**Disabled bodies at work: The impacts of equalities legislation on disabled people in the workplace**

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Emma Partlow is a second year PhD student at the University of Birmingham, current research interests are disability, white-collar work and equalities legislation. Future planned work is to investigate the legislative and legal frameworks that exist surrounding assistance dogs, whilst seeking to understand public perceptions of animals as assistance for disabled people. Previous research has looked at the relevance of the Equality Act 2010 and disabled student’s university experience.

Keywords: employment, equality, legislation, disability, bodies, embodiment.

Drawing upon planned fieldwork, this paper demonstrates how it is timely and critically important to research disabled people’s experiences of work in order to interrogate the issues that can be hidden rather than identified through the implementation of equalities legislation in the workplace. This research will draw upon Sociology of the Body (SOTB) literature as a theoretical framework to carry out this research. It is timely both within disability studies and wider fields that we renew ‘body’ literature to be able to combine both the socially constructed nature of disability whilst also encompassing an embodiment of impairment; this is crucial for understanding disability in a holistic manner.

This paper will demonstrate how Sociology of the Body literature can be renewed in order to be placed as a framework and wider tool through which to view disability and impairment in modern Britain, in particular, the British white-collar workplace. It is well-documented that SOTB has failed to take account of disability directly, however, some of the key ideas including embodiment and acknowledging that our interpretation of everyday life relies upon bodies need to be renewed in order to be able to achieve a wider understanding of disability than is currently present.

The rationale for this research is that it is hazardous for the government to make bold claims about work being a ‘health outcome’, as a means to ‘inclusion’ and as beneficial to disabled people without first understanding their experiences of work. To fully understand the experiences of work we must look beyond the socially constructed nature of disability and also encompass ‘the body’. It is envisaged that by focusing upon embodiment in relation to work, it will be uncovered which bodies are deemed as appropriate within certain spaces and places.

Using Sociology of the Body literature will allow this research to critically analyse the workplace as a case-study with a backdrop of normative professional ideals and disabled bodies which must perform in a certain manner during working hours. Furthermore, this literature and body of work will allow contemporary equalities legislation and relevant concepts including ‘reasonable adjustments’ to be scrutinised against the realities of these adjustments and the strain they may cause upon the whole person, both mind and body. By combining empirical work and the theoretical framework of SOTB, this research seeks to move beyond the assumption that support will be consistent and readily available by uncovering people’s lived experiences of equalities legislation and policies.