**CURRENT GAPS AND POSSIBILITIES IN EMPIRICAL RESEARCH AT**

**THE INTERSECTION OF DISABILITIES AND SEXUALITIES**

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**Objectives:**

The existing literature has been critiqued for focusing on the experiences of heterosexual, cisgender people with disabilities (PWD) while paying less attention to those of LGBTQ+ PWD (Martino, 2017). In contrast, this paper makes space for these experiences by reviewing the literature focused on the lives of LGBTQ+ PWD. This exploration is founded on calls from researchers to complicate our notions of disability with respect to different experiences across social identities (Bell, 2006). This review considered the demographic information and geographical location of research participants to explore the social locations that have been considered by these studies and, subsequently, to identify potential missing voices.

**Method:**

Through a systematic literature review, we gathered 116 peer-reviewed articles published between 1990 to 2017 that explored the intersection of disabilities and sexualities. Coupled with the term “disabilit\*”, we searched various sexuality identifiers (e.g., gay, lesbian, bisexual) separately. We chose to focus on empirical scholarly work in order to access geographical data and use the additional information to supplement our findings. Three authors searched the databases to ensure that the findings were exhaustive and that the coding of the literature reviewed was consistent.

**Results:**

Our review of the literature revealed a significant proportion of studies focusing on the experiences of queer PWD come from countries in the global North. Although we found some diversity regarding geographical locations within the global North, studies were predominantly located in the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada. Within those, most studies seem focused on more metropolitan areas. This review indicates that we know less about the experiences of LGBTQ+ PWD in rural contexts and the global South. Examining the participants demographic information also revealed a lack of intersectional approach with respect to disability, sexuality, class, race and ethnicity. Not only were participants predominantly from the global North, but they were largely white, lesbian or gay, and cis-gendered. Moreover, participants with developmental disabilities were only present in 5% of the studies. These results point to a gap in the literature that could be filled with voices of marginalized groups within queer disabled communities. Such findings ask future research to consider how complex intersections of various social identities and geography shape the lives of queer PWD.

**Conclusions:**

Research at this intersection remains limited. There is a need for a “geographical turn” and a greater emphasis on intersectional approaches to decenter our emphasis on empirical analysis of queer PWD’s lives from the global North. In an increasingly globalized world, people are coming to Canada with different lived experiences of disability and sexuality, and it is important to understand these perspectives in order to offer unique practice delivery options.

**References:**

Bell, C. (2006). Introducing White Disability Studies: A Modest Proposal. In Ed. Lennard J. Davis (Ed.) *The Disability Studies Reader* (2nd ed.) (275-282.) New York, NY: Routledge.

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