

QUEER THEORY

Queer Comics Queering Continuity: *The Unstoppable Wasp* and the Fight for a Queer Future

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Introduction

With the publication of *Gay Comix #1* in 1980, Howard Cruse wrote in the foreword:

[I]n drawing this book, we gay cartoonists would like to affirm that we are here, and that we live lives as strewn with India-Inked prat-falls, flawed heroics, quizzical word balloons and surreptitious truths as the rest of the human race and even a few talking animals.

(Cruse, 1980, foreword)

Cruse's declaration captures a defining characteristic of the gay and lesbian liberation movement and similar threads that would inform early queer theory: the need to assert one's presence through universalization and sameness to the rest of humanity. A comix anthology by gay and lesbian cartoonists queered what could be portrayed in the medium. However, Cruse's description of the sameness of gay experience with the rest of humankind (and even a few talking animals) would be challenged today, along with many early theorists of gay and lesbian identity and the gay liberation movement. Such groups often had no place for queerness beyond gay, often male, white, and able-bodied persons as their representatives.

I open with Cruse's announcement, a courageous clarion call for gay and lesbian cartoonists in 1980 because it captures a shift in understanding queerness. Cruse's anthology series and declaration forever changed comics, but asserting gay and lesbian identities in comics is somewhat of a less queer event today as such identities have become established categories unto themselves. Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* and its success on Broadway, or Sina Grace's *Iceman* are examples of this shift. As Hillary Chute remarks, referring to the critique of Batman and Robin and Wonder Woman as gay

by Fredric Wertham, "[c]omics used to be read paranoically as gay code; in contemporary comics queer identity is openly announced" (2017, 350). As the position of queerness in comics and the larger culture has shifted, so has our ability to both learn from it and critique it. Thus, once established as experiences unto themselves, the queer categories that were once hidden from view, repressed, and denigrated continue to be explored and expanded to consider other forms of queerness and lived experience without a need of justification or the narrative of sameness. If queerness is that which is not seen or rather obfuscated through structures of power—as the personal lives of these cartoonists had been—then what is queer shifts. Queer theory, ever transforming by definition, finds energy in this fluidity and explores established categories and norms to reveal the faultiness of binary thinking and the violence engendered by accepting norms without question, thus fostering new possibilities. Cartoonists like Cruse, including Trina Robbins, Mary Wings, Alison Bechdel, and others queered comics so that future creators could continue to challenge the form and the stories that might be told.

Underlying Assumptions of the Approach

Queer theory by definition is difficult to capture, as the very concept resists classification, but for the purposes of this introduction, it is best to understand queer theory as the theoretical discourse that upends our assumptions that serve to undergird oppressive structures of power. Namely, those assumptions that reinforce heteronormativity and harmful gender norms. As Donald Hall articulates, "if there is one thing for which 'queer theory' generally has little respect, it is hidden agendas with their unspoken, unintegrated norms and assumptions" (2002, 1). For example, J. Jack Halberstam captures this use of queer theory in *The Queer Art of Failure*. Halberstam asks, "what kind of reward can failure offer us?" Because in a patriarchal society, "feminine success is always measured by male standards" (3–4). Thus, failing may only mean to not achieve based on male standards and traditions that have typically excluded women. It may appear at first like an odd question to someone not familiar with queer theory, why we are questioning ideas such as success, but it is not success that is being interrogated here but its definition and thus what it excludes. Queer theory queries that which is established—traditions and belief systems that are taken for granted and cause harm to others.

Queer theory's interest in questioning categories and tradition is reflected in its history of not having one particular origin story, but rather many. The theoretical assumptions that define "queer theory" emerged from many different forms of thought and activism. The origin story of queer theory in the academy includes the increased investment in the study of lesbian and gay identity and the gay and lesbian liberation movement, as well as the feminist movements and the many splinter feminist groups that emerged in

the second half of the twentieth-century. As Heather Love argues, though, the main difference between the earlier discourses on lesbian and gay identity and queer theory today is that "[e]arly gay and lesbian criticism tended to ignore the difficulties of the past in order to construct a positive history; queer criticism by contrast has focused on negative aspects of the past in order to use them" (2009, 18). It is difficult to identify all the threads that led to queer theory, the rise of critical theory in the academy being one of them, though it seems to have been coined as a term by Teresa de Lauretis, when she held a conference on the subject in 1990 (Halperin, 2003, 339). With its origins in the study of sexuality and feminism, queer theory is often used to explore identity categories, including those that were previously imagined as stable such as heterosexuality. For example, why did we have to see homosexuality and heterosexuality as a binary for so long? They are unique experiences not reliant upon one another. It is not that queer theory wants to be rid of heterosexuality, but rather asks, is this a sufficient category to describe people? Once we have accepted that there is no need for the binary of these two categories, we also begin to recognize other identities that are excluded, pansexuality or asexuality being two of those. This simple explanation captures what happens when the binary is broken down. The purpose is not always to deconstruct, though it can be useful if the aim is to open up, make more inclusive, or democratize. Queer theory has further been used to explore subjects including the working class, childhood, structures of time, disability and many more ideas and debates far too expansive for this introduction.

Early theorists whose work would define queer thought—though they may not have identified as queer theorists—include Michel Foucault and Judith Butler. Foucault's contributions in *The History of Sexuality* (1978) identified the construction of the homosexual (and thus the heterosexual) as an identity category in the nineteenth century. Foucault argued that in that period, contemporary identity politics were born as we became individuals whose actions defined the categories we would use to label ourselves. Thus, a homosexual was someone who had sex with members of the same sex. Butler, building on the work of Foucault and surveying the ideas of the many feminist groups of the 1970s and 80s in *Gender Trouble* (1990), explored how our genders are not stable, but rather performances contingent upon social and historical moments.

Many early theorists were critiqued for not acknowledging the lived experience of other intersecting categories such as race, religion, class, ability, and other factors that affect gender and sexuality. This critique is captured in the debates between Lee Edelman and Jose Muñoz. In his work on the "future," Edelman advocates linking queer theory to Freud's conception of the "death drive," embracing negativity, in short, to suggest that the future is constructed in heteronormative terms and we should reject the *idea* of the future (2004). Edelman believes that the idea of the

future is tied up with reproduction and fantasy of a world that will never come to pass. We are in a sense held down by a belief that we are fighting for the future, though Edelman would suggest it does not exist. In response, he believes we might embrace negativity in an effort to challenge the establishment, focusing on the present and recognizing the death and pain that surrounds us. However, Muñoz declares that this rejection of hope linked to the future is only applicable to people who have power in queer theory, meaning white gay men. Furthermore, Muñoz brings the "future" back into the conversation of lived experiences as he states,

arguing that the fact that this version of futurity is currently winning is all the more reason to call on a utopian political imagination that will enable us to glimpse another time and place: a "not-yet" where queer youths of color actually get to grow up.

(2009, 95–96)

A common critique of queer theory is that those theorists that elevate antinormativity are often privileged enough to be speaking of such an idea.

While there are strains of queer theory that privilege antinormativity as a destabilizing force, this is only one way to use queer theory; there is also a way to look at empowering disenfranchised subjects by taking apart the structures of power, or creating new avenues. It is the latter side of queer theory I will focus on in my chapter, which at times may appear feminist, even psychoanalytic. If it does, this is for the following two reasons. First, queer theory is indebted to these theoretical models and thus often looks like them. Second, I want to stress that this is *my* version of queer theory, but it is only one version and furthermore inflected by my experience as a social worker. Thus, my queer theory takes a relational, practical approach, sometimes even utopian like Muñoz rather than antisocial like Edelman. Queer theory is multivalent and always inflected by our own standpoints and experiences.

Appropriate Artifacts/Subjects/Phenomena for Analysis

Nearly all aspects of comics form and culture can be explored using queer theory. This includes the comics medium proper and analyses of the content, fan culture, readership practices, convention culture, communities formed through comics both online and in person, and more. Utilizing Eve Sedgwick's (1990) thought about "queerness as both a universalizing and a minoritizing discourse," Dariek Scott and Ramzi Fawaz declare "anyone and everyone can be queer, but actual queers are a minority group in the larger culture; similarly, comics end up in the hands of nearly everybody, but comic book readers are a niche (read: queer, nerd, outcast, weirdo)

group" (2018, 198). The comics form as a hybrid already establishes itself as queer, lending itself to this study. Furthermore, queer theory can be used to question and disassemble the established dynamics of comics culture, much of which has excluded women, people of color, queers, and other minority groups.

Procedures for Analysis

Queer theory can be useful in the study of comics to explore the form and culture related to the medium. For the purposes of the study of comics, a reader may consider the ways that a text "queers" (that is, upends the established norms in a way that challenges underlying hierarchies and assumptions) established narratives in comics including the representation of bodies, the types of stories told or how a character might challenge the very form. Paul Petrovic (2011), for example, writes an essay about Kate Kane, Batwoman, queering the panel borders of *Detective Comics* when she is introduced through the art of J.H. Williams III. An analysis should focus on the ways that established norms including identity categories, the form of comics, or other assumptions related to the larger field of comics such as fan engagement are queered. Queer theory should be utilized not to re-categorize comics but to offer new opportunities to rethink comics, and the assumptions that corporations, creators, and consumers may participate in or reinforce unconsciously. The procedure that the reader is enacting is not merely in exposing the problem but rather exploring an idea that might offer new understanding of comics and more significantly, possibility for the future of comics. Reading with queer theory does not mean imposing a queer reading onto the text, but asking what is queer about the text or what it is queering.

Artifact Selected for Sample Analysis

In the sample analysis, I will explore Justin Whitley and Elsa Charretier's *The Unstoppable Wasp*, which offers a queer feminist critique of a convention of mainstream comics: continuity. As with literature, there is a canon of stories and continuity is the mainstream comics' version, which determines what is and is not part of a character's (or even a universe's) agreed-upon history. Continuity can be used to reinforce the assumptions, stereotypes, and structures of power that have built and maintained the masculinist nature of the Marvel Universe. The series questions one use of continuity and captures how this towering tenant of comics has swallowed up and obscured the lives of women and other members of minority communities. Offering an important critique, *The Unstoppable Wasp* creates an opportunity to rewrite the history of erasure that continuity has facilitated. Whitley and Charretier proffer questions that allow us to think about the

culture of comics and fandom that misuses continuity to police comics. For example, when a character's identity changes, as with the introduction of a female Thor or a female African-American "Iron Man," there has been resistance and even threats against creators from the so-called "fan community." This resistance and violence is often wrongly couched in the idea of continuity. Sexist and racist fans declare some version of "it ruined my childhood." The critiques offered in this series reveal how continuity can be used at times to limit the possibilities of comics, and, in its place, the series imagines a vision of a queer future.

The first arc of *The Unstoppable Wasp* details the story of Nadia Pym (later van Dyne), the long-lost daughter of Hank Pym with his first wife Maria Trovaya and her entrance into the Marvel Universe. Prior to her appearance in the *Avengers* only months before the publication of the series, Nadia's existence was unknown: she had been locked up for many years performing research for a Russian black ops agency—the Red Room—but she had recently escaped and immigrated to the United States. She recounts all of this in a flashback, providing the reader with an introduction to her life, so the story can be read as standalone. Nadia begins her life in the United States and quickly establishes a plan to seek out the female geniuses of the Marvel Universe. Upon entering continuity, she begins to queer it and question the establishment of the Marvel Universe as she asks, in this first issue, where are all the female geniuses? Because of limited space, I will focus primarily on the first issue of the series, exploring how *The Unstoppable Wasp* sets up a narrative to queer continuity in Marvel comics and how we can use what is learned from this story to think about comic book culture.

Sample Analysis

Whitley, Jeremy, and Elsa Charretier. *The Unstoppable Wasp*. New York, NY: Marvel, 2017.

The first issue of the series opens with Nadia Pym following Kamala Khan, Ms. Marvel into a bakery (Figure 4.1). Because Nadia has spent her entire life locked up, she is only beginning to be introduced to the customs and practices of U.S. American culture. This first page queers the very core of American superhero comics: Superman's origin story. Instead of landing in Kansas, raised by white parents in the "heart of America," Nadia's story begins with her walking through Manhattan into a bakery that serves Pakistani desserts. The creators queer the narrative of what is "American" by introducing a "foreigner" to Pakistani donuts as one of her first endeavors into the culture of the United States. Nadia's guide is a Pakistani-American, which opens her up to a non-traditional experience of U.S. American society. That is to say, by non-traditional, it queers the assumption that when entering the U.S., the first introduction to cultural practices is always going

to be an interaction with white, middle-class America: the Kansas of Superman or the diner of Archie comics. While this is not Nadia's origin story, this is the first issue of her series and this opening scene offers one of many different paths that a person entering the United States and participating in its cultures may experience. The queering of traditions, history, and continuity will define *The Unstoppable Wasp's* run. The text is queer in that it asks readers to rethink the history and tenants of the superhero story, offering a new vision of the future, rejecting a universal path, and instead opening new ones.

The creative team, however, does not offer this alternative simply to upend the typical story of the superhero or what one might look like without purpose. By including Kamala, the comic utilizes the visual to set up a false binary that it will deconstruct. Nadia, who is white, may immediately be seen as the character who is introducing Kamala to American culture in this initial scene. That binary is quickly disassembled, however, as Kamala is in fact Nadia's guide. The creative team does not offer one singular definition of Pakistani-American culture either. Nadia asks Kamala, "Are those the most delicious ones?" assuming that she knows all about Southeast Asian foods, but Kamala remarks, "I don't know. I haven't tried everything" (Figure 4.1). The series does not reject all knowledge, though, as the baker does have answers, as one would expect. His status as baker is not torn down, but expectation that a Pakistani-American should know everything about that culture is broken down. The purpose here is to ask the reader to question the assumptions of what someone's introduction to "American" culture might be, and to rethink our own expectations, establishing the model for the type of questions that Nadia will ask in the series. After leaving the bakery, Nadia crosses the street without looking both ways. Ms. Marvel makes light of knowledge differences when she says, "You never know where the gaps in the knowledge might be" (Whitley and Charretier, 2017a). But as we will see in this comic, it's the gaps in knowledge that allow Nadia to be creative and challenge the norms that others have accepted. In forgoing these restrictions even of stereotypes, we open up new creative possibilities for the future.

The story, then, takes on the superhero genre as masculinist, male-driven, and exclusionary. Following this scene in the bakery, a short battle takes place holding to the tenets of the superhero comic; however, this fight scene does not set up an ongoing narrative for a villain, but will establish the queering of comics continuity. A female scientist piloting a giant robot attacks the city. During the battle Nadia recognizes her as Monica Rappaccini, but not as a villain, rather as a great scientist whose work she knows well. Rappaccini states that part of her reason for attacking the city is that women are not valued, she could not find work in science, so she became a super villain. The conversation critiques the fact that the superhero narrative is dominated by men, as Nadia says to Rappaccini: "Wait! You became a super villain! That's super disappointing. Your biochemistry work was



Figure 4.1 *The Unstoppable Wasp* #1 (2018), p. 1. Justin Whitley and Elsa Charretier. © Marvel

revolutionary." And Rappaccini responds, "And it still is! But all the world hears about are male blowhards like Bruce Banner and Hank Pym" (Whitley and Charretier, 2017a). Many of the female villains in this series share

a similar narrative. The isolation that is felt by some of these women leads them to become villainous.

Rappaccini's remark during the battle is the impetus for the rest of the story arc: the search for female geniuses and the fight against the structures of power that have isolated them. Nadia begins to question why women scientists are not valued; she asks, where are they? Having been locked up in a black ops facility her entire life working with the papers of women scientists she imagines that they must all be respected based solely on their work. This is not true. Then, Bobbi Morse, Mockingbird, informs Nadia about "the list," which she describes in the following way: "S.H.I.E.L.D. has this list of the smartest people in the world. It's been the same for years until just recently. It always bothered me." She continues, "And it got me thinking about who made these lists, right? Other guys, other S.H.I.E.L.D. agents, other superheroes. All these guys have known each other forever. They don't seek new people out" (Whitley and Charretier, 2017a). Explicit in her questioning is how the list serves as a metaphor for male supremacy. The "list" is part of hegemonic structures of power, made by men for men, to preserve the status of men.

There is an important feature in naming "the list" because for a new reader to Marvel comics, it serves as a metaphor for male power and control of the future of knowledge development in comics. But for readers who know what "the list" is, the names reveal that not only is it masculinist but it is mired in violence, and in a history of power and destruction in the Marvel Universe. Included on that list are many villains such as Doctor Doom and Doctor Octopus. Of course, there are heroes on "the list" such as Reed Richards, Mister Fantastic, and Tony Stark, Iron Man, but even they have participated in acts of violence and dark groups, such as the Illuminati, that have led to much destruction in the Marvel Universe. One has to wonder what the list does other than identify geniuses. It serves to exclude. This leaves characters like Bobbi Morse locked out of what has become a boys' club. A boys' club that protects even abusers and villains for the sake of sustaining male supremacy. Notably, only recently have men and women of color joined the ranks including T'Challa, the Black Panther, or Amadeus Cho, the Hulk, and now Lunella Lafayette, Moon Girl. In a genre where power seems to be of utmost importance, we easily forget that that in making the story world more democratic and inclusive, we must also uncover the women scientists of the world and other positions beyond being a superhero, and recognize how continuity has locked them out.

In questioning the concept of "the list," Nadia exposes the accepted truth that despite all the women in the Marvel Universe only one has ever made "the list," at "no. 27" according to Bobbi Morse (Whitley and Charretier, 2017a). And it has only recently been questioned that there might be people smarter than Reed Richards or Tony Stark. Placing pressure on our assumed truths offers opportunity to question the idea of continuity, a part of comics that often goes unchecked. In an interview, comics writer Chuck Dixon states,

Continuity is a framework. I always find it more instructive than restrictive. Continuity is just the readership's perceived reality for whatever comic you're writing. You get into the feel of it and build on it rather than constantly looking for ways to tear it down. Sometimes there are stories you can't tell. But generally these are stories that shouldn't be told in any case.

(Klaehn, 2014, 120)

What Dixon's statement reveals, unintentionally, is the idea that continuity has been used to exclude. For example, no creative team has taken on the challenge of "the list" in any significant way because it just is a part of the Marvel Universe. Continuity is instructive, but it can also be limiting and excluding. Continuity has been used as an argument against the inclusion of characters of different genders, races, ability, and sexualities as fans claim their narratives are being lost. Unlike continuity, Muñoz states, "Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world" (2009, 1). Nadia rejects this moment, this list, and instead creates a new space for women, disobeying the structures of power.

The creators understand the power of the categories that we establish, and know that they exclude and in doing so do harm to others including female scientists such as Rappaccini, whose isolation led to her villainy. Thus, Nadia aims to queer the list of geniuses in the Marvel Universe. The final page of the first issue depicts Nadia Pym declaring that she will uncover the archive of the Marvel Universe's history and in doing so she challenges the idea of the list. She declares: "I'm going to make them rethink that whole list." Her intention is not to simply uncover these women, but to restructure the very model that has left women out. Nadia is in many ways like another favorite figure of queer theory, Antigone, who refused to submit to the law and defied Creon in order to give her brother Polyneices a proper burial. As Mari Ruti has articulated, "Antigone's act is antisocial but it is not antirelational; it opposes hegemonic forms of sociality" (2017, 108). Ruti captures an important distinction: in refusing to submit to the established law, Antigone leaves behind the society as she knows it, but she does it for the sake of *her* family. Nadia refuses to submit to the establishment—continuity—but does not become a reclusive genius, nor does she take the path of the villain. Rappaccini's response is antisocial; Nadia's is relational. Nadia intends to start a new community as she declares that she lost part of her life, so she intends to use the rest of her life to make a difference. Nadia imagines a queer, inclusive future.

Furthermore, in naming her group "G.I.R.L." Nadia recovers the part of her that was lost—her girlhood, and the lives of many others that would be lost. Her work will honor the girl who was captured and forced to work for the Red Room. Nadia remarks later that the Red Room chose girls because

they appear less dangerous (Whitley and Charretier, 2017b). By showing that they are powerful and smart she reverses the commonly held belief that girls are not dangerous or rather cannot be dangerous. In this image Nadia is seen standing in front of papers and other files—an uncovered archive—and her shadow is that of her super suit suggesting that this is a mission for a superhero. It will be a new era of superheroics. There are images of faceless women behind Nadia on this final page, suggesting they exist but have not been named, identified, or perhaps they have been erased. Thus, Nadia upends the archive of Marvel Comics history in order to uncover those characters and stories that have been locked out or forgotten. Whitley and Charretier create a comic book that pays respect to the wishes of Virginia Woolf to uncover the lives of female geniuses. And in the final issue, in homage to Woolf, one of the newly discovered female geniuses remarks, "I've never had a room of my own before" (2017c).

Despite queer theory finding its origins in feminist theory, there has been "a presumption that queer and feminist writings are theoretically incompatible in their modes of reference, their priorities and their calls for action" (Richardson, McLaughlin, and Casey, 2006, 3). The two were positioned in a binary where queer theory focused too much on sexuality and feminist theory too much on gender. However, as *The Unstoppable Wasp* makes clear, the two cannot be separated, as the queering of the categories that exclude these women also shares a priority with feminism. The empowerment of women is central to the deconstruction of structures of power that protect the boys' club that something like "the list" sustained. The queering of the superhero comic is integrally connected to a feminist awakening of all women, women of color, women with different abilities, and women with different identification of gender and sexuality seen in this series. There is no separation.

The kinship narrative between women is further underscored as a queer response to the harms of continuity that has isolated women and sustained the boys' club. Once Nadia becomes a naturalized citizen, she rejects the violence passed down to her from her father, who she learns was a domestic abuser, and she takes the last name of van Dyne, the second wife of her father, Hank Pym, as, she says, "it's the only name I really know" (Whitley and Charretier, 2017c). Janet van Dyne has been Nadia's mentor throughout the series and the creative team once again queers the legacy of comics because women in superhero stories rarely pass on a mantle and, when they do, it is because the previous character is dead or depowered. Janet van Dyne, the original Wasp, is still around; she is a mentor and, in the end, she creates a space for Nadia to continue her research where they work together with the other female geniuses. Further queering stereotypes, Nadia's stepmother is not the villain in the story but rather is her support system. In the end, this story deconstructs the structures of power that have locked women out

and gives them a new avenue through Nadia's G.I.R.L. program with the help of her newfound team.

"The list" embodies the toxicity of some parts of mainstream comics culture: the rabid fandom that does not enjoy the history of comics and continuity, but rather aims to use it as a way to lock others out. This may range from policing who can be a fan to proclaiming that comics culture is being destroyed by the inclusion and representation of members of minority communities. *The Unstoppable Wasp* reveals the artificiality of these categories that serve to sustain a past led by male supremacy. The series also reveals how easy it was to accept without question the basis of this idea—that all of the men in the Marvel Universe were smarter than the women. This is a reality that the comics community must also address—that for too long it has been a boys' club. Adding women to "the list," including at the top of "the list," queers structures of power and the underlying assumptions and stereotypes, but it does not change past continuity. Sexist fans who use the term "continuity" as part of their argument against change are misusing the concept. Nadia and G.I.R.L. don't change the past, rather they queer the future narrative of comics continuity when they reject the structures that have locked them out and begin producing knowledge on their own terms in their own model that is more inclusive. Rather than being forced to negotiate with the system that has locked them out, Nadia and the other women create a new one. Comics such as *The Unstoppable Wasp*, thus, renew the queerness of comics exhibited in stories such as the early *Wonder Woman* of William Moulton Marston and H.G. Peter because, I believe, if comics is queer, this becomes most visible in their fight for the future.

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DISABILITY STUDIES

Disrupting Representation, Representing Disruption

Krista Quesenberry

Introduction

Disability is a convenient, though complicated, term. It is both precise and generic; it is an identity category but one so large that its boundaries are contested. Simi Linton describes *disability* as "a medically derived term that assigns predominantly medical significance and meaning to certain types of human variation" (Linton 2010, 224). Linton's phrasing highlights that what we call disabilities are simply variations, not aberrations or distinct categories, and that the term gains its authority primarily from its medical uses.

Though the history of the term dates back centuries, its contemporary usage was in many ways crystallized by the disability rights activists of the late twentieth century. In 1975, the British advocacy group the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) established that: "it is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments, by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group in society" (qtd. in Shakespeare 2010, 267).

This social construction theory connects the term *disability* with other categories of identity and with opportunities for social and political mobilization. Indeed, from the term *disability*, we can define *ableism* as analogous to the forms of discrimination we call *sexism* and *racism* (Linton 2010, 223), and we can distinguish the opposite of *disabled* with the terms *able-bodied* or *non-disabled* (along with *dis/ability*), which recognize human variations without privileging norms, similar to the interplay between *transgender* and *cisgender*.

However, in contrast with most identity categories, disability is a grouping that includes everyone. Even if we may not currently identify as having a disability, we have all been in the past or will be in the future a part of the disability community—because we may break an arm, develop a chronic illness, or experience age-related vision and hearing loss. According to Tobin Siebers, society "prefers to think of people with disabilities as a small population, a stable