

Article

# Taking a Feminist Disability Studies Approach to Fundamental British Values: Do “Fundamental” “British” Values Encourage the Appreciation of Marginalized Identity Groups, or Lead to the Performance of Inclusion?

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## Abstract

In this article, Fundamental British Values (FBV) are understood as a token attempt toward societal inclusion and empowerment of all citizens. Rather than providing meaningful routes for all individuals to be included in British citizenship, FBV are built on foundations of “inclusionism”—the inclusion of marginalized identity groups in society, on the premise that existing social structures are not threatened. Disabled women’s responses to sociocultural stereotypes surrounding disability and gender are interpreted through a feminist disability studies lens. Empirical data, gathered within a larger research project which examined disabled women’s responses to the representation of disabled women in Anglo-American advertising, are drawn on and connections are made between the growing trend of promoting diversity in advertising, and superficial approaches to diversity and empowerment of all citizens, enacted in FBV. Two key themes underpin this critical discussion: participant resistance to “pity” narratives surrounding the portrayal of

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disabled women in advertising and disabled women's navigation of "belonging" in exclusionary environments.

### **Keywords**

fundamental british values, feminist disability studies, advertising, citizenship, inclusion, inclusionism

## **Introduction**

Inclusionism obscures at least as much as it reveals. (Mitchell & Snyder, 2015, p. 4)

The research presented in this article examines Fundamental British Values (FBV) as a performative approach to the inclusion of marginalized identity groups, such as disabled women, in society. Fundamental British Values were originally introduced by the United Kingdom (U.K.) government in their Prevent strategy (HM Government, 2011), which was designed to challenge acts of terrorism and extremism. Previously, FBV been examined as insufficiently providing clear and meaningful directives for social cohesion (Healy, 2018). Additionally, FBV have been examined as a defensive mechanism used to eliminate perceived challenges to "white privilege" and the normalization of state control over society (Winter & Mills, 2020, p. 2).

Building on critical understandings of FBV as sustaining, rather than challenging, unequal power relations in society, the research presented in this article examines two components of FBV: "tolerance" and "individual liberty" from a feminist disability studies perspective. These values are understood as performative gestures toward empowerment of citizens. It is argued that FBV encourage "inclusionism"—the superficial inclusion of marginalized identity groups, such as disabled people (Mitchell & Snyder, 2015). In this critical exploration, disabled women's embodied experiences are drawn on as a means of dismantling harmful attitudes toward women with impairments, and in order to explore how FBV and citizenship discourses can provide meaningful routes toward societal inclusion (Hall, 2011). Taking a feminist disability studies approach to disabled women's narratives does not mean that personal experience is treated as an exact reflection of individual realities or phenomena. Rather, embodied experience provides insight into the complex ways in which individuals navigate their surrounding worlds, contribute to and resist their social positioning (Jung, 2011).

In enacting a feminist disability studies approach, empirical data—collected via semi-structured interviews with a small sample of disabled women—are drawn on in this article. The data were originally gathered as part of a larger research project examining the representation of disabled women in Anglo-American advertising, post-2000. A key conclusion from the original research project indicated that although the makers of advertisements are more enthusiastically supporting diversity, for example, through featuring disabled women in advertising campaigns that aim to be "risky" and

challenge traditional beauty standards (Houston, 2019), the disabled women I interviewed frequently perceived the advertisements as superficially approaching diversity. Similar to existing criticisms of FBV's performative approach to social inclusion and cohesion, participants critically questioned the extent to which "diversity" was appreciated in advertising portrayals of disabled women. In challenging tokenistic portrayals of bodily diversity in advertising, participants drew on their subjective experiences, sense of self and personal beliefs regarding meaningful sociocultural inclusion of disabled women.

Tokenistic inclusion and "tolerance" of marginalized identity groups, such as disabled people, is understood as a way in which diversity is obscured, rather than encouraged and celebrated (Mitchell & Snyder, 2015, p. 14). Fundamental British Values are critically interpreted as diluting diversity through enforcing master-narratives of how citizens should be valued and value themselves. The enforcement of FBV as a tool of "totalisation" that seeks to tie individuals to an exclusionary and illusory construct of citizenship is examined (Hodkinson & Ghajarieh, 2014, p. 2). Fundamental British Values, then, are critiqued as a gestural attempt on behalf of the British government to bolster an attitude of unification and resilience in British society. Moreover, drawing on the words of Blyth et al. (2016, p. 298). FBV are critiqued as a rhetorical framework that "starts from the outside and seeks to redress a deficit in engagement: to bring something 'in' that was previously 'out'." It is argued, then, that FBV constitute a political attempt to construct "belonging" to British society in a fixed and narrow way.

In the first section of this article, the constructed boundary between those who "tolerate" and those who are "tolerated" is examined as a vital component in sustaining the exclusion of those who are oppressed in society (Yuval-Davis, 2007). Disability studies critiques of traditional citizenship discourses, particularly the understanding of citizenship as something to be earned, rather than bestowed as a human right, are explored. Moreover, problematic understandings of disabled people as "dependent" and passive recipients of social care are examined as contributing to a culture of tolerating, rather than appreciating, disabled people. Moving from a macro-focus on exclusionary citizenship discourses and their impact on attitudes toward disabled people, the notion of "individual liberty" is then considered. Specifically, the issue of whether individuals can truly exercise autonomy and embrace their liberty in a nation that extols tolerance as opposed to appreciation of diverse communities is addressed. Here, Mitchell and Snyder's (2015) concept of inclusionism is drawn on, in order to discuss how performative approaches to inclusion serve as a mechanism of cultural homogenization and, ultimately, devalue diversity.

Moving forward, the qualitative methodological approach taken to this research is outlined. In particular, the capacity qualitative research provides in recognizing how singular narratives contain threads of universal experience is recognized (Denzin, 2017; Sartre, 1981). In other words, while it is recognized that the subjective narratives of individual disabled women are not representative of *all* disabled women, the micro-experiences and stories of a small-sample of disabled women—which are portrayed in this article—illuminate broader, macro issues involved in the universal

oppression of women with impairments. Following discussion of the methodological approach taken in this research, analysis of the empirical data is presented. In relation to FBV, two key themes from participant narratives emerge. The first theme relates to disabled women's frustration and rejection of "pitiable" portrayals of women with impairments in advertising. The second theme presented explores participant navigation of belonging. In particular, connections between data and critiques of political discourses of "belonging" are made. Yuval-Davis articulates how political approaches to "belonging" often sustain exclusionary narratives of "us"—those who supposedly belong—and "them"—those perceived as not belonging, often on the basis of national, religious, race, or cultural identity (Yuval-Davis, 2007, p. 197).

### **“Tolerance”: A Deficit-Based Approach to Diversity**

The term “citizenship” is frequently used in political rhetoric that aims to convey support of democratic values. Indeed, the political popularity of citizenship discourses are due to the growth of nationalism and patriotic inclination (Barton, 1993). However, writing from a disability studies perspective, Barton suggests that the complex issues facing many people in marginalized communities (e.g., disabled people) are frequently avoided in such rhetoric. Often, governmental discussions of citizenship tend to focus on the “obligations” citizens hold to society, for example, being in paid employment. Thus, the consideration of how individuals may partake in “meaningful citizenship,” for example, experiencing solidarity with fellow citizens as part of a community is avoided (Barton, 1993, abstract). Barton’s critique of the typically superficial way in which political rhetoric gives the *impression* of democratic and unifying values strongly links with Yuval-Davis (2007) “politics of belonging” in which she critiques political attempts to construct social belonging in a narrow and fixed manner. Considering that Barton’s foundational disability studies critique of the nationalistic nature of citizenship discourses was published in 1993, it is interesting that over 20 years later, the U.K. government is extolling patriotism through requiring FBV to be embedded in the national curriculum (Department for Education, 2014, p. 5).

From a disability studies perspective, the contention is not that disabled people are absent in governmental discussions surrounding citizenship. Rather, it is argued that construction of tolerance, as opposed to appreciation, of disabled people frequently manifests (Mitchell & Snyder, 2015). For Lewis (2005, p. 540), the practice of obscuring diversity sustains the oppression of marginalized identity groups and maintains the boundary between those who “tolerate” and the “tolerated.” Here, Favell’s description of the politicization of “belonging” as “boundary maintenance” is recalled (Favell, 1999, in Yuval-Davis, 2007).

Garland-Thomson (2019) critically suggests that dominant constructs of citizenship understand impairment as “deficit” and fail to recognize disabled embodiment as belonging in the spectrum of human variation. Garland-Thomson’s argument helps to explain political structures aiming to tolerate, rather than embrace diverse identity groups, such as disabled people. Mobilizing Garland-Thomson’s argument, I suggest

that the disabled form—when understood from a deficit-based approach—is viewed as a threat to “productive” citizenship. Similarly, Meekosha and Dowse (1997)—who draw on Australian politics as an example—highlight reliance on normative imagery and language in citizenship discourses. In their words, “we speak of upright and upstanding citizens, we stand to attention to the playing of the national anthem. The good citizen is embodied as male, white, active, fit and able...” (Meekosha & Dowse, 1997). Moreover, they highlight how people with impairments, especially those who are women, are often perceived as passive members of society. Disabled women are frequently viewed as not able to contribute in both public and private spheres and, as such, they suggest that disabled women are pejoratively cast in contrast to the idealized citizen (Meekosha & Dowse, 1997).

Illustrative examples of deficit-based approaches to disabled people’s citizenship are found in a 2005 report produced by Tony Blair’s then Labour government: *Improving the life chances of disabled people* (Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit, 2005). By 2025, the report projected disabled people “will be respected and included as equal members of society... [disabled people] should have full opportunities and choices to improve their quality of life (6).” According to the report, it was time to “end the culture of dependency and low expectations (10)” and give “them [disabled people] the opportunity to exercise their responsibilities as citizens (9).” An overall aim of the 2005 report was to “support disabled people to help themselves (7).”

The preemptory tone of the report is problematic from a disability-rights approach. In suggesting that the “culture of dependency” needs to be ended, the authors of the report work from the problematic assumption that accessing welfare benefits is an act of dependency, rather an aspect of being part of society. The notion that disabled people need to “help themselves” sustains the oppressive response of pity and patronisation, as opposed to recognition, which is commonly experienced by disabled people in society (Serlin, 2010). Moreover, the emphasis on citizenship “responsibilities” (the term is used 33 times in the report) further impacts the notion of citizenship as something a person receives when they prove themselves as “worthy” to society. When disability is anchored to deficit-based discourses, disabled people will continue to be perceived as deviating from “normal” life (Mitchell & Snyder, 2015). As such, the boundary between those considered “able” and those perceived as “disabled” is maintained (Mitchell & Snyder, 2015).

## **“Individual Liberty”: Valuing the Freedom of All\*, \*With Limitations Applied**

Substantially, research in the area of disability and citizenship provides a macro-focus on the exclusionary agenda of citizenship discourses in neoliberal contexts (Brown & Baker, 2012; Hughes, 2015; Mitchell & Snyder, 2015; Owen et al., 2012; Soldatic & Meekosha, 2011; Parker Harris et al., 2012; Soldatic & Chapman, 2010; Garland-Thomson, 2019). A considerable portion of research focuses on the relationship between employment and access to citizenship. For example, Soldatic and Meekosha

(2011) research problematizes how disabled people are often coerced into taking part in employment regimes in order to continue accessing welfare benefits. Adding to the argument, Parker Harris et al. (2012) echo Barton's (1993) critique of citizenship discourses by suggesting that employment policies in the United Kingdom, United States, and Australia (all of which have high unemployment rates for disabled people) are preoccupied with the notion that citizens have a "responsibility" to work, rather than exploring how the state may help individuals to partake in meaningful work.

Characteristically, the existing body of literature also emphasizes oppressive and rigid attitudes infiltrating citizenship discourses in neoliberal societies. In particular, Hughes (2015), Mitchell and Snyder (2015), and Garland-Thomson (2019) examine how dominant ideas surrounding citizenship and associated values sustain the binary of "us" and "them." For Hughes (2015, p. 993), many disabled people are viewed "counterfeit citizens." In other words, societies dominated by neoliberal ideologies work on the premise of scapegoating marginalized groups of people, for example, on the basis of disability, sexuality, cultural, or religious identity, as a means of validating the position of those who are viewed as "deserving" citizens (p. 993).

It is fair to describe the U.K. context as influenced by neoliberal ideologies, in part largely due to the increasing marketization of public services that are pumped with private finance and face increasing competition from private services (Tyler, 2013). Neoliberal values, such as, the privitisation and deregularisation of public services, hinder the progress of disability rights (Parker Harris et al., 2012). Davis (2013, p. 10) describes how neoliberalism claims to provide individuals with increased choice, freedom to embrace diversity, and express "selfhood." However, as he points out, "diversity" is naively approached in neoliberal contexts. Explaining his point further, Davis (2013) suggests that only manifestations of diversity that do not threaten the status quo are permitted. For example, the disabled person who works a nine-to-five job and does not take welfare benefits may be applauded and featured as part of an "inspirational" news story. Or, the conventionally beautiful woman who wears a prosthetic limb may feature in a "pro-diversity" fashion advertisement. However, bodies and minds that refuse to be "compliant" to neoliberal governance will continue to be relegated to the outskirts of society (p. 5).

While existing literature emphasizes macro-barriers impacting disabled people's access to citizenship, it is also important to consider micro-impacts of exclusionary citizenship discourses on disabled people. The prevalence of disabling discourses in political rhetoric, as explored in the previous section, can be considered as a direct example of oppression facing disabled people. However, "indirect" manifestations of disablism, such as the personal and emotional impact arising from barriers to accessing citizenship, are more difficult to measure (Reeve, 2014). In taking a feminist disability studies approach to the examination of FBV as a device which obscures rather than embraces diversity, it is necessary to recognize the impact of oppression on a person's sense of self and individual liberty. Similar to Kitchin's (Reeve, 2014) suggestion that inaccessible buildings and environments signal to disabled people, "'you are out of place', 'you are different', I propose that the emphasis on tolerating diversity

in FBV leads to people from oppressed minority groups being relegated in spaces of “counterfeit citizenship” (Hughes, 2015, p. 992). Individuals who are part of identity groups in society that are “tolerated,” rather than appreciated, face restrictions when exercising their liberty because the knowledge they have—connected to their embodiment—is devalued and curtailed by those who hold power and “tolerate” (Tóth, 2018).

Mitchell et al. (2014) research on the reinforcement of supposed normativity in educational strategies which are designed to purportedly support diversity is crucial to my argument here. Drawing on mainstream educational contexts in the United States, Mitchell, Snyder, and Ware suggest that the reproduction of normalization is often a central aspect of educational policy that seeks to supposedly promote diversity. Through the assumption that species-typical ways of being are most desirable, “cripistemologies”—knowledge arising as a direct result of disabled embodiment—are shunned (p. 304). Within their concept of inclusionism, Mitchell and Snyder (2015) examine how governmental strategies purportedly aiming to support citizenship for all are frequently ostentatious:

By inclusionism we mean to identify a term specifically associated with disabled bodies operative in the policy world of neoliberalism. Most significantly, inclusionism has found its most robust rhetorical home within the myriad diversity missions advanced by public education. Inclusionism has come to mean an embrace of diversity-based practices by which we include those who look, act, function, and feel different; yet our contention here is that inclusionism obscures at least as much as it reveals.

Mitchell and Snyder's (2015) concept of inclusionism is instrumental to the focus on disability and citizenship values, which is presented in this article. Mitchell and Snyder (p. 13) suggest that normative expectations, for example, maintaining an appearance that does not challenge expected social aesthetics and participating in paid employment, are treated as tantamount with the “privileges of citizenship.” An essential aspect within the feminist disability studies approach employed in this article is unpicking dominant values and expectations associated with citizenship, in the U.K. context. Paying attention to disabled women's lived experiences is an essential aspect of this process process as embodied knowledge is recognized as a powerful tool in revaluing, resisting, and “restructuring” hegemonic control (Jung, 2011).

This article emphasizes how the embodied values and experiences of disabled women can be used to create manifestos for reevaluating understandings of citizenship. As Goodley (2011, p. 716) highlights, thinking about the relationship between the self and social oppression creates better understanding of how societal marginalization is, “... felt physically, subjectively and emotionally but is always socially, culturally, politically and economically produced.”



## Methodology

A qualitative methodological approach, influenced by the recognition of disabled people's lived knowledge as a tool that can be used to destabilize seemingly "neutral" knowledge and practices in society (Lester & Nusbaum, 2018), was taken in this research. Qualitative approaches to research are characteristically identified by a desire to gather rich interpretations of the world and social phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Indeed, a defining feature of feminist research is commitment to working with and for women, in order to produce research that interprets women's complex experiences of their positioning in society (Abrams, 2018). In both feminist and disability studies circles, the capacity of qualitative research to recognize multiple interpretations of phenomena fits well with an understanding of gender and disability as socially constructed (O'Day & Killeen, 2002). Moreover, researchers undertaking critical qualitative inquiry operate from an ethical and activist foundation and seek to cultivate research focusing on "human beings as universal singulars, individuals, and groups universalising in their singularity the transformative life experiences of their historical moment" (Denzin, 2017, p. 9).

The research design in the original research project consisted of two main phases. In both phases, a small sample of multimedia (print and television) advertisements (n.9) featuring women with either mobility impairment, mental health issues, or visual impairment was featured. The impairment categories were selected as they were the most recurrent when searches for "disab\* women/woman/female advert UK US\*" and "women/female with impairments advert UK US\*" were conducted via worldwide internet search engines. However, it is noted that the chosen impairment categories are rudimentary and are not inclusive of a rich spectrum of impairment identities. Advertisements were only selected if they featured a disabled woman as the sole or main character and if they were produced in the UK or US post-2000. The final sample was selected on the basis that the advertisements were produced by a variety of different organizations, for example, fashion companies, television broadcasters, charitable organizations, and pharmaceutical companies. The first phase was based on my analyses of advertisements, via application of textual, critical, and multimodal discourse analyses. Data from the first phase are not included in this article. Instead, focus is given to participant responses to advertising representations (n.4) of disabled women and approaches to the promotion of "diversity" and "inclusion," in order to draw parallels between the performative nature of "inclusion" in FBV.

The second phase focused on the collection of empirical data through individual and one-off semi-structured interviews with a purposively selected sample (n.15) of disabled women. A small participant sample was used in order to enable close and detailed analysis of disabled women's beliefs and stories. Participants were recruited via mailing lists relating to advertising, media, disability studies, and women's studies. A potential limitation relating to the recruitment strategy is that participants were substantially more likely to be familiar with critical approaches to advertising representations of disabled women, due to their participation in such mailing lists. However, the



only criterion for participation in the research was that participants were 18+ and self-identified as disabled women. Participants reported different social backgrounds, levels of education, and career pathways. During interviews, participants were shown advertisements featuring women with the same impairment they identify with and were asked six open-ended questions. The questions were designed to prompt participant analyses of key themes in advertisements, whether or not they believed the advertisements provided a useful or problematic representation of disability and gender, and whether they could relate any of the own personal experience to the advertising content.

Each interview was transcribed and narrative analysis was applied to transcripts, in order to outline dominant and reoccurring narratives for each participant. A sociological-based approach to narrative analysis was undertaken, as opposed to enacting a linguistics-based approach. In other words, attention was paid to the way in which participants interpreted, internalized, and resisted societal ideologies and practices, in the stories that they shared—as opposed to closely examining exact words, terms, and linguistic features of participant stories. In accessing the narratives of disabled women, it is not suggested that the opportunity to uncover the “psyches” of participants is realized (Silverman, 2013, p. 325). Instead, direct participant narratives are appreciated as a means of deepening understanding of disabled women’s experiences of oppression and responses to sociocultural stereotypes. As Silverman (2013) cautions, qualitative researchers must be careful not to assume that participant data reflect unfiltered human experience. Rather, when individuals recount past experiences, their words are always socially and culturally mediated, and impacted by the presence of a researcher.

Moving forward, the following sections present discussion of the research findings. Two overarching themes, centered on participant resistance of sociocultural stereotypes of disabled women as “passive” and “dependent,” and participant navigation of “belonging,” are examined.

## **Discussion of Findings**

### ***“If You’re Disabled, You Have to Be Grateful, You Have to Be Passive, and You Have to Be Brave”***

Participants’ resistance to stereotypes of disabled women as passive and dependent in advertisements emerges as a key theme across the data. Significantly, participant criticisms of advertising portrayals of disabled women as “dependent” and “passive” connect with problematic citizenship discourses, such as those supported in Labour’s (2005) Improving life chances for disabled people report, depicting disabled people as less-powerful and part of “the culture of dependency and low expectations (10).” Filtering through participants’ problematization of portrayals of disabled women as “pitiable” was the concern that nondisabled audiences may engage with the advertisements and feel sympathetic toward disabled people.

Exploring advertising representations of disabled women prompted one participant, Joanna (pseudonyms used for all participants)—who has completed a PhD and has mobility impairment—to reflect on disability stereotypes traditionally reflected in culture: “...because of my age - I’m middle-aged - I would have grown up on all those awful childhood books which teach you, when you are a child, that if you’re disabled, you have to be grateful, you have to be passive, and you have to be brave...” Here, Joanna outlines the prevalence of cultural portrayals featuring disabled people as those who inherently “receive,” rather can “contribute.” Such approaches to disabled people, embedded in culture, cannot be ignored when considering how those who are disabled continue to be viewed as a potential “risk” in socioeconomic contexts (Waldschmidt & Sépulchre, 2019).

Annie, who is a university student and has visual impairment, was frustrated by an advertisement produced by *The Guide Dogs Association*. The television advertisement depicts a woman—Emma—who has visual impairment and is joined by her two young children and guide dog, who is named Jazz. In the advertisement, references are made to Jazz as “special” and “clever.” Emma’s young son (who narrates a section of the advertisement) talks about going to the park and shopping with his mother and suggests that, without Jazz, she would be unable to do so. Annie suggested that the advertisement’s portrayal of visual impairment led to her feeling patronized:

I think *Guide Dogs*’ representation of visually impaired people is absolutely dreadful. It’s patronising and... it makes me cringe. I’m thinking of, again, “normal” [quotes signed] people watching those advertisements and thinking, ‘oh, those poor blind people’. I think that’s what *Guide Dogs*’ are going for though – the sympathy... “these poor blind people, they can’t do anything without their dogs” [sarcastic tone].

Finklestein (1998) suggests that a problematic binary, positioning disabled people as needy and supposedly nondisabled people as self-sufficient is often reinforced in society. Annie expresses her frustration at the way in which the makers of the advertisement reinforce disabled people as belonging in a “culture of dependency.” In highlighting how “normal” people may respond to the advertisement’s depiction of a disabled woman as dependent on her guide-dog, Annie demonstrates how disabled people may internalize dominant citizenship discourses that reinforce notions of the “able” citizen—who is “fit and able” (Meekosha & Dowse, 1997), and can contribute contribute, rather than “depend” on society (Hughes, 2015).

Another participant, Fran—who has completed postgraduate studies and has visual impairment—similarly described the advertisement’s portrayal of a disabled woman as “patronising” and “disempowering.” Fran was skeptical of the approach taken by the makers of the advertisement to fundraising. In her words, “look how cute the [guide dog] puppies are: give us some money.” Here, Fran identifies how the guide dogs are being used in the commodification of sympathy. At the same time as they are being encouraged to experience sympathy for those who have visual impairment and are assumedly unable to take their children to the park or shopping, the audience are

being persuaded to donate to *The Guide Dogs Association*, so that they are able to “supposedly alleviate” the circumstances of people with visual impairment. Representations of disabled people as receivers of “good-will” gestures and charitable donations provide a background for common assumptions in citizenship discourses that disabled people are less able to economically contribute to society and, as such, are relegated to spaces of “counterfeit citizenship” (Hughes, 2015, p. 992).

Despite identifying advertising representations that problematically portray disabled women as passive, and discussing cultural attitudes that equate disability with dependency, participants took opportunities to reassert themselves as self-empowered. For instance, J.K.—who works in education and has visual impairment—articulated how she has brought about her own success in life:

I was declared legally blind before I went to university and got a bachelor’s degree... And I got my masters and that also included a lot of reading and fieldwork, so getting out and going places... I want to live my life – I don’t just want to sit around and wait for something to happen...

Furthermore, when engaging with *The Guide Dogs Association* advertisement, J.K. appreciated the portrayal of a woman with visual impairment being able to enjoy more activities with her children, with assistance from her guide dog. During our interview, J.K. referred positively to assistive technology on a few occasions and said that she favored advertisements which portray disabled people as able to be more independent, with assistance from technology. In the below excerpt, J.K. appears eager for myths surrounding disabled people as dependent to be dispelled:

It’s helpful to show the situations of, “hey, this person is completely blind but by using this technology, you know, she can still earn a living and support herself.” I think that’s also important - I think some prejudices of some people are, “my taxes are affording you to live in this area or do something,” which isn’t really true, you know? We have our own technology, we can work, we can do anything you can do.

As explored in an earlier section of this article, in order to be recognized as citizens, many disabled people face processes which they must “prove” that they are responsible and contributing citizens—a key focus of which rests on the capacity of disabled individuals to partake in paid employment (Soldatic & Meekosha, 2011). As such, a punitive and assessment-based approach to citizenship is enacted. This results in pressures on disabled people to demonstrate why and how they are worthy of value, rather than directing attention to sociocultural structures and attitudes that sustain disabled people’s oppression in society. In the above excerpt, J.K. highlights her academic achievements in order to counteract the assumption that disabled people cannot be self-sufficient. By highlighting her educational successes, J.K. defends her position as a “worthy” member of society. Here, J.K. is keen to disrupt the deficit and pity-based attitudes often targeted toward people with impairments. In declaring her identity as a

disabled woman, and then bringing attention to her educational achievements, J.K. destabilizes the equation often made between disabled people and dependency.

### *Disabled Women's Navigation of "Belonging"*

A core theme emerging from the data surrounds participant suspicion of tokenistic approaches to disability in advertising and society more broadly. Tokenistic representations of disabled people—which can be interpreted as the integration of disability in a minor way that does not substantially alter standard practices—strongly resonates with the critique of FBV as evoking performative inclusion of marginalized groups in society. This form of superficial integration of marginalized groups, such as disabled people, is a key premise of inclusionism (Mitchell & Snyder, 2015).

A key way in which participants resisted superficial attempts in advertisements to supposedly include and support disabled women was by defining their disabled embodiment as a “normal” part of their lives. A core feature of this theme is participant sharing of “cripistemologies”—the subjective knowledge they hold regarding their disabled embodiment (Mitchell et al., 2014). Participants did not reflect the idea that a certain type of person, for example, a white, middle-class, university educated male should represent a “normal” standard that individuals are required to meet (Davis, 1995). Rather, instead of adhering to a “manufactured” notion of normality and belonging, participants illustrated their embodiment and subjective experiences as worthy of recognition in themselves, rather than falling into the realms of “inspirational” and “exceptional.”

One participant, Penelope, who is in her 30s, has mobility impairment and is a university graduate, suggested that bodily impairment is often appropriated as a symbol of diversity and “difference” in advertising. In Penelope’s words, “What I find interesting is when you look at adverts the thing that they’re picking out are impairments that are not normative, everything else is very normative. So, they have to draw the attention to that impairment...” Here, Penelope articulates how impairment is used by the makers of ads as a “sign” of diversity to present the impression that their brand is forward-thinking, inclusive, and one that will enable consumers, if they buy into the brand, to profit from association with a “progressive” approach. This process is reminiscent of FBV, in particular, the way in which certain values are posited as a means to “support” societal cohesion and inclusion of marginalized identity groups. By “buying into” FBV, citizens are given the illusion that they have the opportunity to be part of an inclusive and progressive society.

Moreover, Helen—who is a postgraduate student and has mobility impairment—addressed how disabled women are often included in advertising campaigns supposedly supporting diversity, only if they largely subscribe to traditional notions of “beauty.” Helen’s critical exploration of advertisements that capitalize on themes of nonconformance and diversity, yet feature models who mostly meet normative bodily expectations and beauty standards, connects strongly to tolerance of diversity:

[In response to Kenneth Cole's advertisement, featuring Mullins]... You have to look at it very closely to even realise she is wearing prosthetic legs... people might not sometimes notice that she is wearing prosthetics. I would say often she has the ability to appear as normal, or as without impairment... We're [disabled women] only included in advertisements if we subscribe to certain, very narrow, beauty standards... I understand why some people would want to pass as normal sometimes and I don't judge them for it. But trying to create an advertisement that embraces diversity and making it seem like there is no diversity, is almost contradictory... [Referring to the advertisement's key message] "We're all normal and we're all different." Which isn't a very, at least for me, revolutionary message at all. Yes, we all walk in different shoes [quoting advertising tagline] - it's true - but barriers aren't put into everyone's way...

Here, Helen identifies the process of bringing something (disabled embodiment) "in" that was previously "out" (of advertising campaigns). She articulates how disabled women are only featured in advertisements if they emulate nondisabled embodiment. Helen's argument connects strongly with Hodkinson and Ghajarieh (2014, p. 54) discussion of totalization, whereby the body with impairments is featured in "smoothed out" images that "constrain individualisation." Moreover, Helen's analysis demonstrates how tolerance of diversity that results in markers of diversity being imperceptible, is interpreted as "contradictory." Invoked here is Mitchell and Snyder (2015) suggestion that neoliberal "inclusion" of disabled people is founded upon a process of making disabled bodies appear "unapparent."

It is not to say that Helen does not view her life as belonging in the realms of normality: "impairment is the mundane for me, it's not the extraordinary. I see how other people don't view it as the ordinary but in my everyday life, it's my normality." Similarly presenting "normality" as subjective experience, Alice, a woman who works for a charity organization and has visual impairment, described how disabled women are often tied to inspirational narratives, despite leading "normal" lives. In her words, "We [women with visual impairment] have normal lives... we just do normal things. I think it's that thing that you have to be inspirational in order to be validated... 'Inspirational' is actually quite an alienating term." Here, Alice aims to break down the boundary between nondisabled/uninspiring and disabled/inspirational. Alice recognizes how the process of casting disabled people as inspirational supports the separation of people with impairments from "normal" life and citizenship.

When analyzing an advertisement produced by *The Dame Kelly Holmes Trust*, featuring Haleemah, who is a young woman who has visual impairment and has recently organized a fashion show, with support from the Trust—Alice contextualizes her point that women with visual impairment lead "normal" lives:

I think it's [the advertisement's portrayal of a disabled woman] fairly positive actually... there isn't really a lot of tendency for disabled women, especially blind women, to be associated with the fashion industry and stuff like that. This perspective of Haleemah being part of that was quite normalised really – it wasn't really made into anything special. It is

just showing how someone has got their confidence back... she isn't really portrayed as some "poor blind girl". She's just a regular individual. I kind of liked that.

Alice's message that visual impairment is part of her normality echoes Helen's description of impairment as a "mundane" part of her life. Both women keenly described their disabled embodiment as an unexceptional part of their everyday experience. For Alice, when disabled women are tied into "inspirational" narratives, prejudice is negatively doubled. Not only is the individual perceived as a "poor blind girl," but the suggestion that the individual is inspirational because they are supposedly defeating their embodiment inherently separates the person from being a "regular individual" who does not have to do so. Here, Alice and Helen position their lives and disabled embodiment as part of regular experience. In doing so, both women resist the boundary between those who are supposedly "able" and those who are "disabled." In defending their life experiences as "mundane" and "normal," Alice and Helen seek to define their selfhoods on their own terms, rather than being cast into the position of disabled "other." Alice and Helen's revaluation of their disabled embodiment as an affirmative feature of their lives is helpful when resisting governmental rhetoric, such as FBV, that understand equality through a lens of "sameness," rather than paying respect to the knowledge of marginalized identity groups, such as disabled women.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, in this article FBV have been investigated as indicative of a culture of conformity, rather than a tool which can be used to include a wide spectrum of identity groups in society. In particular, Mitchell and Snyder's (2015) concept of "inclusionism" has been used to investigate how the value of "tolerance" sustains unequal power relations between those who "tolerate" and those who are "tolerated." By drawing on the narratives of disabled women and their responses to disabling and gendered stereotypes present in advertising representations of women with impairments, the notion of marginalized identity groups, such as disabled women, as "counterfeit citizens" (Hughes, 2015, p. 993) has been critically challenged. Moreover, in identifying and challenging sociocultural stereotypes surrounding disabled women that are present in "pro-diversity" advertisements, participants have resisted superficial approaches to inclusion and redefined disabled embodiment as a "normal" part of life, and valuable on its own terms.

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