially processed for criminal acts by police, courts and correctional agencies than a wealthy white youth does (p. 275).

The social hierarchies characterizing modernity function to separate members of the dominant white community from marginalized blacks, exposing members of the black community to deviant social status. Once the process of labelling has taken root and becomes accepted as a social reality, police power can then be justified as necessary to reinforce the many social barriers that are purportedly required to protect privileged social groups from the inherent criminality and violence of anti-social and deviant groups. Members of minority social groups need not be defined as sub-human or as posing some kind of existential threat to the well-being of society - as in the case of Nazi Germany's labelling of the Jewish people - but privileged social groups within modern societies use political, cultural and economic power to impose systemic subjugation and a deviant social status on minority social groups merely because they are different. As Oliver and Barnes (2012) state, cultural values and rules "establish both the criteria for what is considered 'normal' and typical, and also what is viewed as 'abnormal,' different and unacceptable" (p. 99). Under the influence of hegemonic social power, simple

differences between people are transformed into a system of binary oppositions between qualities such as superior and inferior, acceptable and unacceptable.

Expressions of power within modernity utilize ideology as a tool of domination and oppression. Political ideologies in particular constitute an aspect of modernity that facilitates the disabling of different social groups by shaping social understandings and the behaviour of social actors. Novkov (2011), for example, indicates that some conservative political ideologies create and reinforce racist practices “through the actions of state institutions and those working within them” (p. 189). Thought and action are linked; since dominant political ideologies determine how people think and interpret sociological phenomena, they also have the power to determine how people act. Falk (2001) further asserts that ideologically shaped understandings of social phenomena that are grounded in presumptions of inequality and exclusion function to stigmatize and label members of some social groups as “deviants” or “outsiders” (p. 23). Conservative ideologies typically draw upon a biological determinist perspective in order to justify existing and exclusionary forms of hegemonic power and domination. As mentioned above, these ideologies claim that social inequalities and hierarchies express natural differences between members of different social groups.

Falk (2001) reveals the critical or counter-hegemonic potential of a constructionist perspective which exposes labels of deviance or inferiority as products of “perspectives that change all the time” (p. 23-24). In the most simple of terms, there are many different ways of interpreting all sociological phenomena. Of course, progressive political ideologies generally have egalitarian and inclusive motives while conservative political ideologies seek to reinforce the privileges of hegemonic power by stigmatizing and marginalizing ‘different’ social groups. However, given the increasing racial and ethnic diversity that characterizes contemporary

western societies, the mere fact of difference is not adequate to justify the extremes of inequality that continue to exist; those who diverge from dominant social norms must be labelled as deviant and confined within an outsider status.

In contemporary American society, many young black males are stigmatized as criminal outsiders and subjected to the hegemonic authority and penal/phallic punishment of dominant white culture. Of course, much of the punishment and violence that is imposed on the black male body is administered by black males on themselves and each other, but the US justice system plays a large role in stigmatizing the black male identity as deviant (Knight, 2015, p. 1). The sources of hegemonic power and authority within modernity have historically imposed an outsider status on black males that is reinforced ideologically through racist and exclusionary frameworks of understanding. This outsider status is reinforced geographically through the actual processes of physical separation and confinement to which many black males are subject in contemporary American society. Large numbers of black males are incarcerated in US jails and prisons, which means that they are not only excluded from any form of meaningful social power but also denied access to legitimate employment and advantages such as family life. Further, as Downes et al. (2009) indicate, they are subjected to a process of “stigmatized shaming” that denies them the ability to affirm socially acceptable identities (p. 357).

In modern America, the criminal justice system acts as an agent of social control that reinforces existing racial inequalities by stigmatizing the black community. Reiman’s (2009) work, *The Rich get Richer and the Poor get Prison*, indicates that “the goal of the criminal justice system is not to reduce crime or achieve justice but to project to the American public a visible image of threat of crime” (p. 2-4). This “image of threat” is belied by the fact that most of the black males who are incarcerated in US prisons have committed relatively minor

transgressions - typically related to participation in the underground drug trade. Reiman (2009) indicates that hegemonic authorities seek to create distorted images of the “threat” posed by the black community (and other underprivileged social groups) by deflecting “the discontent and potential hostility of middle America away from the classes above them and toward the classes below them” (p. 2-4). In reality, most incarcerated black males are not hard-core criminals but oppressed young men who have faced long odds in the struggle to survive. In his work, *Stigma*, Falk (2001) observes that such individuals are marked as “impure” and then “isolated from ordinary society until their purity can be restored” (p. 311). Of course, once they have been incarcerated there is very little chance they will ever be “restored” as ex-convicts continue to be “viewed as outsiders... to whom one has no allegiance” (Falk, 2001, p. 365). Defined as outsiders whether they live in prisons or in society, many young black males face confinement in marginalized social spaces that deny their rights and offer minimal, if any, opportunities for education, employment or social advancement.

The lack of education and critical awareness amongst many members of marginalized communities represents a significant factor that contributes to disability, inequality and oppression. In a discussion of the role of differential social power in creating classifications that stigmatize specific groups and individuals as criminal, Siegal and McCormick (2010) state that “a person can be labelled deviant because of the differences in power between the labeller and the person labelled, differences located in race, class and ethnicity” (p. 275). Of course, such power differences can also be located in physical and mental disabilities. Given the hierarchical social structures within modernity, dominant white society has the ability to use its hegemonic status to stigmatize all blacks (or members of any targeted group) as deviant based on the actions of those blacks who are in fact engaged in criminal activity. The process of stereotyping all

members of a social group based on the actions of only a few members of the group fails to recognize the diversity and differences within the group. In this situation, generalized markers of identity such as physical disability or skin color can function to reinforce false stereotypes and perpetuate inequality.

Stienstra's (2012) analysis of disability rights shows how generalized markers of identity create a binary division between individuals who are defined as normal and those who are assigned abnormal identities. According to Stienstra (2012), "disability is something that sets people apart from others, makes them different because of how they look, how they act, how they move or why they need support or assistance. While we see these variations in bodies and minds, we often assume these differences signal 'abnormality'" (p. 5). Within the context of the disability modernity imposed on black identity, Afro-Americans have historically been constructed not only as different but as abnormal and deviant, and therefore as posing a threat to peace and security within society. The fact that many members of society accept this biased and distorted perspective uncritically suggests the need for broad-based education and increased social awareness of the causes of racial inequalities and the factors that perpetuate racist social structures and institutions. Calaprice (2011) quotes Albert Einstein's statement that "race prejudice is part of a tradition which - conditioned by history - is uncritically handed down from one generation to another. The only remedy is enlightenment and education. This is a slow, painstaking process in which all right thinking people should take part" (p. 316-317). Einstein affirms the importance of education and critical awareness in creating greater racial equality and inclusion within society. However, *high quality* education is essential. A 2015 report titled, "Glossary of Education Reform for Journalists, Parents, and Community Members," states that "minority students may be subject to prejudice or bias that denies them equal and equitable

access to learning opportunities. For example, students of color tend to be disproportionately represented in lower-level courses and special-education programs, and their academic achievement, graduation rates, and college-enrollment rates are typically lower than those of their white peers” (p. 1). It is evident that contemporary education systems require culturally responsive pedagogical approaches that enable students from underprivileged communities to avoid premature streaming into occupational tracks and to realize their full potential.

The comparatively low levels of educational achievement that characterize the black community reinforce negative social stereotypes by offering evidence to confirm that the Afro-American mind is inherently inferior to the Caucasian mind. This racial prejudice is then able to function as a marker of difference that stigmatizes and disables the black community as a whole, denying members of the black community access to quality employment positions and excluding them from meaningful social power. In order to oppose false social stereotypes of black intellectual and moral inferiority, leaders and educators in the black community must speak truth and name the true causes of black disablement and marginalization. Members of the black community must observe and reject the negative identities that too many blacks have internalized due to the workings of hegemonic power and ideology. Black leaders must encourage young black males and females to embrace agency, oppose being stigmatized as outsiders, and fight for their right to quality education and equal opportunities in the employment market.

## CHAPTER FIVE: RESISTANCE, LAW AND CHANGE

### Creating New Discourses

Modernity's master status identity of white, able-bodied heterosexual masculinity gives this particular hegemonic group the power to construct social norms that include some groups while excluding others, even persons with recognized achievements. Regardless of the contributions they make to society in any field of endeavor, individuals and groups with identities that diverge from dominant norms are vulnerable to being stigmatized as deviant and unacceptable. For example, a gay woman or a black man may have achieved great things in life but "whatever laudable achievements the deviant might have, such as a good job, or successful marriage, he or she is primarily judged in the community by the fact of deviance" (Linden, 2004, p. 355). Modernity's prevailing hegemonic identity can impose deviant status on individuals and groups due to a single marker of difference while ignoring the fact that singular aspects of identity represent mere parts - perhaps even inconsequential parts - of a total human identity that cannot be captured by limiting labels or stereotypes.

Some people are disabled and assigned a deviant status on the basis of multiple markers of difference. In his memoir, *Exile and Pride*, Clare (1999) situates his disability in both sociological and physiological spaces in order to demonstrate the multiple factors shaping his experiences as a lesbian woman with cerebral palsy prior to and following his transformation into a trans-man. He indicates that the hegemonic power ruling society constitutes a primary factor in the stigmatization of his identity, stating, "Up there on the mountain, we confront the external forces, the power brokers who benefit so much from the status quo and their privileged position at the very summit" (Clare, 1999, p. 2). Clare (1999) uses the symbol of the mountain to

describe the obstacles that must be overcome by individuals and groups that have been defined and excluded as deviant by hegemonic power.

Hegemonic masculinity constructs norms and standards of behaviour to govern all areas of social life but, with regard to norms of sexual identity, modernity's heterosexual master status identity asserts and confirms its superior status by stigmatizing and disabling gay identity as an inferior or under-developed state of being. Throughout most of the modern era, members of the gay community have been oppressed by the assumptions at the basis of the Medical Model of Disability, which defines gay identity as a medical condition requiring medical intervention and cure (Freud, 1932, p.134). Members of the gay community have also been institutionalized and criminalized on the basis of laws that not only prohibited gay sexuality but pushed gay identity to the margins of society as a less-than-fully-human identity. As Linden (2004) states, "Arrest, charge, and conviction were parts of a formal labeling process, a ceremony of degradation in which a person was formally stigmatized" (p. 91). The aggressive disabling and oppression of significant segments of the overall population by hegemonic power has created a fierce dialectical opposition between privileged social groups that define themselves as normal and underprivileged groups that are stigmatized as abnormal. Davis (2006) indicates that when "normals and the stigmatized do in fact encounter one another's immediate presence, there occurs one of the primal scenes of sociology; for in many cases, these moments will be the ones when the causes and the effects of stigma must be directly confronted on both sides" (p. 136). Stigmatized, disabled and marginalized by the hegemonic practices of white, able-bodied heterosexual masculinity, the gay community has recognized that discourse, ideology and social consciousness constitute critical arenas in the battle against oppression.

For the purposes of this dissertation, language, discourse and ideology are regarded as inherently interconnected elements of the fundamental communicative processes through which social identities and norms are constructed. This dissertation does not seek to differentiate between language and discourse, nor does it attempt to explore the complex meaning creation processes associated with the various types of signs, signifiers and referents - lingual and otherwise - that supposedly construct what we call social reality. These complex issues of semiotics, hermeneutics and the philosophy of language are beyond the scope of the present discussion. That said, modernity's dominant languages, discourses and ideologies continue to subtly reinforce and enable hegemonic heterosexuality while constructing and stigmatizing gay identities as deviant. Linton (1998) asserts that language represents a major factor that reinforces the ability of hegemonic power to shape social norms and public perceptions of ability and disability. Linton (1998) states, "It is particularly important to bring to light the language that reinforces the dominant culture's views of disability" (p. 9). This language incorporates not only literal discourse but also the myriad negative images and depictions of oppressed and disabled groups that exist in media representations such as films, magazines, newspapers, the Internet and television. Titchkosky (2007) asserts that in order to oppose the many expressions of discourse that impose disability and oppression, marginalized groups seeking equality and inclusion must claim autonomous power over their identities and relationships with other social groups (p. 18). Instead of passively accepting confinement within the oppressed pole in modernity's binary structures of superiority and inferiority, disabled social groups must recognize that language is the central factor shaping negative public understandings of disability, and then take the initiative in creating new and enabling discourses.

Movements of liberation must seek to understand the lingual structures causing oppression in order to create effective strategies of empowerment. Understanding the oppressive workings of specific articulations of language requires critical analysis - active interrogation, if you will - of the oppressive structures existing within discourse. As hooks (1992) asserts, “Black looks, as they were constituted in the context of social movements for racial uplift, were interrogating gazes” (p. 117). Jary and Jary (1995) make a similar point when they explain that “challenging socio-political structures of dominance requires interrogating power through a deconstruction of their hegemonic ideals” (p. 279). Jary and Jary (1995) further observe that when Gramsci sought to inspire the oppressed and exploited working class he advocated “a cultural and ideological struggle in order to create a new socialist ‘common sense,’ and thus change the way people think and behave” (p. 279). In accordance with this goal, oppressed social groups and classes had to organize “to resist physical coercion and repression [and] to develop a systematic refutation of ruling ideas” (Jary & Jary, 1995, p. 279). The battle against oppression was to take place at a practical political level as well as at the level of discourse and ideology.

The inherent democratic element within Gramsci’s thought is demonstrated by his belief that stable societies are characterized by a balance of power between different and competing social groups. Jary and Jary (1995) reference Gramsci’s view that “excessive power held by any one group represented a destabilizing factor within an evolving social structure” (p. 279). Gramsci recognizes that societies in the modern era are in a state of constant change and evolution but he asserts that they also required stability and balance. Simon (1994) points out that Gramsci’s focus on constant social change resembles Marx’s view that the historical process involves perpetual class struggle and, indeed, that the conflict and battles between different classes represents the driving force behind historical development (p. 157). Referring to Marx’s

understanding of the historical process, Simon (1994) states, “All history has been a history of class struggles between the exploited and the exploiting, between dominated and dominating classes at various stages of social development” (p. 157). However, class struggle cannot drive the historical process unless members of the exploited class - which Marx refers to as the working class or proletariat - have acquired enough education and class consciousness to understand how they are oppressed and, concomitantly, how to create alternative discourses and ideologies that promote equality and inclusion for all.

The oppositional gaze advocated by hooks (1992) supports new discourses that oppose hegemonic domination and affirm the rights and social inclusion of social groups that have been disabled on the basis of class, race, gender, disability or any other factor. Indeed, dominant hegemonic ideologies and discourses reinforce the master status identity of white heterosexual masculinity at multiple, intersecting levels. Of course, the power of governments and the state represents the primary source of modernity’s hegemonic authority. But civil society and culture reinforce that authority. Jary and Jary (1995) indicate that Gramsci (1929-32) “compared civil society to a powerful system of ‘fortresses and earthworks’ standing behind the state” (p. 279). The hegemonic status of the modern state is created and supported by many social institutions such as the family, religion, law, education and the media. In the modern society, the combined effects of these interconnected and mutually reinforcing social institutions shape and locate various social identities within the total social matrix.

Interestingly, hooks (1992) asserts that watching television represents a way “to develop critical spectatorship” because an active viewer can easily discern how mass media representations on TV function as “a system of knowledge and power for reproducing and maintaining white supremacy” (p. 117). It seems possible that hooks (1992) overestimates the

ability of the average television viewer to decode the subtle projections of meaning and hegemonic power that are expressed in popular entertainment products. While it is true that contemporary television shows are more diverse and inclusive than those of the past, the presence of non-white actors, characters and story lines does not necessarily translate into narratives that challenge convention. Television shows based on black characters, like *The Cosby Show*, can be oppositional in the sense of promoting images of successful, law-abiding black people within the world of dominant media representations. But such shows can also be oppressive in the sense that they perpetuate hegemonic power by normalizing the traditional, patriarchal, heterosexual family structure. More recent sit-coms and movies such as the previously mentioned *Will and Grace* and *As Good as it Gets* appear to manifest modernity's capacity for transformation and change because they actively subvert heterosexual, patriarchal traditions and affirm racial and sexuality diversity as integral parts of a more inclusive society.

Despite the increasing incorporation of minority identities into popular mass media representations such as movies and television shows, hegemonic heterosexual masculinity remains entrenched as society's master status identity. This is because the increased presence of gays and people of color in television shows does little to change the structures of power within society (or within the entertainment industry). A new approach is needed that refutes the disabling and oppressive ruling ideas of hegemonic heterosexuality at multiple levels simultaneously, including the levels of fundamental social, cultural, political and economic institutions. Historically, of course, capitalist institutions have oppressed and disabled social groups differing from hegemonic norms. But McRuer (2006) suggests that capitalism, in the era of neoliberalism, has changed in ways that give it the potential to support dramatic change within society. Referring to his work, *Crip Theory*, McRuer (2006) states:

I take neoliberal capitalism to be the dominant economic and cultural system in which, and also against which, embodied and sexual identities have been imagined and composed over the past quarter century. Emerging from both the new social movements (including feminism, gay liberation, and the disability rights movement) and the economic crises of the 1970s, neoliberalism does not stigmatize difference and can in fact celebrate it (p. 2).

Of course, what neoliberalism and capitalism celebrate, first and foremost, is private profit maximization. If difference can become a source of profit then capitalism and neoliberalism will indeed celebrate difference. However, this celebration of difference takes place with the larger context of what might be called The Same - the same focus on wealth creation, economic efficiency and profit maximization as the basic *raison d'être* of the period of modernity during which capitalism has reigned supreme. On the one hand, traditional patriarchal culture can be challenged through a dialectical transformation of capitalism such that it recognizes the gay and black populations as significant markets and sources of economic profit. On the other hand, capitalism and neoliberalism - still firmly under the control of white, male hegemonic elites - continue to reign supreme as modernity's new institutional representatives of master status identity. It seems very likely that more inclusive media representations will not be adequate for challenging their domination.

### **Law, Rights and Democracy**

Explorations of disabling ideologies expressed through mass media representations such as film and television help to explain some of the social factors that reinforce the persisting hegemony of the white, able-bodied heterosexual male. But the domination of capitalism, neoliberalism and the financial profit imperative in the realm of cultural production raises the

possibility that effective counter-hegemonic discourses are more likely to arise in the area of law and, specifically in the form of efforts to uphold the legal rights of minority social groups. There is a sense in which capitalism and neoliberalism legitimate minority identities but they do so by reducing members of minority communities to the status of consumers who are to be manipulated and exploited. As a result, economic elites retain dominant social, political, cultural and economic power. In contrast, the power of law and the aggressive affirmation of equality rights can result in substantive social change. Pardie and Luchetta (1999) affirm that “the law is a crucial factor in the success of any social movement [due to] its ability to legitimize, or delegitimize, the way people think about issues surrounding that movement” (p. 19). Law is especially important in challenging disabling expressions of hegemonic power because changes in law can have immediate and meaningful pragmatic effects. Before same-sex couples in Canada could obtain access to many legal benefits, for example, the legal definition of a ‘spouse’ had to be altered to include gay partners. Common benefits enjoyed by members of heterosexual couples, such as death-related insurance claims or alimony in cases of divorce, were not granted to members of the gay community prior to the changed definition of a spouse. The discussion below shows that the gay community in Canada has achieved great success by using the courts and the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* to assert its right to equality and inclusion.

The landmark case of *M v. H* (1999) concerned the definition of ‘spouse’ in Canada in connection to the issue of spousal benefits. Prior to this case, section 29 of the Ontario Family Law Act (OFLA) defined ‘spouse’ strictly in terms of heterosexual partners, and *M v. H* (1999) challenged the exclusion of gay partners. The nine justices of the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) unanimously judged that section 29 of the OFLA violated the equality rights of gay partners as protected under section 15 (1) of the *Charter*, which reads:

Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

Judicial decisions rely on precedents and the results of previous cases, and the SCC drew upon *Egan V. Canada* (1995) in conducting its judicial review and analysis of *M v. H* (1999). Brodie (2002) states that “in order to perform their review functions, judges are required to look to past decisions, also called precedents, for guidance and instruction. In this sense judicial review is a backward-looking and largely conservative task” (p. 154.). Contrary to Brodie’s (2002) assertion, judicial review can also be forward-looking and progressive. In *M v. H* (1999), the justices unanimously agreed that:

All Parties and interveners on this appeal concede that s. 29 [of the OFLA] constitutes a prima face violation of M’s s.15 (1) equality rights and agree that the debate is situated under s.1 of the Charter (Finlayson, 1996, p. 21).

The SCC justices asked whether s. 29 of the OFLA differentiated between gay couples and heterosexual couples in a way that was grounded in forms of inequality and discrimination that violated the *Charter*. The response to this question was based on a direct, literal understanding of the wording of the OFLA:

The motions judge concluded that “[c]learly section 29 of the FLA has drawn a distinction between opposite-sex partners and same-sex partners in a relation of some permanence. Section 29 of the FLA set out definitions applicable to Part III of the Act which deals with support obligations, and defines “spouse” as follows: “spouse” means a spouse as defined in subsection 1(1) a man and woman who are married to each other or

who have entered into a marriage that is voidable or void, and in addition includes either of a man and woman who are not married to each other and have cohabited (a) continuously for a period of not less than three years; or (b) in a relationship of some permanence, if they are the natural or adoptive parents of a child (Finlayson, 1996, p. 23). As the appellant in *M v. H* (1999), M argued before the Court that this definition of ‘spouse’ denied her the right to apply for spousal support under s. 33 of the OFLA. This right was granted to unmarried persons involved in heterosexual relationships who met statute requirements, but it was not available to unmarried partners participating in same-sex relationships even if they also met statute requirements. Accordingly, M argued that the OFLA was overtly discriminatory due to the *Charter’s* protection of equality rights.

Jones and Basser Marks (1999) indicate that most “legal regimes have some form of regulation of relationships which are considered to be taboo. The law may prohibit a range of unacceptable sexual relationships, including the prohibition of homosexual relationships, incestuous relationships and relationships with young children” (p. 7). The wording of the OFLA shows that Canadian law traditionally viewed homosexuality as a taboo relationship that was unworthy of equality under the law. In addressing this taboo, the Supreme Court justices concluded, “M is correct in her contention that same-sex couples are capable of meeting all statutory prerequisites set out in s. 29 and s. 1 (1) but for the requirement that they be “a man and woman” (*M v. H*, 1999, 2.S.C.R.). Same-sex couples are certainly capable of living together continuously for a period of not less than three years. The Court also stated, “On the present state of the law, same-sex couples may well be able to adopt children... and live together in a relationship of some permanence” (*M v. H*, 1999, 2.S.C.R.). The central issue then to be

determined was: Does the distinction between heterosexual and same-sex couples in the OLFA constitute discrimination under Canadian law?

Looking to precedents as a source of guidance in the decision-making process, the justices of the SCC compared *M v. H* (1999) to *Egan v. Canada* (1995). *Egan v. Canada* (1995) describes the Court's determinations as follows:

In *Egan*, all Justices were unanimous in finding that sexual orientation is an analogous ground under s.15 (1). As stated above, this usually suffices to establish discrimination and it is only in exceptional cases that the denial of equality on analogous ground will not violate the purpose of s. 15(1) since the limitation imposed upon M is based on a “stereotypical application of presumed group characteristics and not on merit, capacity or circumstance (*Egan v. Canada*, 1995, 2.S.C.R.).

On the basis of the comparison between *Egan v. Canada* (1995) and *M v. H* (1999), and taking into account the appellant's equality rights protections under s. 15 (1) of the *Charter*, the SCC judged that M had indeed been a victim of discrimination based on sexual orientation. M won her case in a decision that brought permanent and meaningful improvements to the lives of gay people in Ontario and Canada.

The ruling in *M v. H* (1999) changed the hegemonic power relations in Canadian society but caused considerable controversy in the process. Some felt that the ruling made by the Court constituted an assault on democracy because it was based on the *Charter* rather than laws enacted in Parliament by elected officials to represent the will of the majority of people (Martin 2003, p. 26-40). The Court did overrule the wishes of citizens and politicians who shared traditional views that opposed legal equality rights for same-sex partners, and some questioned the right of a small panel of judges to make a decision they felt should have been left to the

people and the democratic process (Martin, 2003, p. 26-40). However, other observers asserted that one of the most fundamental purposes of law is to protect the rights of minority groups against victimization and discrimination imposed by the majority will. Gay groups, for example, argued that the *Charter* gives the SCC the power to “strike down unconstitutional legislation and award remedies for constitutional violations (Roach, 2001, p. 54). This power “was specifically recognized” by the outcome of *M v. H* (1999) (Roach, 2001, p. 54). Others pointed to the economic efficiency of the *Charter* in reducing the need for case-by-case adjudication at great cost to taxpayers and litigants. As Ryder (2000) commented, “The Supreme Court sent the signal that you can go slowly and face litigation on a case-by-case basis that you are almost certain to lose, or you can change the laws all at once” (in Chwialkowska, 2000, p. 1). From this perspective, the legal sanctioning of gay equality rights was a progressive development that was bound to happen sooner or later in Canada, and the use of a *Charter*-based challenge to obtain those rights offered an economically efficient way of abolishing the discriminatory assumptions embodied in the law and achieving positive change.

The controversy over the SCC’s judgment in *M v. H* (1999) exposes the manner in which hegemonic governmental power, democratic ideals and human rights are all implicated in the power relationships within modern societies. When the gay community initially made a strong push for same-sex marriage rights in Canada, then Conservative opposition leader Stephen Harper held an alternative position on the debate surrounding same-sex marriages and the type of legal outcome he would have preferred. Goldenberg (2013) indicates that Harper wanted to “put the *Charter* rights of gay Canadians to a free vote in Parliament” because he supported civil unions for gays rather than marriage (p. 1). However, then Prime Minister Jean Chretien stated, “It’s marriage” and informed MPs that he would not consider the “less controversial ‘civil

unions” (MacCharles & Whittington, 2003, p. 1). Chretien’s successor, Prime Minister Paul Martin, supported this view and together these men sent a clear message to Canadians that Canada is a democracy based on the rule of law and the requirements of the Constitution rather than a theocracy where the religious assumptions of private individuals could be used to justify discrimination based on personal prejudice.

The above examples show how law and important legal instruments such as Constitutions and the *Charter* can support progressive social change and the generation of new forms of hegemony within society. However, Jones and Basser Marks (1999) indicate that law also has oppressive and disabling potential:

Law works by categorizing, isolating, ostracizing, dehumanizing, rather than by just punishing identifiable acts of wrong doing. Of course punishment is still a feature of the law, and it is this that... shows the way in which the ideology of disability is a feature of the construction and process of law and provides a perfect opportunity for putting “crime and punishment” into perspective (p. 5).

Jones and Basser Marks (1999) indicate that law acts not only to punish specific crimes but also to perform the wider social function of marginalizing those who do not meet expected social norms of identity and behavior. Thus, law is a social institution that impacts the shape and functioning of democratic societies in many ways. The denial of equality rights to minority social groups such as gays or persons with disabilities not only punishes them for being outside the law, but also reinforces anti-democratic and discriminatory ideologies and practices. Indeed, the creation of inclusionary laws that uphold the legal rights of disabled social groups is very much connected to the fulfillment of the fundamental ideals of democratic societies.

Conflict exists over different views of the relationships between law, rights, democracy and the will of the majority. Some commentators contend that in a democratic society the courts should not have the power to make laws that oppose the desires of the majority and that Parliament, rather than the courts, is the place where issues such as gay rights should be worked out. For example, Martin (2003) claims that “democracy is and always has been about the interest of the collectivity, about majority rule, about power to the people” (p. 99). Martin (2003) criticizes the use of the courts and what he calls “interest group politics” to advance the legal rights protections afforded to minority social groups:

Interest group politics is antidemocratic in two respects. It erodes citizenship, the essential precondition to democratic politics. People are induced to define themselves according to their race or sex or sexual preference or some ascriptive criterion, rather than as citizens. And, in practice, interest group politics has meant seeking to use the courts as a means of short-circuiting or bypassing democratic processes (p. 100).

In the view of Martin (2003), the use of judicial activism to advance the human rights of minority social groups undermines the democratic basis of society. However, a much stronger case can be made that “interest group politics” and the use of courts to assert constitutional rights does not “erode citizenship” so much as it enables members of minority groups to gain access to their the rights as citizens and, often, to their legal status as citizens. Further, there are cases where the will of the majority can deny social groups their constitutionally protected rights and in cases such as this the precise role of the courts is to ensure that democracy does *not* prevail.

Bryden (1994) rejects Martin’s (2003) position, asserting that it is based on a thoroughly delusional understanding of the actual workings of democracy. In his critique of the “myths” advanced by writers such as Martin (2003), Bryden (1994) states, “The first myth is that the

decisions of an elected legislature and the majority are one and the same; the second (and ultimately most damaging myth) is that majority rule is, or ought to be, all that modern democratic government is about” (p.104). With regard to the political decision-making process in Canada, Bryden (1994) states:

Important decisions can only be taken after a free and public discussion to abide by a set of rules that govern the way we make authoritative decisions, and acceptance of significant constraints on the use of force, some contained in the Charter and others not... are part of the reason the Canadian government - notwithstanding its shortcomings - is respected by people around the world (p. 104).

For Bryden (1994), the use of the courts and legal instruments such as the *Charter* to uphold and advance the legal rights of minority social groups such as the gay and disabled communities does not undermine democracy in Canada but instead establishes the country as a world leader in demonstrating how democratic societies should function.

A major aspect of a properly functioning democracy involves protecting individuals and groups from dictatorial or tyrannical expressions of the will of the majority that support discrimination against vulnerable minority social groups. With regard to the Canadian context in particular, Bryden (1994) states, “I think it is dangerously naïve to believe that our fellow citizens are somehow incapable of tyranny” (p. 104). Because the possibility of tyranny is always present, even in a relatively progressive nation like Canada, legal instruments such as the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* represent critically important means of guarding against the actions of dictatorial forms of social agency that happen to possess hegemonic power. Ultimately, one must decide whether dictatorship and tyranny fulfill or oppose democracy. As Mandel (1994) states, “Despite the historical opposition between popular politics and judicial

review, the dominant theme in the selling of the Charter has been democracy. The Charter, its supporters have argued, means a net gain in popular power” (p. 39). Mandel (1994) further observes that the power of the *Charter* functions to limit “the power of both provincial and federal governments in favour of the rights of individual citizens. It gives people the power to appeal to the courts if they feel their rights have been infringed or denied. The Charter ... transfers power to all Canadians” (p. 39).

It is very difficult, and perhaps impossible, to create a comprehensive or definitive view of what constitutes power. Foucault (1978) claims that “power is everywhere [and] is not an institution and not a structure” (p. 93). But however pervasive power may be in society - including the many covert and subtle articulations of hegemonic power - the mechanisms of power in modern Canadian society certainly include structures and institutions such as legal institutions. Bryden (1994) and Mandel (1994) argue persuasively that the use of legal instruments such as the *Charter* to advance the equality rights of all Canadians not only fulfills the highest promises of democracy but also establishes Canada, during the present period of late modernity, as a world leader in the ongoing evolutionary process of creating progressive social change. The *Charter*, it would seem, possesses a significant capacity for empowering marginalized individuals and groups to resist disabling expressions of hegemonic power and to create new forms of power that uphold the universal rights of all Canadians.

In Canada and internationally at the global level, many legal documents and mechanisms have been created and implemented which strive to offer formal human rights protections to vulnerable social groups such as gays, members of non-white communities and persons with disabilities. Tools such as the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Human Rights Act,

the Employment Equity Act, and the Canadian Rights Commission all sanction the rights of vulnerable social groups. In their analysis of Canadian measures designed to prevent discrimination against members of the disabled community, Westhues and Warf (2012) affirm that the Charter, the Canadian Human Rights Act, the Employment Equity Act and the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal all strive to uphold the rights of persons with disabilities (p. 96-99). At the global level, the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner states, “Human rights are inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language, or any other status. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible” (UNHROHC).

Within the specific context of Canadian legal rights protections for persons with disabilities, many such protections exist at both the federal and provincial levels. Of course, section 15 (1) of the *Charter* states, “Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability” (Westhuges & Warf, 2012, p. 96). Section 2 of the Canadian Human Rights Act (1985) affirms the right of all Canadians to “fully participate in Canada as members of society, without being hindered in or prevented from doing so by discriminatory practices based on race, national, or ethnic origin, colour, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability, or conviction for an offence for which a pardon has been granted” (Westhuges & Warf, 2012, p. 97). In Ontario, the Ontario Human Rights Code (1962) “prohibits actions that discriminate against people based on protected grounds in a protected social area” (OHRC, 1962). Protected *grounds* include age, ancestry,

colour, race, citizenship, ethnic origin, place of origin, creed, family status, marital status (including single status), gender identity, gender expression, receipt of public assistance (in housing only), record of offences (in employment only), sex (including pregnancy and breast feeding), sexual orientation, and disability. Protected *areas* include accommodation (housing), contracts, employment, goods, services and facilities, and membership in unions, trade and professional associations” (OHRC, 1962). At a practical level, much discrimination against persons with disabilities continues to exist in Canada and Ontario, but the OHRC establishes many grounds and areas in which discrimination is prohibited by the law.

Employment represents an area of especially great significance to persons with disabilities because the ability to earn a living wage promotes autonomy, self-esteem and social participation. The Employment Equity Act (EEA) was developed in Canada based on “the *Report of the Commission on Equality in Employment...* tabled by Judge Rosalie Abella” (Westhuges & Warf, 2012, p. 97). According to Westhuges and Warf (2012), the EEA recommended the creation and implementation of policies to prevent employment discrimination against four designated groups - Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, visible minorities and women - and discrimination was to be abolished from “the federal government, federal agencies, and federally regulated agencies [including the] Canadian Forces, the RCMP, the Treasury Board, the Public Services Commissions, airlines and banks” (p. 97). In many ways, the EEA reflects Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states, “Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work, and to protection against unemployment” (Lundy, 2011, p. 300). Legal mechanisms and documents such as the Ontario Human Rights Code, the *Charter*, the Canadian Human Rights Act, the Employment Equity Act, and the UDHR strive to establish rights protections for

vulnerable social groups, such as members of the disabled community, in both Canadian and international contexts. Clearly, substantive efforts have been made to establish organizations and human rights protections that fight against the oppressive expressions of hegemonic power that have been so characteristic of modernity. Moreover, these legal mechanisms promote what appears to constitute the most fundamental foundation of democracy as both an ideal and a social reality - the universal right to equality, inclusion and community membership.

### **Towards Inclusive Community**

If the Nazi phenomenon represents an extreme example of the disabling impacts of hegemonic power in the modern era, it remains true that many social groups continue to struggle against multiple forms of oppression and marginalization in contemporary society. These groups include members of minority communities such as gays as well as all non-white populations. People with disabilities figure prominently among those facing ongoing stigmatization despite the human rights advances that have been achieved in many modern societies. As Albrecht et al. (2001) confirm, “People with disabilities frequently occupy marginalized social and economic positions in contemporary societies” (p. 430). Despite the tragic lessons of Nazism and other dehumanizing expressions of white supremacist hegemonic social and political power, even relatively progressive countries such as Canada continue to impose disability, marginalization and a struggle for recognition and belonging on a wide array of social groups. Many people are disabled based on a variety of factors, often intersecting factors, and denied equality and a full sense of societal inclusion. As we have seen, a significant factor sustaining the oppression and disabling of social groups is the way in which ‘disability’ is defined and understood.

The concept of disability is generally connected to manifest physical or mental disabilities, but the reality is that disability can take many forms. Some forms of disability are

visible to the viewing eye at the center of the ocular-centric regime of modernity, but many disabilities are outside the range of human vision and therefore remain effectively invisible. As a result, many difficulties are associated with the task of recognizing, understanding and defining what constitutes disability. Of course, many theories and models of disability have been advanced to assist our understanding of the multiple factors that contribute to the oppression and disabling of individuals and groups within society. Distinguishing between the literal fact of ‘impairment’ and ‘disability,’ the Social Model of Disability argues that disability is, to a very large extent, socially constructed and therefore that many forms of disability represent artificial social constructs (Oliver & Barnes, 2012, p. 23). As Lundy (2011) states, “Unlike previous traditional, individual, medical approaches, the social model breaks the causal link between impairment and disability. The reality of impairment is not denied but it is not viewed as the cause of disabled people’s economic and social disadvantage” (p. 117). This argument is very convincing and readily supported by empirical facts. As we have seen, Canadian laws and social policies governing gay sexuality once defined and disabled gay identities as inherently criminal. A legal and political process of decriminalization began in 1964 and culminated in 1969 with a “consenting adults in private” law that was passed in Parliament (Adam, 1987, p. 84). Gay identities were no longer criminalized; the social construction and disabling of members of the gay community was identified and the practice of artificially constructing the gay community as disabled and criminal began to undergo a process of change that continues to the present. Once it is recognized and acknowledged that the power of hegemonic groups to construct social identities plays a crucial role in determining what constitutes disability, and which social groups should be socially included or excluded, it becomes possible to resist and change the specific ideological and institutional factors that stigmatize and disable marginalized social groups.

In Canada, the realms of politics, law and social policy development have been crucial components of the fight to oppose disabling expressions of hegemonic authority and to create a more inclusive society. Progress has been made in asserting the rights of many marginalized groups, such as women and the gay community. In a 2009 event marking the occasion of the drafting of Bill C-150 in 1969 to decriminalize homosexuality for consenting adults over the age of twenty-one, NDP member Libby Davies stated, “Something very momentous took place... The fact that laws criminalized people because they loved each other and they happened to be of the same sex- it’s a horrific thing. Changing those laws was an important milestone in Canadian queer rights” (in Smith, 2009). This example shows the important roles to be played by politics, law and social policy in supporting enhanced equality and inclusion for members of disabled and oppressed social groups. As Albrecht et al. (2001) state, “People with disabilities have increasingly sought to participate collectively in broader decisions about social policy. These political initiatives have taken a variety of forms, depending on the nature of the existing political institutions... [and] the issues in question” (p. 430). While participation in politics and the creation of social policy constitute pragmatic strategies for subverting oppressive hegemonic norms and generating alternative ideologies, discourses and practices, it is also necessary to resist the disabling impacts of discriminatory constructions of social reality. The struggle to create and implement inclusive social policies, then, must be complemented by changes at the level of the social construction of ‘reality’ itself.

Mass media representations play a significant role in the social construction of reality and therefore represent an important area of critical analysis for the field of CDS. Haller’s (2010) work, *Representing Disability in an Ableist World: Essays on Mass Media*, indicates that mass media representations - or, literally, mediations - play a strong role in shaping modern

understandings of reality. According to Haller (2010), “the framing of disability issues and disabled people by news media lends credence to media scholar Doris Graber’s view that journalists select the content and frame the news, thereby constructing reality for those who read, watch, or listen to their stories” (p. 27). Of course, journalists who work in the specific area of broadcasting news reports constitute only a small segment of the population working in mass media, and media personnel such as those employed in television, radio, movies, smartphone data content, the Internet and so on also play roles in shaping the way people perceive social reality. Indeed, Haller (2010) asserts that “most Western societies are now mass-mediated cultures in which their citizens understand “reality” through personal experience and mass media information” (p. 27). However, the mass-mediated social reality of contemporary modernity is complex and contradictory; on the one hand, it generates a disabling and oppressive homogeneity that undermines equality-within-difference but, on the other hand, it opens up space for resistance and the creation of counter-hegemonic discourses, laws and policies that support equality and inclusion for all.

A work by Altman and Barnartt (2000) titled, *Expanding the Scope of Social Science: Research on Disability*, analyzes the use of “contestatory action” to promote social justice and contends that effective resistance must take place at two interconnected levels simultaneously - the level of practical social activism and the level of the social construction of identity (p. 143). Focussing on overt obstacles to social inclusion, Altman and Barnartt (2000) draw upon the personal narratives of individuals with disabilities in order to demonstrate how exclusionary social policies deny disabled people access to required healthcare supports and services (p. 143). The efforts of the gay community to achieve equality offer an excellent example of the way in which contestatory action taking place at the level of social policy and at the level of social

identity construction can result in positive outcomes. As noted above and throughout this dissertation, the gay community in Canada has used contestatory action centered on the courts to achieve the decriminalizing of homosexuality, but it has also succeeded in changing disabling social attitudes regarding gay identity. This has produced ongoing progress. In 2005, for instance, the federal Liberal government implemented Bill C-38 - The Civil Marriage Act - which redefined marriage to include same-sex partnerships (Government of Canada, 2005, Bill C-38). This highly significant change in social policy took place concurrently with a broad societal reinterpretation of gay identities based on widespread public recognition of gay equality and entitlement to social inclusion.

The horrors of Nazi Germany illustrate one of the primary factors contributing to the stigmatization and disabling of specific social groups that have been targeted by oppressive hegemonic powers. This factor is public passivity and implied public consent to the sometimes horrific actions of hegemonic authorities. The passivity and compliance of a significant portion of the German population in the Nazi project emphasizes the need to promote independent critical thought and awareness in members of the public. Indeed, the willingness of many people to comply with demands from hegemonic authority figures to commit or permit outrageous criminality is a disturbing phenomenon. In a work examining this phenomenon titled, *The Social Outcast: Ostracism, Social Exclusion, Rejection and Bullying*, Williams et al. (2005) state that many people are so passive and lacking in independent judgment that they “will obey authorities to the point of harming the other” (p. xix). This is problematic when hegemonic constructions of identity seek to stigmatize, exclude or even impose violence on groups defined as social threats or outcasts.

O’Neill’s (2010) examination of the gay and lesbian communities shows how hegemonic

constructions of heterosexuality as “natural and universal” has historically created public passivity in the face of the oppression of gays and other non-heterosexuals (p. 331-332). Because some prominent individuals, social institutions, laws and religious interpretations of human identity seek to ostracize and exclude groups defined as outcasts, a major goal of contestatory action involves support for independent critical thought that challenges traditional expressions of social hegemony. Education that supports the growth of independent thinking, critical consciousness and raised social awareness can generate new discourses that extend equality and inclusion to groups that traditionally have been stigmatized and excluded. The notion of an inclusive community can then take root and begin to redefine popular understandings of what constitutes social reality. Indeed, many ideals that support the notion of an inclusive community are already present in the founding principles, constitutions and democratic institutions of modern liberal democratic nations such as Canada and the US.

In their work, “Disability and Social Justice,” Ralston and Ho (2010) argue that political activism designed to oppose disabling hegemonic expressions of power serves to affirm and fulfill the fundamental goals of liberalism and democracy. The authors confirm that “the core of liberalism, as a political philosophy, involves the recognition that human persons are free and equal, and that the state and its activities should respect these two correlative features of persons” (Ralston & Ho, 2010, p. 211). One of the obstacles to the fulfillment of democracy is the failure to recognize that individuals and social groups can be different and equal, that there can be equality-within-difference. Too often, as we have seen, differences between social groups lead to inequality, but differences between the diverse groups that characterize present modern societies neither imply nor justify inequality. Mackey (2011) calls for affirmation that diversity represents a positive good that can be reconciled with equality (p. 156-157). With globalization bringing

people from all over the world into closer and closer proximity, the embrace of diversity has become an important aspect of the present stage of modernity. Caravelis and Robinson (2016) suggest that social inclusion requires recognition that all people share a common humanity and therefore have a right to equitable treatment, human rights and a fair allocation of community resources (p. 154). Depictions of immigrant populations, such as the large Latino population in the US, as virtual “enemies at the gate” achieve little more than to “fuel moral panic and lead the public to believe that immigrants pose a physical, economic and cultural threat” (Caravelis & Robinson, 2016, p. 154). Caravelis and Robinson (2016) affirm that social inclusion in a modern context entails promoting a just society by challenging injustice and by valuing diversity, rather than by defining immigrants and refugees “as ‘enemies at the gate’ that are attempting to invade western nations” (p. 154). Such negative definitions of immigrants and refugees undermine the very foundations of liberal democratic societies.

Similarly discussing the need for societal changes that enhance the inclusion of people who are vulnerable to stigmatizing and marginalization, Russell (1998) develops the notion of “reorganization” to describe the way in which people with disabilities can fight for equality and inclusion (p. 220). For Russell (1998), reorganization involves the implementation of inclusive factors such as disability-friendly architectural designs and a de-corporatized media that focuses less on the entertainment value of media representations and more on the oppressive and marginalized condition under which many people with disabilities continue to live (p. 220). Russell’s (1998) discussion implies that economic factors figure large in creating the disabling impacts of hegemonic power; it is because the contemporary media has become highly corporatized that it reflects capitalism’s narrow focus on profit-maximization (p. 220). However, a de-corporatized media would have greater potential to support public education and worthy

projects such as enhanced inclusion for oppressed and disabled social groups. The main thrust of Russell's (1998) argument appears to be her belief that the diverse social groups in modern society are fundamentally equal and "share a common humanity." This belief raises an important question: Given that the diverse population of human beings shares a common humanity, why is it that modern societies inevitably construct human differences in terms of binary concepts of superiority and inferiority, worthiness and lack of worth?

While a substantial body of CDS literature incorporates extensive analysis of the ways in which disability has been socially constructed, it would appear that minimal attention has been paid to the concept of society itself as a factor reinforcing oppressive expressions of hegemony. The disabling impacts of the modern understanding of society, especially modern liberal democratic society, are confirmed by King and McKeowan (2004) when they assert that inequality and discrimination persist despite the advances that have been made in our "more liberal, modern society" (p. 150). The many oppressive elements implied within the modern understanding of what constitutes liberal democratic society can be observed through comparison of the concept of society with the concept of community. Indeed, it must be pointed out that neither the concept of society nor the concept of community is currently included in the *Encyclopedia of Disability*.

Countless volumes have been written on the concept of society so it is possible to provide only a brief and basic definition of the concept of liberal democratic society, but that is adequate to our present purposes. At a basic level, modern liberal democratic nations such as Canada understand the concept of society - and hence social reality - as denoting a social collective formed by atomistic individuals who create laws and mutual obligations so they can live together in peace and prosperity. Differentiated social units such as the individual, the family and various

groups live together and form 'society.' In contrast, the concept of community recognizes the social collective and social relations as the very ground of the individual; the individual exists, one might say, only as a member of a community (Giddens & Sutton, 2014, p. 20-23, 117-119). It is impossible to even conceive of an 'individual' apart from the community within which he or she has his or her being. Drawing a similar distinction between society and community, Max Weber's (1964) work, *Basic Concepts in Sociology*, asserts that the "aggregation of social relationships" - society - is based on a balancing of interests motivated by rational value judgements, expediency and mutual consent; while the "communalization of social relationships" - community - is based on a sense of solidarity and emotional attachments between members of the collective (p. 91). Other writers distinguish between society and community on the basis of the difference between transitory and long-term social relations. For example, Loomis' (1957) work, *Community and Society*, states the concept of society, or *Gesellschaft*, refers to a "transitory and superficial... mechanical aggregate and artifact," while the concept of community, or *Gemeinschaft*, designates "a lasting and genuine form of living together" (p. 35). Clearly, all of the above writers draw sharp distinctions between the concepts of society and community. These distinctions have very strong consequences with regard to how people understand social reality and the meaning of human values such as equality and inclusion.

The stark differences between the concepts of society and community, and the implications of those differences for the practical realization of ideals such as equality, democracy and inclusion, suggest that critical analysis of the concept of community can contribute a new and valuable element to disability discourse. It would appear that the concept of community can provide a useful complement to the SMD by asking questions such as: What are the characteristics of the "social" that is assumed by the SMD? How did the current

understanding of society arise in connection to modernity - specifically, in connection to the historical origins of modern liberal democratic society - and why or how has modern society come to be denuded of the communal aspects of human collective life? Can communities exist at the larger level of the state or at an international level, or must they be limited to smaller, local groups with narrow interests? These and countless other important questions are raised through the introduction of the concept of community to disability discourse.

The concept of community has been elaborated to create new and related concepts that contribute to critical theory and to the formulation of activist strategies designed to enhance social justice for marginalized and disabled groups. For example, the notion of transcommunality was introduced by John Brown Childs in 2003, and this concept appears to have the potential to add to CDS discourse - and to critical sociological discourses in general - due to the unique and relevant questions raised by the author. One of the main questions Childs asks is: How can social movements fighting for positive social change create a unified voice given the inevitability of internal divisions within social movements connected to issues such as race, class, gender and disability? While CDS theoretical frameworks such as the SMD analyze the disabling impacts of intersecting forms of oppression stemming from society, Childs (2003) notes that these divisions also exist *within* activist social movements. He then offers some ideas on how to overcome internal divisions that inhibit efforts to create social change and enhance social justice.

For Childs (2003), the overcoming of internal divisions within activist movements represents the key to the practical achievement of social change. The notion of transcommunality expresses his understanding of how to create unified social movements. Childs' (2003) work raises many questions that are relevant to CDS such as this central question: How can the notion of society characterizing modernity - based on the existence of many different sub-communities

existing in hierarchical relations of inferiority/superiority and privilege/oppression - be transformed into a view of society that incorporates the ideal of a unified community in which all sub-communities are recognized and affirmed as equal parts of an inclusive whole? Moreover, it is evident that the concept of transcommunality is a dynamic notion that describes a process more than it does a social entity; it refers to the ongoing work of committed activists in creating an inclusive society that is inspired by the traditional notion of a community.

The unique nature of Childs' (2003) writing is related to the fact that many of his ideas are informed by the wisdom and traditions of the Aboriginal Haudenosaunee people. Indeed, Haudenosaunee knowledge and wisdom played a large role in the formulation of the concept of transcommunality. In Haudenosaunee societies, "respectful speech and listening form an essential path by which honest positions and feelings can be circulated within the society" (Childs, 2003, p. 57). Childs' (2003) understanding of effective strategies for achieving social change emphasizes the need for theories of social change to be complemented by practical action. Indeed, he argues that the concept of transcommunality "is fundamentally experience based and action oriented" (Childs, 2003, p. 58). In Childs' (2003) view, groups hoping to achieve social change must first become "affiliated participants" in the movement for change on the basis of mutual respect and shared practical action (p. 75). The acknowledgement of common interests is vital because it helps to ensure that the diversity and divisions that inevitably exist within change movements do not undermine the struggle for change (Childs, 2003, p. 75). In the words of Childs (2003), the concept of transcommunality implies that "diversity is an essential part of the solution to the question of how to combine cooperation and pluralism" (p. 75). Further, effective strategies for change must act simultaneously at the macro (shared collective goals) and micro (specific goals of individual groups) levels (Childs, 2003, p. 75). It is evident

that, for Childs (2003), the large-scale and small-scale processes of social change sought through transcommunal social activism are dialectically interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

The concept of transcommunality is strongly linked to the issues of modernity, society, hegemony, disability, neoliberalism, social justice and community which are at the basis of this dissertation. Arguing that Childs' (2003) work is already antiquated, White (2003) argues that contemporary society embodies "postcommunality" because the rise of globalization and neoliberalism has permanently eliminated the possibility of a genuine community coming into being (in Childs, 2003, p. 165). White (2003) asserts that the ideal of an inclusive community manifesting social justice exists only as a "rallying cry for groups threatened by assimilation" to the exigencies of a global capitalist market based on commoditized social identities (in Childs, 2003, p. 165). Moreover, it is not only individual identities that are determined by materialistic values but also group and community identities. As White (2003) observes, "In the brave new world of commodity production... community is defined by what one possesses and consumes" (in Childs, 2003, p. 165). Given the absolute domination of materialistic values in contemporary capitalist society, and the reduction of all social identities to the status of commoditized objects, all efforts to achieve social change must fail to rise above the level of cosmetic "fashion"; social change based on "substance" is no longer possible (White in Childs, 2003, p. 166). In the view of White, then, Childs' thought expresses hopeless idealism. The concept of transcommunality represents an inspiring but futile "effort to get beyond the harsh dichotomies that typically hamstring our efforts even to think about, much less achieve, community under the conditions of modernity" (White in Childs, 2003, p. 166). Because modernity is inextricably intertwined with capitalism and neoliberalism, individual and social identities are commoditized to the extent that the hope to create authentic communities represents little more than an empty dream.

White (2003) argues persuasively that the current historical period of globalization and the spread of neoliberal socioeconomic norms and institutions has virtually universalized the social construction of alienated and commoditized social identities. However, a strong argument can be made that when human identities and worth have become determined by consumerism and exclusionary understandings of health and ability, society has lost its moral legitimacy and *demands* change and renewal. Despite White's very convincing critique of Childs' work, discourse around the concept of transcommunality appears to contain elements that support such a renewal. White (2003) implies that the spread of capitalism and neoliberalism has created conditions under which the very concept of community must now be re-conceptualized at a global level. Traditional understandings of communities as local phenomena characterized by more intimate social bonds between relatively small numbers of community members have broken down. The rapidly emerging post-modern world - or the next stage in modernity, if one prefers - is shattering modernity's rules, borders and hegemonic power relations at the levels of space, knowledge and connections between people in all regions of the world (White in Childs, 2003, p. 172). Indeed, modern communications technology such as the Internet and social media are creating virtual space and virtual communities that must be accounted for in current efforts to understand what constitutes community itself.

In a contemporary context, communities may be defined not only in traditional geographical or cultural/shared values terms, but also in terms of the unique 'space' occupied by virtual communities. Today, it is not easy to define what constitutes a community and it is precisely this that gives the concept of community the ability to add a useful element to disability discourse. As Minar and Greer (1969) state in their work, *The Concept of Community*, "The importance of the concept of community lies in its very ambiguity... it embodies both the

descriptive and the ideal; it recalls to us our power to make as well as to accept, to act as well as to behave” (p. 331). Minar and Greer (1969) affirm that the concept of community has great potential to generate counter-hegemonic discourses that defy reified viewpoints and encourage critical analysis of the many factors within modern society that oppress and disable a wide range of social groups. The concept of community, and closely related concepts such as Childs’ (2003) notion of transcommunality, can contribute a unique and valuable perspective to the process of understanding how the disabling inequalities associated with the historical origins of modernity have been perpetuated in the present, and to the process of creating strategies that committed activists can use to create a more genuinely democratic, egalitarian and inclusive society, or community, of the future.

## CONCLUSION

This dissertation has argued that in order to understand contemporary forms of disability it is necessary to appreciate how the historical period known as modernity gave rise to many of the disabling forms of oppression that continue to exist in present society. The historical analysis methodology utilized in the dissertation has attempted to clarify some of the past roots of the contemporary forms of stigmatization that continued to disable and marginalize many social groups. The dissertation began by examining linkages between modernity, hegemony and disability, and specifically by clarifying the understanding of modernity that informed the work. Although there is much dispute over exactly what time period and criteria are to be used in defining modernity, the first chapter of this research project indicated that the paper embraces Berman's (1982) view of modernity as beginning around the year 1500 and extending into the present. Many important historical developments are associated with this time period such as the Reformation, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution. This dissertation showed how the rise of industrial capitalism and the liberal political ideals of freedom, equality and democracy demonstrated humanity's growing autonomy and power of self-determination while also creating many disabling expressions of oppression.

This dissertation explained how democratic ideals, the empirical sciences, an "ocularcentric" emphasis on the visible world as the arbiter of the real, and white male hegemony all arose during modernity and had both positive and negative impacts on human freedom. Mullaly (2010) indicated that the nineteenth century sanctioned the white bourgeois male as the norm against which all other groups were defined and oppressed as different and inferior, but Berman (1982) asserted that modernity facilitated "adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world" (p. 67; p.15). Thus, one of the central themes that was

explored in this dissertation was the complex and contradictory nature of modernity as a historical period that has been both deeply oppressive and filled with vitality and opportunities for progress and new developments in all areas of human life. Berman's (1982) late modern period of 1900-1989 was particularly relevant to this dissertation since it described the more recent historical changes associated with the growth of individual thought and affirmation of different identities, which are notable characteristics of the black, gay and women's activist movements explored in the dissertation.

This research project placed strong emphasis on the disabling role played by modernity's hegemonic master status identity - the white, able-bodied, heterosexual male. Works by writers such as De Beauvoir (1952), Rattansi (2007) and others were utilized to demonstrate the disabling impact of white male hegemony on women, gays, blacks and members of all non-white racial and ethnic groups. Gramsci's (1929-32) theory of cultural hegemony demonstrated how the major institutions of capitalist society - including the Catholic Church, the legal system, the education system, the media, and so on - have embraced ideological norms that benefit the ruling capitalist class at the expense of the working class. The dissertation also indicated how the hierarchical social, epistemological and ontological structures of modernity entrenched inequality as a social norm and disabled and marginalized social groups that diverged from the hegemonic norms established by the white heterosexual male.

A significant theme that was explored in this dissertation is the forms of rationality within modernity that constructed some social identities as inferior and rightfully subjected to domination while white, able-bodied males were assigned a superior status (Segal & McCormick, 2010, p. 275). The work showed how modernity's pervasive classifications and categorizing of social groups transformed mere differences into invidious comparisons based on

rigid able/disabled, superior/inferior binary codes. The dissertation referenced historical, exclusionary ideologies that constructed human identity classifications which stigmatized and disabled those deemed as 'abnormal'. For example, it discussed the view of the eugenicist Sir Francis Galton (1833) that people with mental disabilities should be weeded out of society in order to maintain a healthy populace. Galton's scientific classifications supported the view that members of all social groups that diverged from dominant understandings of normalcy should be stigmatized as inferior, deviant and abnormal. This dissertation explained how the eugenicist perspective advanced by Galton (1833) and others connected modernity's central value of social progress to the ideal of the physically and mentally able individual. Individuals with disabilities were perceived as undermining social progress and the dissertation emphasized the modernist view that social groups differing from hegemonic understandings of normalcy and ability represent threats to social progress. Indeed, the dissertation emphasized that modernity's disabling rationality and binary codes persist despite the advances that have been made in the "more liberal, modern society" of today (King & McKeowan, 2004, p. 150).

This research project examined the works of Mahowald (1998) and De Beauvoir (1952) to illustrate how modernity's binary coded identity classifications denied women independent existence and positioned them in subjection to men. It also pointed out that all non-white, non-heterosexual groups have also been subordinated by the hegemonic power of modernity's master status identity, and used the example of the white supremacist rationality and assumptions of Germany's Nazi regime to reveal modernity's potential for extreme dehumanization. Writers such as Goffman (1959), Stebbins (2004), Segal and McCormick (2010) and King and McKeowan (2004) were introduced to demonstrate that the specific modes of rationality shaping human identities in the modern period have not reflected biological or genetic differences

between people, but rather have been informed by historically contingent systems of social power relations that are subject to opposition and change.

In critiquing modernity's reigning master status identity, this dissertation drew upon the works of many writers from within and outside the field of Critical Disability Studies who have refuted the hegemony of the white, able-bodied, heterosexual male. For example, the dissertation addressed hooks' (1992) subversion of master status identity through an oppositional gaze that exposes and criticizes social constructions of reality that are rooted in inequality, exploitation and domination. It also explored Goffman's (1963) view that stigmatized individuals have the power to reinterpret the negative identities that have been forcefully imposed on them by dominant social power. And, this research project described Gramsci's (1929-32) support for new ways of thinking about and understanding the world that support a socialist political transformation. The dissertation further suggested that the Social Model of Disability (SMD) offers a powerful critique of modernity's master status identity because it exposes the historical and social determinants of disability; it shows that disability is shaped by power and hegemony (Shakespeare, 2006, p. 30). Overall, the dissertation revealed the linkages between modernity's master status identity and the hierarchies, inequalities and processes of dehumanization that continue to disable many groups in today's society.

A significant section of this dissertation explored the role of Sigmund Freud in consolidating and legitimating the dominant positioning of modernity's master status identity - the white, heterosexual male. It discussed how Freud's (1910) ideas about normal and healthy human psychosexual development reflect and reproduce the processes of social identity construction characterizing modernity. Freud's (1910) view of healthy human maturation generates a binary structure of able-bodied heterosexual normality and disabled homosexual

abnormality, and the work explained Freud's assumption that homosexuality is based on failure to successfully resolve the Oedipus complex. Moreover, the dissertation demonstrated how psychoanalytic thought links phallic heterosexuality to socioeconomic power in modern society and described the psychosocial processes through which the mature phallic male naturally transitions into the hegemonic role of modernity's master status identity. This research project also examined subversive elements within psychoanalysis such as the relativizing of human desire. Chodorow's (1989) view that gender identities are formed through self-definitions and constantly changing cultural norms was introduced to raise the possibility of a future that is free of rigid and exclusionary sex and gender norms (p. 101-109). Freud's sanctioning of masculine hegemony was also critically examined from the perspective of Oliver's (1990) explanation of the "politics of disablement" and the ways in which major social institutions within modernity, such as the medical establishment, seek to perpetuate their own power and privilege, sometimes at the expense of truth and the public good.

Modernity's scopic elements were also explored in this dissertation in order to expose "the role of seeing" in constructing many forms of disability and oppression (Jay, 1988; Garland Thompson, 2001). The discussion of phallic hegemony revealed how a white, able-bodied male viewpoint has provided the lens through which human bodies are perceived and situated in modernity's hierarchy of worthiness. Drawing upon Elkins' (1999) work, the dissertation demonstrated how the human body is subjected to a process of interpretation and evaluation that categorizes all human bodies that diverge from the ideal of the healthy white male body - such as the bodies of women, non-whites and people with disabilities - as inherently less worthy than the healthy white male. However, the dissertation also emphasized that many counter-hegemonic perspectives exist within modernity's various realms of meaning creation and, accordingly, that

interpretations of beauty, race, ability, disability, male, female, black, white, sexual normalcy are constantly changing. Despite this, the dissertation pointed out that capitalist assumptions have remained stubbornly entrenched in modernity and continue to classify people based on their economic productivity. As a result, notions of human worth in modernity have been informed, to a significant extent, by the economic dictates of efficiency and productivity.

Shifting into a more contemporary context, this dissertation explored hegemony, modernity and disability in current American society. The work discussed the ongoing disabling of the gay community in the US despite the advances in gay rights that have been achieved, and explained the role of America's hegemonic, white Judeo-Christian population in opposing social policies that promote equality and inclusion for all social groups. Accordingly, the dissertation examined the role of irrational fear in perpetuating the denial of gay rights in the US and elsewhere (Herek, 2004, p. 16.). It also indicated that the efforts of American religious extremists to support the legally sanctioned murder of gay people in Africa represents an example of the Americanization of the global psyche that is taking place under globalization and the spread of neoliberalism. While Beasley (2005) links the logic of heterosexual domination to masculine hegemony within all arenas of social power, and Watters (2010) asserts that America uses its power as a global hegemon to aggressively impose its own "crazy" norms on the world, this dissertation rejected simplistic, one-dimensional understandings of the US and suggested that the "individualistic quest" at the heart of American society contains positive potential. American individualism can obviously be corrupted by greed, but the dissertation suggested that it can also promote acceptance of differences. The work referenced Waldschmidt's (2005) phrase "flexible-normalism" to describe the rise of the view that Americans should affirm their equality and belonging despite ways in which they might diverge from hegemonic identity norms (p. 191).

This dissertation pursued the conflict between Watters' (2010) view that America uses its power as a global hegemon to impose its "craziness" on the entire globe and Waldschmidt's (2005) observation that the power to define what constitutes 'normal' is no longer in the hands of hegemonic groups in America. Noting that conflict between groups promoting exclusionary and inclusionary norms can be observed in many aspects of contemporary American society, the dissertation suggested that the experiences of women, the disabled, and the gay and black communities have been at the center of this conflict. The work examined the disabling social processes that have coerced Afro-Americans into internalizing negative identities as being sub-human, lacking in intelligence, deviant and genetically disposed toward criminal behaviour. And, it discussed relatively recent events such as the police killings of Michael Brown, Walter Scott and Freddie Gray as examples of the tragic consequences of the stigmatization and disablement that US society continues to impose of the black population. This research project emphasized that the current processes of disablement imposed on blacks in the US are not new, but represent strategies of domination that America's hegemonic social groups have historically utilized to perpetuate their own power and privilege while exploiting and marginalizing other social groups.

One of the main themes explored in this dissertation is the notion that the complex and sometimes contradictory linkages between modernity, industrialization, science, technology, capitalism and hegemony must all be understood as parts of a historical process that is deeply contradictory - disabling but also progressive and enabling. Expressions of power and ideology that are characteristic of modernity continue to stigmatize and label members of some social groups as "deviants" or "outsiders" (Falk, 2001, p. 23). However, the final sections of this dissertation discussed some strategies that have been used to resist the disabling expressions of hegemony that have defined the modern era and to create positive social change. Language,

discourse, ideology and social consciousness were explored as critical arenas in the battle against oppression. For example, the dissertation examined Linton's (1998) view that language can function as a disabling power that reinforces the social construction of disability (p. 9).

Focussing on the creation of enabling discourses, this dissertation discussed Gramsci's belief that oppressed groups must engage in "a cultural and ideological struggle in order to create a new socialist 'common sense,' and thus change the way people think and behave" (in Jary & Jary, 1995, p. 279). In pursuing this point, the dissertation suggested that the Marxist emphasis on working class consciousness and hooks' (1992) advocacy of the oppositional gaze support counter-hegemonic discourses that affirm the rights of social groups that have been disabled on the basis of class, race, gender, disability or any other factors. It was also noted that the contradictions within capitalism and neoliberalism, which can exploit and disable but also empower and enable, appear to have revolutionary potential and the ability to support dramatic change within society (McRuer, 2006, p. 2). While capitalism has progressive long-term potential because the profit motive is substantially non-discriminatory, a major arena of change where disabled social groups have successfully advanced their rights and created progressive social policies is that of the courts.

This dissertation explained how disabled groups have used legal mechanisms and democratic ideals to promote equality, rights, progressive social policies and inclusion. The activist landmark case of *M v. H* (1999) was cited in this work to show how Canada's *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* led to a new concept of 'spouse' in Canada that included gay partners. The dissertation examined the use of the courts to promote social change within the context of debates about the nature of democracy and the power of courts versus the power of elected officials and representatives. Some felt that the court's ruling in *M v. H* (1999) undermined

democracy because it was based on the *Charter* rather than on laws enacted in Parliament by elected officials (Martin, 2003, p. 99). Others argued that the use of the courts to protect minority rights represents a critical part of democracy (Bryden, 1994, p. 104). This dissertation referenced Mandel's (1994) assertion that the *Charter* transfers power to "all Canadians" (p. 39). Overall, the dissertation discussed a wide range of Canadian and international legal mechanisms that support human rights and social justice for oppressed social groups such as gays, women, members of non-white communities and persons with disabilities.

The final section of this dissertation discussed factors with the potential to contribute to the development of more inclusive communities. It examined the view of Altman and Barnartt (2000) that disabled social groups can engage in forms of "contestatory action" that promote social justice at the levels of practical social activism and the social construction of identity (p. 143). It argued that education, critical thought and raised social awareness all represent aspects of contestatory action that are required in order to overcome public passivity and implied consent to the disabling actions of hegemonic authorities. However, this dissertation suggested that inadequate attention has been paid to the disabling impacts of the modern understanding of society, especially modern liberal democratic society (King & McKeowan, 2004, p. 150). The dissertation compared the concept of society with the concept of community in order to demonstrate the oppressive elements that are implied within the modern understanding of what constitutes society.

This dissertation introduced a number of writers who show that the modern understanding of society refers to atomistic individuals forming a social group on the basis of mutually recognized formal obligations, while the concept of community recognizes the social collective and social relations as the very ground of the individual. For example, the dissertation

referenced Max Weber's (1964) view that the "aggregation of social relationships" - society - is based on a balancing of interests motivated by rational value judgements, expediency and mutual consent; while the "communalization of social relationships" - community - is based on a sense of solidarity and emotional attachments between individuals (p. 91). Loomis' (1957) work, *Community and Society*, was used to elaborate the differences between society and community as it indicates that the concept of society, or *Gesellschaft*, refers to a "transitory and superficial... mechanical aggregate and artifact" while the concept of community, or *Gemeinschaft*, designates "a lasting and genuine form of living together" (p. 35). The works of these writers were examined in order to demonstrate that there are profound differences between the concepts of society and community.

This dissertation raised the possibility that the concept of community supports the notion of an inclusive society where all individuals represent equal and worthy contributors to the social whole. It argued that Childs' (2003) notion of "transcommunality" has the potential to add to Critical Disability Studies discourse due to the author's unique perspective. Childs (2003) focuses on a type of community that is inherently active and progressive, has the potential to reconcile diversity with cooperation, and affirms the importance of both unifying common interests and local concerns. As a result, the dissertation suggested that Childs (2003) implicitly asks how the form of society characterizing modernity - based on the existence of many different sub-communities existing in hierarchical relations of inferiority/superiority and privilege/oppression - can be transformed into a society in which all sub-communities are recognized and affirmed as equal parts of an inclusive whole. Although the concept of transcommunality is strongly connected to the issues of modernity, hegemony, disability, capitalism, neoliberalism, social justice and inclusion at the basis of this dissertation, there are critics of the concept.

This dissertation discussed White's (2003) assertion that the type of community envisioned by Childs is no longer possible because capitalism, globalization and neoliberalism have virtually universalized the social construction of alienated and commoditized social identities that are incapable of forming authentic community bonds (in Childs, 2003, p. 172). The dissertation argued that critical discourse around the concept of community - and related concepts such as that of transcommunality - is very valuable due to the questions and issues it raises. For example, critical analysis of the concept of community demands exploration of what constitutes community, of the differences between the concept of society and the concept of community, of the strengths and weaknesses associated with the formation of narrowly defined sub-communities - such as the black, gay and disabled communities - and of the types of strategies that activist movements can use to achieve substantive progress toward social justice and the realization of an inclusive society. In a contemporary context, communities may be defined not only in traditional geographical or cultural/shared values terms, but also in terms of the unique 'space' occupied by virtual communities. And, the notion of a global community has arisen. Today, then, it is not easy to define what constitutes a community and as it drew to a conclusion this dissertation suggested that it is precisely this which gives the concept of community the ability to add a useful element to critical disability discourse. As Minar and Greer (1969) state, "The importance of the concept of community lies in its very ambiguity... it embodies both the descriptive and the ideal; it recalls to us our power to make as well as to accept, to act as well as to behave" (p. 331). Minar and Greer (1969) affirm that the concept of community can help to explain how the disabling inequalities and hierarchies associated with modernity continue in the present, and can also assist in the task of developing effective strategies for the creation of a more egalitarian, democratic and inclusive future society.

I would like to conclude this dissertation with a reference to the thought and dreams of the very great and inspiring African-American writer, W.E.B. Dubois. In a work titled, *W.E.B. Du Bois: American Prophet*, Blum (2007) states:

Du Bois dreamed of a redeemed world, one that could rise above the ashes of white supremacy, economic exploitation, colonialism, genocide, and world war. He had not lost hope. The world, he declared, “with all its contradictions, can be saved, can yet be born again; but not out of capital, interest, property, and gold, rather out of dreams and loiterings, out of simple goodness and friendship and love...” (p. 186).

The contradictory world described by Du Bois is the world of modernity and while that world has been, and still is, filled with an almost unbearable burden of stigmatization, oppression and disability, it is also overflowing with potential and the possibility to create new expressions of hegemony that affirm equality, ability and inclusion for all.

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