Interdisciplinary Disability Studies

DISABILITY AND NEOLIBERAL STATE FORMATIONS

Karen Soldatic

Disability and Neoliberal State Formations

Disability and Neoliberal State Formations explores the trajectory of neoliberalism in Australia and its impact on the lives of Australians living with disability, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It examines the emergence, intensification and normalisation of neoliberalism across a 20-year period, distilling the radical changes to disability social security and labour-market law, policy and programming, and the enduring effects of the incremental tightening of disability eligibility carried out by Australian governments since the early 2000s.

Incorporating qualitative interviews with disabled people, disability advocates, services and the policy elite, alongside extensive documentary material, this book brings to the fore the compounding effects of neoliberal reforms for disabled people's well-being and participation. The work is of international significance as it illustrates the importance of looking beyond the UK, European Union and the USA to critically understand the historical development and policy mobility of disability neoliberal retraction from smaller economies, such as Australia, to the global economic centre.

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Karen Soldatic

First published 2019
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN: 978-1-4724-6018-9 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-57731-9 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman
by codeMantra

For my grandmother, my mother and my daughter

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Acknowledgements

First, I would like to acknowledge the research participants who have agreed, over the last 15 years, to participate in this research from across Australia. They have all given their time in the hope that this research will enable a more socially just system that garners social solidarity, respect and recognition through sharing their stories and ongoing struggles in navigating the emergence, intensification and normalisation of neoliberal workfare. A number of disability advocacy and service organisations across the country have also been highly supportive, and I particularly would like to thank their staff for their continued commitment to this research. This includes Wendy Rose, Jenny Au Yeong, Rayna Lamb, Lucia Yu, Stephen ‘Baamba’ Albert, Marie Shinn, Marlena Kahika, Beverley Moreton, and Nihal and Zel Iscel. Through this research you have welcomed me into your homes, fed me, supported the work and openly offered enduring friendships. On this note, a special thank you to Helen Errington, lifelong friend and persistent engaged critic, who has remained seated by my side since this project began back in the early 2000s.

I acknowledge the generous financial support that enabled me to begin this work all those years ago, particularly the Fogarty Foundation in Western Australia and the Educational Excellence Three Year funding at the early stages (2005–2009), and numerous travel grants so that the project could realise its national intent. I am also grateful to the Australian Research Council for a three-year DECRA Fellowship (2016–2019), which has enabled me to re-embark on this research journey and examine more explicitly the implications of the neoliberalising Australian state for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who self-identify as living with a disability.

Over the years a network of colleagues, friends and scholars have been extremely generous with their time and energy, providing ongoing support to this project. Special thanks to Anne Chapman, who spent hours labouring over the research as my supervisor, always offering important challenges to the research; Nicole Stiles for her critical eye in the early iterations of this work; Carol Thomas and Helen Meekosha, who provided rich feedback as examiners of my PhD, which enabled me to further conceptually develop the project, providing a strong foundation for the latter years in the analysis

and framing; and Linda Briskman, Lucy Fiske, Caroline Fleay and Barbara Pini, who supported my initial ‘trialling and testing’ of academic life via a secondment to the Centre for Human Rights Education, Curtin University, in 2010. I especially want to acknowledge my incredible colleagues at the Disability Services Commission, Western Australia – Jenny Perkins, David Hounscome, Anne Lawson, Lynn Selepak, Francine Holder, Dianne Shepherd, Janet Parker, Judith Chernysh and Charles Duffil – for the years of incredible commitment and faith in the possibilities of the research when I began working in this policy space and for never being hesitant to offer strong critique and robust dialogue with collegiality, love and friendship.

This project has also benefited from extensive discussions with Shaun Grech, Niro Kandasamy, Chris Grover, Donna Reeve, Hannah Morgan, Mark Sherry, Alan Roulstone, Colin Barnes, John Gilroy, Imogen Tyler, Louise Fitzgerald, Marta Celleti, S. Janaka Biyanwila, Tim Rowse and Kelley Johnson, and the critical scholarship and collegiality of Gerard Goggin, Klaus Serr, Terri-Anne White, Greg Noble, Alan Morris, Shaun Wilson, David Mitchell, Sharon Snyder, Dan Goodley, Robert McRuer and Andrew Sayer.

I would also like to acknowledge the careful and thoughtful editing carried out by Kelly Somers and her dedication and commitment to the project over the years. You have waited patiently for every change, edit and, sometimes, even just some type of ‘movement’ as I slowly worked through the manuscript, and for reordering my disorder. Thank you.

Finally, I thank the publishers who gave permission, allowing me to republish some of the work produced over the years that, combined, makes this book possible. Excerpts in this book have previously appeared in the following publications:

Karen Soldatic and Barbara Pini 2009, ‘The three Ds of welfare reform: disability, disgust and deservingness’, *Australian Journal of Human Rights*, 15 (1), 77–95. Copyright © Australian Human Rights Centre, reprinted by permission of Taylor & Francis Ltd, <http://www.tandfonline.com> on behalf of Australian Human Rights Centre.

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Karen Soldatic and Hannah Morgan 2017, “‘The way you make me feel’: shame and the neoliberal governance of disability welfare subjectivities in Australia and the UK’, in J Louth and M Potter (eds) *Edges of identity: the production of neoliberal subjectivities*, 106–33. Chester: University of Chester Press. Reprinted by permission of University of Chester Press.

Karen Soldatic 2017, ‘Policy mobilities of exclusion: implications of Australian disability pension retraction for Indigenous Australians’, *Social Policy and Society*, 17 (1), 151–67. Reproduced with permission from Cambridge University Press.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ACE	Australian Competitive Employment
ACOSS	Australian Council of Social Service
ACROD	Australian Council for Rehabilitation of the Disabled
AIRC	Australian Industrial Relations Commission
APA	Australian Parent Advocacy Inc.
DEAC	Disability Employment Action Centre
DEWR	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
DPA	Disability Participation Alliance
DPOs	Disabled People's Organisations
DSP	Disability Support Pension
DSS	Department of Social Security
FaCS	Department of Family and Community Services
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NCID	National Council on Intellectual Disability
NHSNN	National High Support Needs Network
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PWD	Australia People with Disabilities Australia

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1 Introduction

Disability and Australian state formations

Societal notions of the body are located in time and space, and the socio-political environment of the day. Stone's (1981) seminal work on the Disabled State reveals the extent to which the emergence of the modern capitalist nation relies on the reclassification of the human body. In seeking out the mechanisms that classify and mark out bodies as disabled within state formations, this book examines disability as a socially constitutive collective class and identity with the emergence of the postmodern, neoliberal nation state. It builds on spatial-temporal, socio-relational arguments to identify disability and disablement as socially produced and reproduced oppression. In this book I explore those mechanisms that are integral to the consensus-building project occurring as neoliberalism grows in power and the strategies drawn upon to build popular support for the reconstitution of 'disability' under the neoliberal workfare state.

Disability has always been an integral part of the making of the Australian nation (Jakubowicz and Meekosha 2002). As disability scholars have theorised, the relationship between ethnicity, race and disability has underpinned the nation-building strategies of white settler societies, such as Australia (Jakubowicz and Meekosha 2002; Meekosha 2005). The formation of a White Australia, as a national 'body' politic, was the 'confluence of border controls and public health measures, underpinned by medical science' (Jakubowicz and Meekosha 2003, p. 180) and supported by the international hygiene movement, more commonly known as eugenics (Bashford 2004; Wyndham 2003). At the turn of the 20th century, eugenics, as science, medicine and social regulation, was a governing rationality (Baker 2002) and of strategic importance to the imperial colonial project (Bashford 2004). Promoting a range of mechanisms 'based upon scientific management systems' (Mitchell and Snyder 2003, p. 844) was central to excluding those bodies seen as inferior, unfit and impure in achieving 'national fitness' (Wyndham 2003). The *Immigration Restriction Act (1901)*, well known for its racialisation of border controls, also marked out 'any idiot or insane person' or 'any person suffering from an infectious or contagious disease of a loathsome or dangerous character'. The impaired immigrant, represented as a burden to the state (Gothard 1998), was a focus of powerful moral

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discourses and practices situating whiteness as moral biological purity, free from contagion (Soldatic and Fiske 2009).

Many second- and third-generation Australians like myself bear the stamp of these racialised and disabling ideologies and practices. My maternal grandmother was placed in institutional care during the height of the eugenics period in the 1940s and remained incarcerated until her death almost 40 years later. With my grandmother deemed unable to care for her children, my mother and her siblings were removed to an institution and then permanently placed in foster care with a white working class Australian family in the suburbs of western Sydney. As a result, my mother's existence has been a site of relentless negotiation. In addition to the institutionalisation of her childhood, the constant emotional upheavals of attempting to reconcile my maternal grandmother's 'madness' has shaped my mother's existence in both her cultural community and the broader community of White Australia. The internalisation of having to constantly defend one's integrity in these racialised and disabling environments has been mutually constitutive (Yuval-Davis 2007, p. 565), having a profound effect on my mother's subjectivity, her sense of self and, of course, her own parental practices of care.¹

As a child, I never really understood the significance of these practices of subjectivity and identity formation. I realised at school that I was 'different' but assumed this was associated with my parents' class and ethnic identity. It was not until more recently that I understood more clearly the relationship between my grandmother's disabled identity and my family's significant difference in both the Croatian migrant community and her new White-Australian family. The deep anguish associated with attempts to self-regulate the constant emotional barrage of love and shame shrouded not only my mother's being but how we were socialised, and thought of, by others.

At the age of eight, I was finally allowed to visit the institution where my grandmother lived. I often recall the car trip and the attendant pride I felt in learning that I had three grandmothers and not just two. The prospect of meeting another grandmother was completely exhilarating to me, and I recall running into her room to introduce myself – only to be told to 'slow down' and 'be quiet'. Inevitably, my feelings of excitement gave way to confusion and bewilderment. By the end of the visit, I was overwhelmed with disappointment. My eight-year-old self was frustrated by her unwillingness to look at or even talk to me as well as angry that this was not the mysterious third grandmother I had hoped to brag about at school. I kept wondering why she could barely speak in any language, let alone English, and why she refused to look at me. It is this moment on which I always reflect.

I now understand that her behaviour was an outward manifestation of the toll that long-term incarceration had taken on her soul (Rose 1999), which was likely exacerbated by the extensive use of so-called therapeutic interventions (Jarman et al. 2002). I often wonder about the possibilities that may have awaited my grandmother as an individual had her circumstances

been different, and also on imagining the different journey that could have been for all of us had there not been so much social stigma attached to her 'mad' existence. On reflection, I am now inclined to suggest that the subjectification of racialised and disabling practices passes from parents to their children (Garon 2004).² Moreover, while we accept in sociological inquiry the role of hegemonic national cultures in racialising identities in second-generation immigrants (Lappalainen 2009), it may be that the disabled subjectivity is similarly intergenerational, as other authors, such as Lennard Davis (1995), have previously suggested. This process of embodiment has shaped who I am, and it is this political subjectivity that determines the framing of this research.

This book, however, is not an auto-ethnographic one. My motivation here is different and emerges from my worker identity within the 'disability industry'. The journey of this research began when the service provider I worked for participated in the first round of federally funded trials to move civil society providers from block funding to outcomes-based funding. Being part of this trial made me acutely aware of the kinds of practices that were emerging in the social field due to new funding restraints and of the resultant effects on social relations between workers and disabled job-seekers. As a worker, it appeared to me that 'disability' and who was defined as disabled were being reconstituted. The body appeared to be undergoing a new process of social stratification as I repeatedly observed service workers and management selectively divide, sort and classify individuals into those who could meet the trial's funding outcomes and those who could not. Questions such as which bodies were worthy of social investment through publicly funded services and what types of service they should receive were disregarded in some instances but heavily contested in others.

In every attempt to answer these questions, I was aware that part of my own humanity and possibly my concern for other human beings was being slowly eroded. As a service worker and human being, I developed significant concerns about the role of publicly funded service provision and citizenship rights. If citizenship is underpinned by notions of rights and entitlements (Barbalet 1998; Stainton 2002) then, within the new funding regime, consideration of one's right to treatment with dignity and respect becomes paramount (White 2004). In the new funding environment, however, it was precisely this right that appeared to be under greatest threat. As Nussbaum (2001, 2004) argues, social institutions play a vital role in our quest to reach our full capacity as human beings. It follows, then, that institutions also have the power to undermine and dismiss our human potential; disability employment services is one such institution. Governed by legal frameworks and funded publicly, disability employment providers purport to represent the interests of disabled people in reaching their full potential by supporting their participation in the labour market as a means to redress their severe levels of material disadvantage and dependent class status. It was this quest for exploring what it takes to be human (Archer 2000; Nussbaum 2001,

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2004, 2007) that led me beyond the general policy debates on ‘welfare to work’ to what social theorists such as Sayer (2000a, 2001) have attempted to renew in the exploration of the moral economy of society. They suggest that processes of moralisation are deeply embedded in political representation and that these forms of representation move from macrostructures to shape and frame micro-social relations of everyday life. It is the link between macrostructural processes of moralisation in the development of one’s identity and the subjective experience of the ‘self’ within this context that this book seeks to explore.

Thinking through disability: theoretical framings

Although the disability studies field has a fairly recent history within sociological inquiry, it is already contested terrain. Critical disability studies emerged from the disability movement’s standpoint and response to Western medical models of disability. It can be broadly split into two main strands of theorising: idealist theories and materialist accounts of disability. Casting disability analysis within a social frame, idealist theories have been highly influential in theorising the relationship between the impaired body and society, hereby demonstrating the significance of power relations, particularly between institutions, professionals and disabled people (see Tremain 2005), and cultural representations of the impaired/disabled body (see Garland-Thomson 1996, 1997; Murray 2008; Riddell and Watson 2003; Siebers 2002). Drawing on the work of Goffman (1963), and more recently Butler (1993, 1999), Foucault (1970, 1973, 1977, 1989) and Rose (1996, 1999), this body of work emphasises the role of social attitudes, aesthetics, cultural discourses, discursive structures and representation in determining and conditioning the social experience of living with an impairment. While Foucault may have objected to being termed an idealist rather than a cultural materialist, the focus of his work in these idealist theoretical accounts is exclusively within the domain of discourses and the cultural realm. In nearly all these works, disability is viewed as a social construct that arises in line with modern medical discourses on body and minds and, in its most extreme form, the body is seen as a social text requiring deconstruction (see Galvin 2004b; Rapley 2001). Actively questioning the ‘master narrative of the body’ (Sennett 1994, p. 15), this work has sought to deconstruct and problematise the medical discourses and discursive structures that ‘come to be internalised by disabled people’ (Snyder and Mitchell 2006, p. 7). Idealist analysis is thus focussed on the making of the disabled subject, grounded in identity politics and the struggle for recognition (Lawson 2001).

Many disabled people, however, object to the extreme form of cultural constructivism of the body that underpins many idealist accounts of disablement (Abberley 1991), arguing that there is a ‘materiality to social practices’ (Gleeson 1999, p. 21). In line with the growing number of disabled people who have called for the recognition of impairment as a real

ontological state, there is a need to theorise the material practices that disable impaired people in everyday life, in addition to those cultural discourses and discursive structures that constitute normate-disabled relations. Such an argument seeks to separate and ensure that the ontological reality of our bodies is not conflated with discursive epistemological construction of its meaning in everyday life and practice (Williams 1999). Materialist theorising on disability first emerged from the scholarship of disability activists in the UK (Abberley 1987, 1991, 1999, 2002; Barnes and Mercer 2003, 2005; Finkelstein 1980, 2001; Oliver 1986, 1990, 1996; Thomas 2002, 2004, 2007). In conceptualising *what* disability *is*, these activists/scholars have argued that impairment should be defined separately from disability in order to shift the focal point of analysis from the medical diagnosis of the body to those societal structures that disable, exclude and oppress people with impairments (Thomas 2004). Mike Oliver's definition, probably the most cited in both activist and scholarly work, conceptualises the distinction between impairment and disability as:

Impairment, lacking part of or all of a limb, or having a defective limb, organism or mechanism of the body;

Disability, the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organisation which takes no or little account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from the mainstream of social activities.

(Oliver 1990, p. 11)

Materialists conceptualise disability as produced through the social relations of society (Abberley 1999; Barnes 1997; Barnes and Mercer 2005; Clear and Gleeson 2001; Gleeson 1999; Oliver 1990; Russell 1998, 2001; Thomas 1999).

Materialist theorising on disability has illustrated the historical link between the capitalist mode of production, the commodification of labour and the management of impaired bodies within this context, and the relationship of those bodies to state-regulating regimes (Gleeson 1997, 1999; Oliver 1990). With the capitalist appropriation of surplus value from the production process, those who are not able to meet the production demands of society have been increasingly marginalised (Russell 2001). From a Marxist theory of surplus value, the exploitation of labour is achieved through the expropriation of surplus labour, that is, the differential value of wages paid to the value of the commodity sold in the market place (Wood 1995). The rise of industrial capitalism brought with it changing work practices and a restructuring of the production process, creating conditions for a pool of 'uncompetitive workers who were eventually incarcerated in the new institutional system of workhouses, hospitals and asylums' (Gleeson 1997, p. 195). Drawing on Marx's conception of nature, Gleeson (1999, p. 53) defines impairment as first nature and disability as second nature in order to

articulate the way societies produce and reproduce structures that condition and ‘transform impaired first nature as disablement’. For this group of theorists, the focus is on the politics of distribution to identify the necessary social and institutional measures of egalitarian redistribution required to redress those social injustices that disable impaired people in an unjust capitalist political economy. Within the capitalist political economy, work and the labour process represents the key area of struggle for social equality, citizenship and material well-being (Abberley 1996, 1999, 2002; Barnes 1999; Barnes and Mercer 2005; Grover and Piggott 2005; Roulstone and Barnes 2005; Thornton 2005).

Increasingly, however, divisions between materialist accounts of disablement and the struggles within the cultural realm are being contested (Butler and Parr 1999; Danermark and Coniavitis Gellerstedt 2004; Jakubowicz and Meekosha 2002; Mladenov 2017). Many disabled feminists have argued extensively that the insights offered by materialism cannot account for the gendered component of the disabled identity (see Crow 1996; Fine and Asch 1988; Ghai 2003; Meekosha 2002; Morris 1991; Wendell 1996, 2001). Challenging both materialist and idealist conceptualisations, it appears ever more plausible to argue that disability is a social collectivity of complexity, that the struggles for recognition and egalitarian redistribution are deeply intertwined and that representational politics is a central component of this regulating nexus which is often not captured in critical depth. Conceptualisations of disability need to account for the intertwining constitutive practices of the three Rs – the politics of representation, redistribution and recognition – in disabled people’s struggles for justice, rights and social affirmation. Importantly, this picture reveals that state-regulating regimes of disability anchored in Western normative notions of the body depict a dialectical relationship between the cultural symbolic role of disability and capitalist class relations that position disability as a dependent group, on the one hand, and those political representative processes that maintain state relations of power, on the other.

Fraser (1995, 2007) refers to social collectivities as bivalent, where the process of social oppression and subordination is structurally located in both the capitalist political economy, in forms of cultural valuation, and political representative structures of state institutional power. While Fraser’s work has focussed mostly on gender, sexuality, class and race, as Mladenov (2017) has argued in relation to disability in the former socialist states of Eastern Europe, this multilayered analysis of disability as a collectivity is pivotal in bringing forth the social struggles situated within neoliberal re-regulation of disability as a state population category and its transformative effects. As Mladenov (2017) has teased out, this approach enriches the historical analysis of the significance of disability to state-regulating regimes as it effectively challenges the analysis to explore the mutually constitutive processes and mechanisms that harness normative positionalities of the human body. Such positioning elucidates the dispossession of disabled people under the

capitalist political economy with the emergence, intensification and normalisation of neoliberal re-regulating structures of state power.

Finally, as the recent work of scholars such as Tyler (2013) have illustrated, the role of emotions as normative judgements of value has been articulated as a politicised technology building popular consensus within the polity for neoliberal re-regulation. Emotions as normative evaluative judgements act as the moral public justification for the stigmatisation and debasement of different body types (Tyler 2013). Emotions emerge from our social existence, inseparable from their broader social and cultural locations, and are interconnected with our material conditionalities (Sayer 2005). By moving to the realm of normative evaluative judgements, we are, as Sayer (2003, 2005) has argued, expanding the material analysis to include the realm of moral economy. To reiterate Vike (1997, p. 197), ‘moral discourses are meta-discourses of power and legitimacy’. Therefore, this book hopes to illustrate the inter-relationship between the cultural–symbolic realm, the political economy and moral discourses with the emergence, intensification and normalisation of disability neoliberalisation, all of which operate conjointly in a complex interplay as regulating discourses and practices (Sayer 2003; Vike 1997). From here, we can begin to theorise on a range of emotions – such as disgust, shame and resentment – that operate as meta-discourses of power which normalise the worst excesses of neoliberal dispossession and structural violence.

I argue that by theorising the affective realm of neoliberal politics and its harnessing of processes of medicalisation to socially re-regulate impaired bodies, it becomes possible to reveal a neoliberal moral economy of disability. The participants of this research reveal that neoliberal affective politics is not reducible to either the idealist or materialist accounts (Vike 1997). We can clearly establish which emotions, as normative evaluative judgements, make the dispossession of some bodies acceptable within the public realm and begin to make the theoretical link between the moral economy of disability and social relational accounts of disablement. It becomes possible to meet Thomas’s (1999, 2002) call to expand the sociological accounts of disability to acknowledge the important role of emotions, as moral discourses of power, in transforming state regulations of disability with the hegemony of neoliberal restructuring.

Neoliberal workfare: the new state formation

Neoliberalism is often described as a system of governance, of economic reordering, that legitimises new forms of capitalist maldistribution from the poor to the rich, coupled with an ideological mapping that trumps the individual over collective concerns of the good, the just, inequality, poverty and deprivation. Its most transformative effect is the normalisation of new forms of citizen dispossession and abjection (Tyler 2015).

The global beginnings of neoliberalism as a real, material, ideological political possibility arose in the 1970s with the breaking of the old world order,

established at the end of the Second World War among Western powers, to impose new forms of global economic power under the tensions of Cold War politics. In Australia the neoliberal moment occurred around 1975, by which time the national Labor government had begun to disband its commitment to socially just redistributive social provisioning (Cass 2005) due to a deep economic recession, triggered by the growing Fordist crisis of production that led globally to an exponential rise in unemployment (Peck 2001). The enduring fiscal crises of the state, elaborated through a political discourse of statistical panic to garner broadscale popular support, led to a highly divisive change of government. The new Coalition government set about actively discrediting the prevailing Keynesian hegemony (Shaver 1989). Neoliberalism was slowly secured through incremental reforms by both conservative and Labor governments over the next 20 years, and intensified under the radical conservatism of the Coalition government of 1996–2007. Prime Minister John Howard instigated a widespread campaign to advance neoliberal social policy measures across all spheres of social life (Bessant et al. 2006), leading to the dismantling of rights for a diverse range of social groups, including women, refugees, people with disabilities and Indigenous Australians (Carney 2003, 2006; Maddison 2008; Parker 2007; Penovic and Dastyari 2007; Nevile 2008). Neoliberalism has since become normalised as policy convention across all areas of Australian life (see Serr 2017). Incremental refinement of neoliberal disability governance has occurred with broadscale political support, even against moments of public contestation.

The emergence of neoliberalism, with its focus on retracting state redistributive power alongside harnessing the labour power of citizens, that is, putting individuals to work, coalesces with the rise of the disability rights movement for equality and economic participation on a par with so-called able-bodied citizens (Roulstone and Morgan 2009). As French and Swain contend (2008), while these two movements have disparate aims for disabled people, their focal point around disabled people's enduring inequality, perpetuated through disabled people's exclusion from the labour market and the resultant effects of entrenched poverty and dependence on welfare, has at times led to an uncomfortable convergence (Soldatic and Meekosha 2012). Neoliberalism's foregrounding of economic participation via the labour market as a duty of citizenship (Bessant 2000; Goodin 2002; Peck 2001; Skeggs 2004; Schram et al. 2008) is, however, quite distinct from the disability movement's claim for the right to work (Grover and Piggott 2010; Malhotra 2006; Roulstone and Barnes 2005; Soldatic and Pini 2012; Zames Fleischer and Zames 2001). Disability activism has targeted policies of redistribution, the political sphere of representation and the affirmative realm of identity recognition and affirmation for disabled people's citizenship, whereas neoliberalism has advanced strategies of de-democratisation by enforcing economic participation through various forms of compliance, coercion and welfare compacts.

Nearly all Western liberal democracies have undertaken large-scale disability policy restructuring in line with neoliberal welfare policy trends. While there is a multiplicity of local variations and deviations, international policy converges around the restructuring of disability social security entitlements, with the primary aim of steering disabled people off disability pensions and into the open labour market (Grover and Piggott 2010). ‘Workfare’, in its full articulation, first surfaced in North America under the Reagan administration but came into full effect in the US during the Clinton administration with the passage of the *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act 1996* (Abramovitz 2006, p. 339). Workfare is now part of an international project (Haylett 2003, p. 765) promoted through global policy institutes such as the OECD and IMF (Humpage 2007, p. 220). In the UK, the Blair Labour government developed its ‘making work pay’ strategy and its New Deal policy (Cook et al. 2001; Finn 2000, 2002; Peck 2001; Walker and Wiseman 2003), while Canada (Peck 2001) and Australia (Cass 2005; Castles 2001; Goodin 2002; Harris 2001, 2002; Humpage 2007; Shaver 2001) have taken similar paths. Considine (2001) has argued that Australia appears to have taken the most radical path of all in reforming its welfare institutions, and in turn, inequality is now greater than at any other time in Australia’s history (ACOSS 2016).

Workfare restructuring has established new understandings of citizenship (Shaver 2002). Citizenship ‘rights and entitlements’ have been redefined as citizenship ‘responsibilities and obligations’ (Goodin 2002); this reconceptualisation is reflected in the neoliberal populist mantra of ‘no rights without responsibilities’ (Fiske and Briskman 2007). Under this policy framework, access to social entitlements is no longer based on need or necessity. Citizens receiving welfare are forced to earn their social entitlements through participation in the labour market (Peck 2001) as paid work is promoted as the highest form of citizen responsibility (Lister 2001).

The centrality of work within neoliberal workfare citizenship debates is constructed on able-bodied, masculine notions of care, work and productivity. The core of the neoliberal argument is that any job, no matter its conditions, hours or pay is a job worth having (Peck and Theodore 2000). For many disabled people who have extensive personal care needs, and especially in the case of women with disabilities who may provide multiple forms of care for themselves and others, workfare is a highly pervasive policy strategy further stigmatising the subjective experience of the self and the body. Care for the nation, exhibited through performing paid work within the labour market, becomes the highest form of citizen responsibility (Soldatic 2013), while people receiving welfare who perform care for themselves and for others are denied the validity of this form of social participation (Haylett 2003; Frohmader et al. 2014; McInnes 2007). Shaming into compliance is a common feature of the coercive regulating regime (Soldatic and Morgan 2017). As legitimising discourse, neoliberal workfare not only individualises but also directly blames those who are suffering from

structural disadvantage (Tyler 2013). The lack of a job is articulated as a private moral failure. Moralising structural disadvantage reinforces existing social divisions (Martin 2007) while reconstituting new social hierarchies. For disabled people, the deliberate ‘misrecognition’ of their structural exclusion from the labour market further entrenches their enduring position of poverty, which is more pronounced for women with disabilities and Indigenous Australians living with disability (Soldatic and Sykes 2017). Other discriminatory issues, such as accessible transport or personal care support within the workplace that facilitate disabled people’s employment participation, are rarely acknowledged in workfare debates (Soldatic and Sykes 2017).

To borrow from Peck (2001) and express this in Foucauldian terms, disabled people are the new bodies and minds forced into an even more open, precarious and unprotected labour market. Neoliberal workfare’s main aim is to pull the floor out of the bottom of wages by enforcing labour market participation through a new range of state regulatory controls and compelling surplus labour into the discipline of the market (Peck 2001). Catchwords such as flexibility, casualisation and productivity are coupled with discourses of mutual obligation. In Australia, the Howard government’s legislative amendments to disability social entitlements and social provisioning fully articulated the neoliberal reimagining of welfare as workfare (see Carney 2006). Labour market flexibility, casualisation and worker insecurity, driven by the neoliberal contract of market rule, has dramatically affected disabled Australians, as exemplified by the narratives of the disabled people articulated in this book.

Significance of this book: disability and neoliberal workfare

This research makes a substantial and original contribution on a number of fronts, namely, critical disability studies, workfare studies and policy analysis. There is limited knowledge of how civil society agents stand in relation to the state, the market and disabled actors (both collectively and individually) in terms of the policy process. According to Burawoy (2003), civil society can collaborate with the state to contain sites of socio-political economic struggle, or they can have enough autonomy to promote dissent, contestation and mobilisation. As the state increasingly applies market terms to deliver its social policy outcomes (Ramia 2002), there is a pressing need to understand how the growing application of state contractualism with civil society organisations unfolds under workfare regimes. Jayasuriya (2002, p. 309) argues that this is a ‘distinctive form of contractual governance’, wherein social policies are contracted through a ‘chain-of-contracts’. Disability employment services, civil society organisations now responsible for the monitoring of disabled people’s compliance with neoliberal contractual governance, are an integral part of this chain. Over time, Australian governments of both persuasions have implemented new legislated forms of citizen control and surveillance via the realm of service compliance contracts.

This process of contractual governance has implications for disabled people and their sense of self as the resultant practices begin to reconstitute their individual and collective identities, and ultimately impact upon their material and subjective well-being, as described in later chapters.

Moreover, there is limited research on the effects of neoliberal workfare contractual governance on movement politics, collective representation and participation within the Australian political sphere (Maddison and Martin 2009). The silencing of dissent through disengaging with collective politics has been a key battleground for neoliberal governance (Harvey 2005), and, in the Australian context, ‘the anti-democratic excesses of the Howard era have been well documented’ (Maddison and Martin 2009, np). In fact, as neoliberal market orthodoxies become central to state–citizen relations, the individual becomes elevated ‘as a *market* agent, pursuing advantage in competition with others’ (Connell 2008, p. 247, original emphasis). Rendering collective struggles for justice as futile, neoliberal governance and regulatory processes actively delegitimise civil society collective agents as a central part of democratic governance (see Maddison and Hamilton 2007).

The Australian disability movement’s collective struggles for justice are not exempt from these silencing strategies (Soldatic and Chapman 2010). The movement in Australia, part of a global disability rights movement, emerged in the late 1960s. Founded on a common identity (Meekosha 2002, p. 72), the movement was forged with the collective ‘experience of discrimination and difference’ (Smith 2003, p. 345). It reframed ‘disability’ from a site of abjection, medicalisation and biological inferiority to a site of social oppression and politics (Newell 1996). The strength of this reframing empowered disabled people to work collectively to contest the hegemonic practices that positioned them as the deserving poor, worthy of pity and charity. As Zames Fleischer and Zames (2001) report in the US context, the Australian disability movement directly confronted, and continues to confront, dominant and unquestioning signified representations of disabled people and ‘self-serving assumptions about normality’ (Meekosha 2002, p. 69). Yet, as this book reveals, this collective agency to resist welfare restructuring has come increasingly under pressure from a neoliberalising state that seeks to delegitimise the disability movement’s claims for justice, rights and recognition.

The Australian disability movement made large gains for social rights, including social security, anti-discrimination legislation and disability policy representation, during its pinnacle period of activism in the 1980s. Segments of the movement became formalised as institutional actors (Newell 1996, pp. 429–32). Disability advocacy organisations were established around the country, giving greater ‘voice’ to disabled people in local policy debates. As a consequence of this representation, new services, largely governed by disabled people, were established around the country. However, the arrival of the Howard government and the closing down of dissent across the Australian polity (Maddison and Hamilton 2007) represented a period of

intense retraction of the rights of people with disabilities, along with other groups outside the government's cultural commemorations of a white, able-bodied nation (Greenfield and Williams 2003; Jakubowicz and Meekosha 2003). By 1999, as a reflection on the Australian disability movement's gains and losses, leading disability feminist Helen Meekosha (1999, p. 1) argued that for many disabled people, living in Australia at the turn of the century was like living in a 'war zone'. Gerard Goggin and Christopher Newell (2005), two leaders of the Australian movement, concurred with this position, articulating 'disability' as a state of social apartheid.

As outlined in the following chapters, many of the gains made during the 1980s were actively wound back with the advent of neoliberalism as the governing hegemonic ideology of the nation state. With neoliberalism's intensification, the movement's institutionalisation became further entrenched as advocacy groups were embedded within state contractual relations, which sought to actively constrain their representational actions. Such groups were increasingly reframed by the Howard government as political lobbyists rather than civil society actors, actively denying disabled people their collective potential for dissent and mobilisation (Maddison and Hamilton 2007), and causing them to lose ground on many of their previously hard-won gains. Despite the intense pressure from the neoliberal state, the Australian disability movement has maintained a commitment to a pluralist identity politics (Cooper 1999, p. 217). The unifying principle of mobilisation has been around the 'common need to raise a voice against hegemonic power structures' (Meekosha and Dowse 1997, p. 65). Struggles for justice are centred on issues of representation. Representational politics, in this context, envisages the multiplicity of democratic spheres, both private and public, that are central to disabled people's emancipatory struggles for rights and justice. This book reveals the significance of the disability movement and its collective efforts in its struggle to realise differing avenues to further disability justice claims.

To counter disability restructuring and social provisioning retraction, the Australian disability rights movement has undergone processes of abeyance, contraction and expansion. In particular, Indigenous Australians living with disability have formed their own advocacy and activist networks, often in partnership with Australian disabled people's organisations (DPOs). Working at the interstice of the ensemble of neoliberal policy regimes to further their claims for justice, they demand redistributive measures via the category of disability partly to seek recognition for the long-standing exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders from disability welfare regimes and partly as a direct response to the production of disability as an outcome of white settler colonial governance and Indigenous dispossession. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living with disabilities yet remain significantly under-represented in disability redistributive measures (Productivity Commission 2011), despite these growing efforts to open up and gain recognition for disability within Indigenous Australia.

In the realm of Indigenous policy, it is now well documented that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have experienced the worst excesses of neoliberal workfare conditionality (Marston et al. 2016). Indigenous specific policies have seen the implementation of mechanisms to control all areas of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individual behaviours in line with neoliberal commitments around work, employment and social security. Paternalistic governance of social security payments through ‘cashless transfer systems’ and the ongoing monitoring of participation in Indigenous employment programmes, alongside the open competitive tendering of Indigenous service provision to bring in non-Indigenous private providers, are some of the new forms of colonial governance that ensure large-scale compliance to neoliberal workfare systems (Jordan 2018). There has not yet been a grounded theoretical analysis of the impact of disability social security reform on redistributing disability mechanisms to enhance subjective, material and cultural well-being with the shift to neoliberal workfare.

Positioning disability, positioning disabled people: methods

The ‘site’ of investigation in this research was not disabled people per se but how disability is reconstituted under the growing normalisation of the neoliberal workfare state. This analytical approach views policy process as a dynamic, open system embedded in a range of social relations, all of which shape the outcome (Sayer 1995). This approach is well accepted in critical policy studies, particularly as an analytical tool to explore the constitution of social identities within the national landscape (Bessant et al. 2006; Dalton et al. 1996; McClelland 2006; Vike 1997). It also enabled the analysis of the movement of disability across state institutional structures and the growing significance of the category of disability to differing stages of neoliberalism – from emergence to intensification and, finally, the stage of normalisation. For example, arguably the most significant structural change occurred within four days of the re-election of the conservative Howard government in October 2004, when it gained control of both houses of Parliament. This change saw the Disability Employment Programme split into two distinct groups. Disability social security regulation alongside disability open labour market employment services became part of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, the key state institution at the time, charged with neoliberalising Australian labour market regulatory controls. Sheltered workshops remained with the primary welfare institution, named at the time the Department of Family and Community Services. Within 18 months, highly restrictive disability social security legislation was pushed through Parliament not 24 hours after changes to industrial relations legislation which brought in individualised contracts and the potential criminalisation of union activism and mobilisation. Understanding policy as process critically distils the mobility of disability reclassification technologies across

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