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State of the Field: Disability History

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Abstract
Historical studies of bodily and cognitive difference have flourished in the past decade. This article surveys recent work in disability history to provide a sense of the state of the field today. Concentrating on work published in English, the article outlines three main pillars of the field: its political impetus; its commitment to a sociocultural approach to disability, and its insistence that disability constitutes a powerful category of historical analysis. Following this, the article discusses the sources and methods used by disability historians, as well as some of the ethical issues their work raises. Major themes and areas of strength in the field are also identified. The article concludes by suggesting how disability history might develop in the future and encourages disability historians to push beyond a Cartesian separation of body and mind when considering human difference.

I

From new book series, blogs, exhibitions and public events to radio programmes and Oscar-nominated documentaries, the last decade has witnessed a tremendous growth in the practice and visibility of disability history.[1] Historians have contributed greatly to this success, but what

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[1] Over the past decade, both the University of Illinois and Manchester University presses have launched major book series dedicated to disability history, and Amsterdam University Press has recently established a series entitled ‘Premodern Health, Disease, and Disability’. For details of these: https://www.press.uillinois.edu/books/find_books.php?type=series&search=DHS [accessed 28 May 2022]; https://manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/series/disability-history/ [accessed 28 May 2022]; https://www.aup.nl/en/series/premodern-health-disease-and-disability [accessed 28 May 2022]; For examples of blogs, exhibitions, and public events: The *Public Disability History* blog, https://www.public-disabilityhistory.org/ [accessed 28 May 2022]; the Disability History Associations’ *All of Us*, http://allofusdha.org/ [accessed 28 May 2022]; ‘Event Archive’ (2014–16), https://www.dis-ind-soc.org.uk/en/event-archive.htm [accessed 28 May 2022]. Originally broadcast in Britain on BBC Radio 4 in 2013, *Disability: A New History* is still available online with transcripts of individual episodes at https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b021mdwt [accessed 28 May 2022]. Nominated for an Oscar in 2021, *Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution* (2020) can be viewed for free at: https://youtu.be/OFS8SpwioZ4, with subtitles [accessed 28 May 2022], or https://youtu.be/Kffi5J61N0c, with audio description [accessed 28 May 2022].

is disability history and where is it heading? In this article, we survey historical research on disability and offer some suggestions about how the field might develop in the future. Our comments are necessarily selective and focus on Anglophone work published over the last decade or so. Despite this choice, we recognise that disability history is an international endeavour. A lot of important work in the field does not appear in English.[2] Yet, this scholarship offers a crucial counterweight to Anglo-American perspectives. Historians serious about developing nuanced accounts of disability will learn a lot from this work, and we urge colleagues to engage with it to the best of their abilities.

We begin with a brief history of the field that pays special attention to its emergence, rationale and theoretical approach. We then discuss how disability history has been conducted in recent years, concentrating on the sources and methods used by disability historians and the ethical issues they have encountered. In the final part of our survey, we identify major themes and areas of strength in the field before concluding with some proposals for future work in disability history.

II

The origins of disability history as a distinct field of study lie in the 1980s. This was a decade in which, thanks to the efforts of the Disability Rights Movement (DRM) and the United Nations' International Year of Disabled Persons (1981), disability started to receive significant attention in public and political discourse. In this climate, Henri–Jacques Stiker and Paul Longmore published what are now considered foundational texts in disability history. Inspired by the work of Michel Foucault, Stiker focussed on Europe, whereas Longmore, who was informed by his personal experience of disability and a significant figure in US disability activism, concentrated on America. Both identified the twentieth century as a key period in the history of disability, proposing broad schemas that others have since refined.[3] However, it was not until the 1990s that the field really began to take off, particularly in the United States. Inspired by the successes of disability activists and the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, increasing numbers of scholars began excavating the 'hidden history' of disability. Most considered themselves members or allies of the DRM and aimed to create a 'usable past' to further the movement's goals.[4] Consequently, from its earliest days, disability history

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[2] For example: Tuomas Laine-Frigren, Riikka Miettinen and Katariina Parhi (eds), Special Issue on Disability History (Vammaisuuden historia), *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja*, 119/2 (2021).

[3] Henri-Jacques Stiker, *Corps infirmes et sociétés* (Paris, 1982), revised edition (1997) translated into English as *A History of Disability* (Ann Arbor, 1999); Paul K. Longmore, 'The life of Randolph Bourne and the need for a history of disabled people', *Reviews in American History*, 13/ 4 (1985), pp. 581–587 and 'Uncovering the hidden history of disabled people', *Reviews in American History*, 15/3 (1987), pp. 355–64; Kim E. Nielsen, 'Paul K. Longmore' in Susan Burch (ed.), *Encyclopedia of American Disability History* (New York, 2009), pp. 577–88.

[4] Michael Rembis, Catherine Kudlick and Kim E. Nielson, 'Introduction' in Rembis, Kudlick and Nielsen (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Disability History* (New York, 2018), p. 3. For a sense of

sought to counter harmful stereotypes of disabled people as passive and dependent by documenting their historical agency and amplifying their 'voices' within the historiography of disability.[5] Such politically engaged scholarship, informed by activism, remains a hallmark of disability history today.

The field was also conspicuous in its critical approach to the so-called 'medical model', which informed earlier historical work on disability and continues to be influential. Shorthand for ideas about bodily and cognitive non-normativity that became dominant in the late modern period, the medical model sees disability as something 'unchanging, pathological, rooted in individual bodies, and always in need of cure, correction, or elimination'.[6] In contrast, disability historians generally advanced 'social' or 'minority group' models of disability. Although sometimes conflated, these models are different, reflecting the different contexts in which they arose.

Stemming from the deliberations of a group of British disability activists in the 1970s and articulated most notably by Michael Oliver, the social model rests on a 'firm distinction between (biological) *impairment* and (social) *disability*'. Such a distinction was not central to the minority group model more popular with North American activists who drew inspiration from the US civil rights tradition. This model emphasised disabled people's minority status and similarity to other marginalised minorities in a deliberate attempt to link the DRM to a wider movement for civil rights. Despite their differences, however, both theoretical frameworks emphasise the 'constructed' nature of disability by shifting attention away from the bodies and minds of 'disabled' people towards the social and cultural contexts that shape perceptions and experiences of human difference.[7] It is this broad commitment to a socio-cultural approach to bodily and cognitive non-normativity, rather than a strict adherence to any particular 'model', that has underpinned disability history from the outset. For disability historians, then, disability is contingent, its meaning and existence dependent on time and place.

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early work in the field, particularly in the United States: Susan Burch, 'Disability history: suggested readings – an annotated bibliography', *The Public Historian*, 27/2 (2005), pp. 63–74.

[5] Longmore, 'Uncovering the hidden history of disabled people'; Catherine Kudlick, 'Comment: on the borderland of medical and disability History', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 87/4, (2013), pp. 540–59; Karen Hirsch, 'Culture and disability: the role of oral history', *The Oral History Review*, 22/1 (1995), pp. 1–27; Dorothy Atkinson and Jan Walmsley, 'History from the inside: towards an inclusive history of intellectual disability', *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, 12/4 (2010), pp. 273–86.

[6] Rembis, Kudlick and Nielson, 'Introduction', pp. 3–4.

[7] Tom Shakespeare, *Disability Rights and Wrongs* (New York, 2006), pp. 23–5 (our emphasis); Michael Oliver, *Understanding Disability: From Theory to Practice* (Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 30–3; Beth Linker, 'On the borderland of medical and disability history: a survey of the field', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 87/4, (2013), p. 519; Longmore, 'The life of Randolph Bourne', p. 585 and *Telethons: Spectacle, Disability and the Business of Charity* (New York, 2016), pp. xvii–xviii; Catherine Kudlick, 'Comment: comparative observations on disability in history', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 24/3 (2005), p. 60; Jeffrey A. Brune, 'Minority' in David Serlin, Benjamin Reiss and Rachel Adams (eds), *Keywords for Disability Studies*. (New York, 2015), pp. 122–4.

Moved by their critical perspective on the medical model and their desire to effect social and political change, early disability historians often distanced themselves from the social history of medicine. While both fields shared similar sources, methods and themes, disability scholars were suspicious of the social history of medicine's medical focus and preoccupation with 'patients', believing it insufficiently critical of the medical model or wedded to the DRM to promote significant political change.[8] Disability historians consciously challenged the medical model by moving beyond the realms of medicine to consider understandings and experiences of bodily and cognitive differences in other contexts. However, by positioning disabled people outside the medical gaze, early disability historians did not seek to deny the significance of bodies and minds to disabled people's lived experiences. As Longmore and Umansky put it: 'At its best, the new disability history recognises the corporeal dimension of human experience and its consequences for daily functioning, while striving continually to understand the contingencies that shape, reflect, express, and result from that dimension'.[9]

Since the publication of Longmore and Umansky's observation in 2001, historians have intensified their efforts to acknowledge and explore the embodied aspects of disability. This has contributed to a significant re-evaluation of the historical usefulness of the social model and the 'impairment/disability divide' on which it rests.[10] As a result, new theoretical frameworks have emerged in the field, including the currently popular 'cultural model of disability'. This model *explicitly* blurs or erases the distinction between impairment and disability to better recognise the interconnectedness of the corporeal and social worlds. As the *cultural* model's name implies, however, despite innovations in the theoretical basis of the field, disability history continues to stress a socio-cultural approach and eschew essentialist understandings of disability.[11]

When viewed as a socially and culturally constructed category of difference, disability appears similar in nature to other powerful social categories, such as gender, race or class. As a result, disability historians

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[8] Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, 'Introduction – disability history: from the margins to the mainstream' in Longmore and Umansky (eds), *The New Disability History: American Perspectives* (New York, 2001), pp. 7–8; Catherine Kudlick, 'Social history of medicine and disability history' in Rembis, Kudlick and Nielsen (eds), *Oxford Handbook of Disability History*, pp. 105–24. For the popularity of patient-centred perspectives in the social history of medicine: Michael Worboys, 'The non-patient's view' in Anne R. Hanley and Jessica Meyer (eds), *Patient Voices in Britain, 1840–1948* (Manchester, 2021), pp. 33–54.

[9] Longmore and Umansky, 'Introduction', p. 20.

[10] Michael Rembis, 'Challenging the impairment/disability divide: disability history and the social model of disability' in Nick Watson and Simo Vehmas (eds), *Routledge Handbook of Disability Studies: Second Edition* (New York, 2020), pp. 377–90.

[11] Joshua R. Eyler, 'Introduction: breaking boundaries, building bridges' in Eyler (ed.), *Disability in the Middle Ages: Reconsiderations and Reverberations* (Farnham, 2010), pp. 5–8; Bianca Frohne, 'The cultural model of dis/ability' in Cordula Nolte, Bianca Frohne, Uta Halle, and Sonja Kerth (eds), *Dis/ability history der Vormoderne: ein Handbuch = Premodern dis/ability history: a companion* (Affalterbach, 2017), pp. 61–3; Bill Hughes, *A Historical Sociology of Disability: Human Validity and Invalidity from Antiquity to Early Modernity* (New York, 2020), pp. 39–42, 69–70.

also argue that disability constitutes 'a useful category of historical analysis' that warrants inclusion in the historian's 'tool box' alongside these more widely used concepts. Like gender, race and class, a disability lens generates new historical insights, from the nature of power and the rationalisation of inequality to the evolution of the modern state, ideas about work, and even the life and times of Francis of Assisi.[12] Disability history, then, has been about much more than lending intellectual support to the DRM or 'uncovering the hidden history of disabled people'. It also seeks to promote a thorough reappraisal of history more generally – one that recognises the central role changing perceptions and experiences of bodily and cognitive difference have played in shaping all our shared pasts.

III

The main features of disability history can be characterised as: its political impetus, its commitment to a socio-cultural approach to disability, and its insistence that disability constitutes a powerful category of analysis relevant to all areas of historical research. While these three pillars continue to underpin the field, the practice of disability history has become more varied. In recent years, as with historians of other marginalised groups, disability historians have employed a widening range of sources and methods and raised important ethical questions that need addressing.

Elizabeth Bredberg has divided primary sources available to disability historians into three broad types: the 'institutional', 'vernacular' and 'experiential'. Institutional sources, such as asylum, school and government records, generally foreground the views of 'experts' or officials, or the priorities and concerns of the state or other organisations, whereas vernacular sources, such as poems, newspapers and film, better 'reflect community or lay understandings of disability'. Experiential sources, for example, diaries, memoirs and interviews, in contrast, emphasise 'personal' or 'first-hand accounts of disability'.[13] Early work in disability history drew heavily on institutional and vernacular sources, and studies centring asylums, schools, social policies or cultural representations were commonplace.[14] Such sources remain popular

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[12] Douglas C. Baynton, 'Disability: a useful category of historical analysis', *DSQ*, 17/2 (1997), pp. 81–7; Catherine J. Kudlick, 'Disability history: why we need another "other"', A*merican Historical Review*, 108/3 (2003), pp. 763–93; Donna Trembinski, *Illness and Authority: Disability in the Life and Lives of Francis of Assisi* (Toronto, 2020), esp. pp. 158–59.

[13] Elizabeth Bredberg, 'Writing disability history: problems, perspectives and sources', *Disability & Society*, 14/2 (1999), pp. 189–201; Penny Richards and Susan Burch, 'Documents, ethics, and the disability historian' in Michael Rembis, Catherine Kudlick, and Kim E. Nielsen (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Disability History* (New York, 2018), pp. 162–63.

[14] For example: James W. Trent Jr, *Inventing the Feeble Mind: A History of Mental Retardation in the United States* (Berkeley, 1995); Deborah Stone, *The Disabled State* (Philadelphia, 1984); Paul K. Longmore, 'Screening stereotypes: images of disabled people in television and motion pictures' in Alan Gartner and Tom Joe (eds), *Images of the Disabled, Disabling Images* (New York, 1987), pp. 65–78; John S. Schuchman, *Hollywood Speaks: Deafness and the Film Entertainment Industry* (Urbana,

amongst disability historians, and rightly so, since institutional and vernacular perspectives are vital for illuminating how disability has been viewed and treated by societies.[15] Nevertheless, recent years have witnessed an increased regard for experience in disability history.

Determined to ensure that the historical voices of disabled people are not drowned out by those of experts, officials or nondisabled people, disability historians have increasingly drawn on memoirs, letters, diaries and interviews to uncover what physical, sensory and cognitive differences have meant to disabled people *themselves*. Doing so has highlighted the ways disabled people have responded to and shaped the conditions facing them, recasting them as historical *actors* instead of passive victims or dependents. By deploying experiential sources in this way, recent disability histories powerfully challenge dominant stereotypes about disabled peoples' lives while simultaneously probing how such ideas have influenced lived experiences of bodily and cognitive non-normativity.[16]

1988); David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder (eds), *The Body and Physical Difference: Discourses of Disability* (Ann Arbor, 1997); Rosemarie Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York, 1997); Robert Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder: Deformity and Disability in the Graeco-Roman World* (London, 1995); Lois Bragg, 'From the mute god to the lesser god: disability in Medieval Celtic and Old Norse literature', *Disability & Society*, 12/2 (1997), pp. 165–78.

[15] For examples of recent studies that make extensive use of institutional and vernacular sources: Iain Hutchison, Martin Atherton and Jaipreet Virdi (eds), *Disability and the Victorians: Attitudes, Interventions, Legacies* (Manchester, 2020); Heli Leppälä, 'Duty to entitlement: work and citizenship in the Finnish post-war disability policy, early 1940s to 1970', *Social History of Medicine*, 27/1 (2014), pp. 144–64; Mike Mantin, '"His whole nature requires development": education, school life and deafness in Wales, 1850–1914', *Social History of* Medicine, 30/4 (2017), pp. 727–47; Jameel Hampton, *Disability and the Welfare State in Britain: Changes in Perception and Policy, 1948–79* (Bristol, 2016); Kathleen M. Brian and James W. Trent, Jr. (eds), *Phallacies: Historical Intersections of Disability and Masculinity* (New York, 2017); Patrick Schmidt, 'Writing a discourse history of multiple discourses: an approach to perceptions and constructions of dis/ability in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European societies', *Frühneuzeit-Info*, 21 (2020), pp. 18–28; Lisa Trentin, *The Hunchback in Hellenistic and Roman Art* (London, 2015); Anu Korhonen, 'Disability humour in English jestbooks of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', *Cultural History*, 3/1 (2014), pp. 27–53.

[16] For examples of recent studies that foreground experiential sources: Guðrún V. Stefánsdóttir and Sólveig Ólafsdóttir, 'The peculiar attitude of the people: the life and social conditions of one "feebleminded" girl in the early 20th century' in Hanna Björg Sigurjónsdóttir and James G. Rice (eds), *Understanding Disability Throughout History: Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Iceland from Settlement to 1936* (New York, 2022), pp. 58–75; Dustin Galer, *Working Towards Equity: Disability Rights Activism and Employment in Late Twentieth-Century Canada* (Toronto, 2018); Herbert Muyinda, 'Negotiating disability: mobilization and organization among landmine survivors in late twentieth-century northern Uganda' in Susan Burch and Michael Rembis (eds), *Disability Histories* (Urbana, 2014), pp. 98–116; Jagdish Chander, 'Self-advocacy and blind activists: the origins of the Disability Rights Movement in twentieth-century India' in Burch and Rembis (eds), *Disability Histories*, pp. 364–80; Bianca Frohne, 'Performing dis/ability? Constructions of 'Infirmity' in Late Medieval and Early Modern Life Writing' in Christian Krötzl, Jenni Kuuliala, and Katariina Mustakallio (eds), *Infirmity in Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Social and Cultural Approaches to Health, Weakness and Care* (New York, 2015), pp. 51–65; Thomas A. Foster, 'Recovering Washington's body-double: disability and manliness in the life and legacy of a founding father', *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 32/1 (2012), http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/3028/3064 [accessed 28 May 2022]; Corinne Doria, '"From the darkness to the light": memoirs of blind Canadian veterans of the First and Second World Wars', *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, 7/3 (2018), pp. 122–44; Jennifer Thorn, 'From "Blind Susan" to *Incidents in the Life of a Blind Girl*: how Mary L. Day disabled domesticity' in Michael Rembis (ed.), *Disabling Domesticity* (New York, 2017), pp. 27–48.

The increasing use of obvious experiential accounts, such as diaries and memoirs, is only one aspect of the growing consideration of experience evident in recent disability histories. As Bredberg suggests, institutional and vernacular sources may privilege nondisabled people's voices, but they are not necessarily devoid of experiential perspectives.[17] Used imaginatively, critically and with an awareness of their mediated nature, such sources can be read 'against the grain' to yield insights into the lived experience of disability.[18] Biographical details, sometimes emanating from disabled people themselves, but recorded by others, are frequently found in court records, parliamentary reports, petitions, or the writings of journalists. In recent years, scholars have increasingly mined such sources to illuminate the lives of disabled people whose experiences and voices might otherwise go unnoticed.[19] Confronting a relative dearth of 'ego-documents' written by people outside the social and political elites, historians specialising in the premodern era, such as Irina Metzler, have been particularly adept and innovative in their use of a wide range of sources to 'tease out' the 'quotidian experience of physical impairment' in the past.[20] Disability historians have also realised that first-hand accounts of disability, shaped as they are by the culture of the time, reveal a lot about the institutional and cultural contexts in which disabled people have lived and the 'social expectations' facing them.[21] Although experience has received more attention from disability historians over the past decade or so, then, this has not been at the expense of institutional or vernacular perspectives. If anything, recently published disability histories have attempted to bring together institutional, cultural, *and* experiential perspectives into a more complex whole.[22]

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[17] Elizabeth Bredberg, 'Writing disability history', p. 194.

[18] Kirsti Bohata, Alexandra Jones, Mike Mantin, and Steven Thompson, *Disability in Industrial Britain: A Cultural and Literary History of Impairment in the Coal Industry, 1880–1948* (Manchester, 2020), pp. 8–9.

[19] For example: Riikka Miettinen, '"Disabled" minds: mental impairments and dis/ability in Early Modern Sweden', *Frühneuzeit-Info*, 21 (2020), pp. 54–69; David M. Turner and Daniel Blackie, 'Disability and political activism in industrializing Britain, c. 1830–1850', *Social History*, 47/2 (2022), pp. 117–40; Jane Draycott, 'Reconstructing the lived experience of disability in Antiquity: a case study from Roman Egypt', *Greece & Rome*, 62/2 (2015), pp. 189–205; Vanessa Warne, 'Clearing the streets: blindness and begging in Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor'* in Glenn Clark, Judith Owens and Greg T. Smith (eds), *City Limits: Perspectives on the Historical European City* (Montreal, 2010), pp. 205–26.

[20] Irina Metzler, *A social history of disability in the Middle Ages*, (New York, 2013), pp. 1–3; Angela Schattner, 'Disabled to work? Impairment, the in/ability to work and perceptions of dis/ability in late medieval and early modern Germany', *Disability Studies Quarterly* 37/4 (2017), https://dsq-sds.org/article/view/6105/4825 [accessed 28 May 2022].

[21] Schattner, 'Disabled to work'?

[22] For example: Audra Jennings, *Out of the Horrors of War: Disability Politics in World War II America* (Philadelphia, 2016); Christian Laes, *Disabilities and the Disabled in the Roman World: A Social and Cultural History* (Cambridge, 2018); Dea H. Boster, *African American Slavery and Disability: Bodies, Property, and Power in the Antebellum South, 1800–1860* (New York, 2013); David M. Turner and Daniel Blackie, *Disability in the Industrial Revolution* (Manchester, 2018); Sharon T. Strocchia, 'Disability histories from the convent', *Early Modern Women*, 15/1 (2020), pp. 74–83; Sarah F. Rose, *No Right to be Idle: the Invention of Disability, 1840s–1930s* (Chapel Hill, 2017).

Disability history has also turned towards material culture in recent years, illuminating, amongst other things, how spaces and objects shape and reflect perceptions and experiences of disability, and providing clues about the social position of disabled people in the past. Employing the built environment and objects as sources, historians are revealing how design privileges or accommodates certain bodies at the expense of others, as well as the role technology plays in defining disability. Examining objects made, used or designed by disabled people from antiquity to the twenty-first century – such as prosthetic limbs, hearing devices, ramps and adapted cars – is enabling the field to develop a more visceral sense of the lived experiences of their users than written sources alone permit. The weight, look and feel of objects, along with signs of wear and tear, for instance, do more than simply suggest the societal pressures facing non-normative bodies – they also offer tangible evidence of how disabled people have *lived* their lives.[23]

Disability history has long been marked by methodological diversity and a willingness to draw on other disciplines for tools and insights.[24] This continues to be the case today. During the past decade, increasing numbers of historians have unsettled established orthodoxies by drawing on Foucauldian concepts and methods, while others have looked to archaeology, literary, and science and technology studies for inspiration.[25] The use of biography has also grown, reflecting the field's preference for focused case studies, such as those examining specific institutions, economic sectors, individuals or events, over more wide-angled analyses.[26]

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[23] Katherine Ott, 'Disability things: material culture and American disability history, 1700–2010' in Burch and Rembis (eds), *Disability Histories*, pp. 119–35; idem, 'Material culture, technology, and the body in disability history' in Rembis, Kudlick, and Nielsen (eds), *Oxford Handbook of Disability History*, pp. 125–140. For recent studies that include a substantial material culture component: Jane Draycott (ed.), *Prostheses in Antiquity* (New York, 2019); Jaipreet Virdi, *Hearing Happiness: Deafness Cures in History* (Chicago, 2020); Bess Williamson & Elizabeth Guffey (eds), *Making Disability Modern: Design Histories* (London, 2020); Debby Sneed, 'The architecture of access: ramps at ancient Greek healing sanctuaries', *Antiquity*, 94/376 (2020), pp. 1015–29; Bess Williamson, *Accessible America: A History of Disability and Design* (New York, 2019); Jaipreet Virdi, 'Material traces of disability: Andrew Gawley's steel hands', *Nuncius*, *35*/3 (2020), pp. 606–31.

[24] Kudlick, 'Disability history'.

[25] Pieter Verstraete, *In the Shadow of Disability: Reconnecting History, Identity and Politics* (Opladen, 2012); Barsch, Klein, and Verstraete (eds), *The Imperfect Historian*; Laes, *Disabilities and the Disabled in the Roman World*; Longmore, *Telethons*; John M. Kinder, 'War and disability studies' in Jennifer Haytock (ed.), *War and American Literature* (New York, 2021); Jona T. Garz, 'Fabricating Spaces and Knowledge: The Berlin-Dalldorf Municipal Asylum for "Feeble-Minded" Children (1880–1900)', *History of Education Review*, 50/2 (2021), pp. 146–65; Coreen McGuire, *Measuring Difference, Numbering Normal: Setting the Standards for Disability in the Interwar Period* (Manchester, 2020).

[26] For example: Foster, 'Recovering Washington's body-double'; Nielsen, *Money, Marriage, and Madness*; Alice Bower, 'Guðmundur Bergþórsson as creator and creation: a folk narrative study of a 17th Century Disabled Poet' in Sigurjónsdóttir and Rice (eds), *Understanding Disability*, pp. 146–62; Nathaniel Smith Kogan, 'Aberrations in the body and in the body politic: the eighteenth-century life of Benjamin Lay, disabled abolitionist', *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 36/3 (2016), https://dsq-sds.org/article/view/5135/4410 [accessed 28 May 2022]; Trembinski, *Illness and Authority*; Penny Richards, 'Thomas Cameron's "Pure and guileless life," 1806–1870: affection and developmental disability in a North Carolina family' in Burch and Rembis (eds), *Disability Histories*, pp. 35–57; Draycott, 'Reconstructing the lived experience of disability in Antiquity'.

These studies are good at illuminating the particular, but their relatively narrow focus raises questions about their representativeness. What do their findings tell us about disability in other settings?

Questions of representativeness also dog the field's reliance on qualitative methods. These are vital for recovering the 'voices' of disabled people and getting a sense of the attitudes and forces shaping their lives. However, used alone, they say little about the true scale of the phenomena they help uncover. While some disability historians address this problem by drawing on statistics derived from sources such as censuses or asylum registers, such data rarely lie at the heart of the overall analyses presented.[27] On the whole, then, quantitative methods remain peripheral to disability history. Nevertheless, more wholehearted quantitative studies are emerging.

In Sweden, for example, researchers led by Lotta Vikström are using extensive demographic databases to probe the impact of impairment to the lives of disabled people in the nineteenth century. By comparing the situation of disabled people to their non-disabled compatriots, Vikström and her team have identified areas of life where disability had a *measurable* effect on the life-course of disabled Swedes.[28] This illuminates the relative position of disabled people as a social group, suggesting areas where structural or attitudinal barriers were particularly significant. Such work demonstrates the potential quantitative studies hold for disability history. By making quantification easier, increasing computing power and the growth of digital history may increase the appeal of quantitative methods to future disability historians. We hope so, but not at the expense of qualitative methodologies. For it is through a blend of quantitative *and* qualitative approaches that disability history will acquire an interpretative framework capable of making room for both macro and micro perspectives.[29]

Vikström's team is also indicative of another emerging trend in disability history. Collaborative work, involving scholars coming together in multiperson – and often multidisciplinary – teams to investigate broad-ranging disability history topics, is becoming far more common, particularly in Europe.[30] With their wider bases of expertise, these projects

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[27] For example: Aparna Nair, '"They shall see his face": blindness in British India, 1850–1950', *Medical History*, 61/2 (2017), pp. 181–99; Rose, *No Right to Be Idle*.

[28] For details of the DISLIFE project (2016–2021) led by Vikström, including a list of publications: https://www.umu.se/en/research/projects/dislife-liveable-disabilities-life-courses-and-opportunity-structures-across-time/ [accessed 28 May 2022]. This work has significant comparative potential. For example: Sofie De Veirman, Helena Haage and Lotta Vikström, 'Deaf and unwanted? Marriage characteristics of deaf people in eighteenth-and nineteenth-century Belgium: a comparative and cross-regional approach', *Continuity and Change*, 31/2 (2016), 241–73.

[29] Richards and Burch, 'Documents, ethics, and the disability historian', p. 167.

[30] In addition to Vikström's DISLIFE project, other examples of European-based multiperson research initiatives include: 'Disability and Industrial Society' (UK, 2011–16), https://www.dis-ind-soc.org.uk [accessed 28 May 2022]; 'Rethinking Disability' (Netherlands, 2015–2020), https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/research/research-projects/humanities/rethinking-disability-the-global-impact-of-the-international-year-of-disabled-persons-1981-in-historical-

are better placed to harness the interdisciplinary skills and knowledge needed to make big breakthroughs in the field than researchers working alone. No historian has in-depth knowledge of *all* historical periods and places, yet it is imperative disability history ranges *across* traditional periodisations and geographies if we want to identify rupture points in the way 'disability' has been perceived and experienced. Only a team of researchers working in concert can satisfactorily address such big questions.

As the evidentiary base of disability history has expanded, historians have paid greater attention to the forces shaping the archival material they deploy and the implications of their methodological assumptions and choices. Disability scholars increasingly recognise that archives and histories are never neutral repositories of knowledge.[31] In 2013, Sebastian Barsch, Anne Klein and Pieter Verstraete observed a general lack of critical 'reflection' on methodological issues and 'a kind of unease with dealing too explicitly with the presuppositions that affect the… collection of historical data' within disability history.[32] Since then, however, contributions exploring 'methodological concerns' and the creation and 'mobilisation' of historical knowledge have appeared, demonstrating that disability historians are becoming more comfortable and adept at interrogating the epistemological underpinnings of the field.[33]

The ethics of disability history are also receiving more scrutiny. For example, drawing on their research into the pension files of disabled First World War veterans, Jessica Meyer and Alexia Moncrieff suggest that the dissemination of medical information included in such records could be regarded as a kind of 'informational colonialism', since data of this kind 'would be deemed confidential' if revealed in other contexts.[34] Ethical concerns have also been raised regarding the way images of 'disabled' people are deployed, especially those created under duress or without the subject's consent. In the internet age, such concerns are particularly

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perspective#tab-1 [accessed 28 May 2022]; 'Disability before Disability' (Iceland, 2017–20), http://dbd.hi.is/disability-before-disability/ [accessed 28 May 2022]; 'Men, Women and Care' (UK, 2015–20), https://menwomenandcare.leeds.ac.uk/ [accessed 28 May 2022].

[31] For example: Kim E. Nielsen, *Money, Marriage, and Madness: The Life of Anna Ott* (Urbana, 2020), pp. 6–7.

[32] Sebastian Barsch, Anne Klein, and Pieter Verstraete, 'The need for imperfection: disability histories in Europe' in Barsch, Klein, and Verstraete (eds), *The Imperfect Historian: Disability Histories in Europe* (Frankfurt am Main, 2013), p. 7.

[33] Christopher Crocker, Yoav Tirosh, and Ármann Jakobsson, 'Disability in Medieval Iceland: some methodological concerns' in Sigurjónsdóttir and Rice (eds), *Understanding Disability*, pp. 12–28; Natalie Spagnuolo, 'Mobilising historical knowledge: locating the disability archive' in K. Ellis, R. Garland-Thomson, M. Kent and R. Robertson (eds) *Interdisciplinary Approaches to Disability: Looking Towards the Future: Volume 2* (New York, 2019), pp. 153–63; Richards and Burch, 'Documents, ethics, and the disability historian'.

[34] Jessica Meyer and Alexia Moncrieff, 'Family not to be informed? the ethical use of historical medical documentation' in Hanley and Meyer (eds), *Patient Voices in Britain*, pp. 61–87.

relevant given the ease with which images circulate widely and freely.[35] While the sources disability historians use may help make 'disabled' people more visible in history, they also introduce ethical dilemmas that need addressing, and this is something scholars are increasingly turning their attention to.[36]

IV

While disability history is still a relatively young field, the work that has been done indicates several notable areas of strength. Of these, perhaps the most significant regards the geographical and temporal scope of the field. Early work was dominated by American historians specialising in the late modern period to such an extent that the seminal collection announcing the arrival of *The New Disability History* in 2001 was subtitled 'American perspectives' and only examined the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[37] Although less pronounced, this bias continues to mark the field today.[38] Yet the situation is changing. The last ten years have witnessed a significant increase in studies exploring disability before 1800, as well as a substantial growth in interest in regions beyond North America. Building on ground-breaking work by Robert Garland, Martha Rose and Irina Metzler, historians of Antiquity and the Middle Ages have expanded our knowledge of 'disability' in the premodern world, challenging the popular image of this as an especially bleak period in the history of disability.[39] Disability studies of the early modern period have also grown, similarly enriching the field.[40] However, despite the emergence

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[35] Ellen Samuels, 'Examining Millie and Christine McKoy: where enslavement and enfreakment meet', *Signs*, 37/1 (2011), pp. 75–6. For further discussion of ethics and historical photography, see: Katherine D. B. Rawling, '"The annexed photos were taken today": Photographing patients in the late-nineteenth-century asylum', *Social History of Medicine*, 34/1 (2021), pp. 256–84; Katherine D. B. Rawling, '"She sits all day in the attitude depicted in the photo": Photography and the psychiatric patient in the late nineteenth century', *Medical Humanities*, 43/2 (2017), pp. 99–110; Jason Bate, *Photography in the Great War: The Ethics of Emerging Medical Collections from the Great War* (London, 2022).

[36] Richards and Burch, 'Documents, ethics, and the disability historian'. On the ethical implications of biography in disability history: Kim E. Nielsen, 'The perils and promises of disability biography' in *The Oxford Handbook of Disability History* (Oxford, 2018), pp. 21–40.

[37] Longmore and Umansky (eds), *New Disability History*.

[38] Julia Gebke and Julia Heinemann, 'Dealing with definitional voids: DisAbility in Early Modern Europe', *Frühneuzeit-Info*, 21 (2020), p. 8.

[39] Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*; Martha L. Rose, *The Staff of Oedipus: Transforming Disability in Ancient Greece* (Ann Arbor, 2003); Irina Metzler, *Disability in medieval Europe: thinking about physical impairment during the high Middle Ages, c. 1100–1400* (New York, 2006); Debby Sneed, 'Disability and infanticide in Ancient Greece', *Hesperia* 90/4 (2021), pp. 747–72; Christian Laes (ed.), *Disability in Antiquity* (New York, 2017); Draycott, 'Reconstructing the lived experience of disability in Antiquity'; Jonathan Hsy, Tory V. Pearman, and Joshua R. Eyler (eds), *A Cultural History of Disability in the Middle Ages* (London, 2020); Jenni Kuuliala, *Childhood Disability and Social Integration in the Middle Ages: Constructions of Impairments in Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-century Canonization Processes* (Turnhout, 2016).

[40] For example: David Houston Wood and Allison P. Hobgood (eds), *Recovering Disability in Early Modern England* (Columbus, 2013); Susan Anderson and Liam Haydon (eds), *A Cultural History of Disability in the Renaissance* (London, 2020); Sara Scalenghe, *Disability in the Ottoman Arab World,*

of studies focusing on the majority world, disability history remains centred on the global North.[41] Moreover, while studies of earlier periods are often quite wide-ranging in their geographical coverage, few disability histories present sustained comparative analyses involving two or more territories or nations.[42] Furthermore, although historians of premodern disability often take a *longue durée* approach in their work, it is rare for studies to examine several historical periods, paying equal attention to evidence from the ancient, medieval *and* modern worlds.[43] This seriously undermines the field's ability to tease out and understand change over time. Nevertheless, while there is undoubtedly room for further expansion and innovation regarding the geographical and chronological scope of the field, the advancements of the past decade are impressive.

The recent wave of research into earlier periods and settings outside the United States has transformed disability history, nuancing the field and encouraging a profound rethink of the analytic approaches disability historians adopt. As work on early and premodern 'Western societies' reveals, before the late modern era, 'disability' did not operate as an 'umbrella term' for disparate types of bodily or cognitive non-normativity. Instead, conditions regarded as falling under the rubric of disability today were often subsumed under categories such as 'infirmity' or 'weakness'.[44] Similarly, by uncovering differences between European and non-European understandings of human difference, work on non-Western societies demonstrates that meanings of non-normativity are *culturally* as well as historically contingent. For example, writing of the premodern Arab World, Sara Scalenghe notes that 'there is little evidence that leprosy was deemed a product of divine punishment, or that moral

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1500–1800 (New York, 2014); Elizabeth B. Bearden, *Monstrous Kinds: Body, Space, and Narrative in Renaissance Representations of Disability* (Ann Arbor, 2019).

[41] For a sense of the evolving geographical scope of disability history: Roy Hanes, Ivan Brown, and Nancy Hansen (eds), *The Routledge History of Disability* (New York, 2017). For additional studies foregrounding majority world perspectives: Muyinda, 'Negotiating disability'; Kristina L. Richardson, *Difference and Disability in the Medieval Islamic World: Blighted Bodies* (Edinburgh, 2012); Heather Vrana, 'The Precious Seed of Christian Virtue: Charity, Disability, and Belonging in Guatemala, 1871–1947', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 101/2 (2021), pp. 265–95; Scalenghe, *Disability in the Ottoman Arab World*; Chander, 'Self-advocacy and blind activists'.

[42] For notable exceptions: De Veirman, Haage and Vikström, 'Deaf and unwanted?'; Deborah Cohen, *The War Come Home: Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914–1939* (Berkeley, 2001); Julie Anderson and Heather R. Perry, 'Rehabilitation and restoration: orthopaedics and disabled soldiers in Germany and Britain in the First World War', *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*, 30/4 (2014), pp. 227–51.

[43] Jenni Kuuliala, Katariina Mustakallio, and Christian Krötzl, 'Introduction: *Infirmitas* in Antiquity and the Middle Ages' in Christian Krötzl, Katariina Mustakallio, and Jenni Kuuliala (eds), *Infirmity in Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (New York, 2015), p. 1. For an exception to this characterisation: Stiker, *A History of Disability*. Although making no mention of the ancient world specifically, Kim E. Nielsen also pays significant attention to both the premodern and modern periods in *A Disability History of the United States* (Boston, 2012). This examines the region now known as the United States from the Pre-Columbian era to the early twentieth-first century.

[44] Gebke and Heinemann, 'Dealing with definitional voids', p. 5; Kuuliala, Mustakallio, and Krötzl, 'Introduction', pp. 3–4.

or spiritual stigma was attached to it' in the manner it was in Christian Europe.[45] Studies of medieval and early modern societies also attest to the 'fluidity' of 'disability' historically, suggesting that its association with permanence is a relatively recent development.[46]

If disability did not operate as a social category in the way it does today in Western societies, how might we approach historical understandings and experiences of bodily and cognitive difference without projecting modern meanings on to the past, distorting it in the process? What are the risks and benefits of identifying historical subjects who would not have recognised the term themselves 'disabled people'? Committed to creating a 'usable past', but ever more conscious of the dangers of anachronism, disability scholars are increasingly addressing these questions directly.[47] As Joyce Huff and Martha Stoddard Holmes write:

> While we use current terms such as 'disability'..., we do so with an awareness that we are imposing our categories on the people of the past in order to frame their experiences in a manner that is meaningful to scholars in the present.[48]

Others take a different tack, drawing on disability theory, but remaining faithful to the terminology of the period they study. Examining depictions of somatic 'deviance' in fifteenth-century canonisation records, Jenni Kuuliala explicitly avoids using the label 'disabilities' to refer to 'physical conditions' such as blindness or difficulties walking. Instead, Kuuliala prefers to retain the language of late medieval Europe, opting to use 'infirmity' over current disability terms.[49] Such examples indicate that, while there are differences in the approaches taken, scholars are paying more attention to how they use disability as a category of historical analysis, realising that it is not quite as straightforward a matter as early work in the field implied.

Alongside disability history's 'traditional' concentration on institutions, social policy, and cultural representations, and its more wholehearted exploration of experience in recent years, the field has also tended to privilege certain kinds of 'disabilities' at the expense of others. For example, people with functional impairments, especially

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[45] Sara Scalenghe, 'Disability in the premodern Arab World' in Rembis, Kudlick, and Nielsen (eds), *Oxford Handbook of Disability History*, p. 78.

[46] Klaus-Peter Horn and Bianca Frohne, 'On the fluidity of "disability" in Medieval and Early Modern societies: opportunities and strategies in a new field of research' in Barsch, Klein, and Verstraete (eds), *The Imperfect Historian*, pp. 38–40.

[47] Spagnuolo, 'Mobilising historical knowledge'. On the problems of categorisation across time periods, see Essaka Joshua, *Physical Disability in British Romantic Literature* (Cambridge, 2020), esp. pp. 5–22.

[48] Joyce L. Huff and Martha Stoddard Holmes, 'Introduction: Negotiating Normalcy in the Long Nineteenth Century' in Huff and Holmes (eds), *A Cultural History of Disability in the Long Nineteenth Century* (London, 2020), p. 2.

[49] Jenni Kuuliala, 'Disability and Religious Practices in Late Medieval Prussia: Infirmity and the Miraculous in the Canonization Process of St. Dorothea of Montau (1404–1406)' in Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Raisa Maria Toivo (eds), *Lived Religion and the Long Reformation in Northern Europe c. 1300–1700* (Boston, 2016), pp. 46–74, esp. p. 51.

physical or sensory ones, have been the focus of many fine disability histories.[50] Although less prominent, perceptions and experiences of people with cognitive or intellectual impairments have also received attention, especially in the last few years.[51] There are signs, though, that disability history is moving beyond its preoccupation with disabilities associated with functional impairment to consider more fully other types of human difference. Studies of 'deformity', 'freakery' and 'monstrosity' have long been a feature of the field, but recent work indicates a broadening and intensification of interest regarding visibly different bodies, as scholars turn their attention towards subjects such as corpulency and facial disfigurement.[52] Intersectional perspectives are also becoming more common, as historians increasingly recognise the ways perceptions and experiences of disability are enmeshed with, and

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[50] For examples from the last ten years: David M. Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England: Imagining Physical Impairment* (New York, 2012); Ben Curtis and Steven Thompson, '"A plentiful crop of cripples made by all this progress": disability, artificial limbs and working-class mutualism in the south Wales coalfield, 1890–1948', *Social History of Medicine*, 27/4 (2014), pp. 708–27; Jenni Kuuliala and Reima Välimäki, 'Deafness and Pastoral Care in the Middle Ages' in Scott M. Williams (ed.), *Disability in Medieval Christian Philosophy and Theology* (New York, 2020), pp. 179–202; Hanna Lindberg, 'National belonging through signed and spoken languages: the case of Finland-Swedish deaf people in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' in Ville Kivimäki, Sami Suodenjoki, Tanja Vahtikari (eds), *Lived Nation as the History of Experiences and Emotions in Finland, 1800–2000* (Cham, 2021); Sofie De Veirman. 'Deaf and disabled? (un)employment of deaf people in Belgium: a comparison of eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century cohorts', *Disability & Society*, 30/3 (2015), pp. 460–74; Brian H. Greenwald and Joseph J. Murray, *In Our Own Hands: Essays in Deaf History, 1780–1970* (Washington, D.C., 2016); Bianca Frohne, 'Blindness: Diverse Approaches to a Complex Phenomenon in the 15th and 16th Centuries' in Anderson and Haydon (eds), *A Cultural History of Disability in the Renaissance*, pp. 83–99; Matthias Reiss, *Blind Workers against Charity: The National League of the Blind of Great Britain and Ireland, 1893–1970* (Basingstoke, 2015); Adam Luptak and John Paul Newman 'Victory, defeat, gender, and disability: blind war veterans in interwar Czechoslovakia', *Journal of Social History*, 53/3 (2020), pp. 604–19.

[51] For example: Irina Metzler, *Fools and Idiots? Intellectual disability in the Middle Ages* (Manchester, 2016); David Kilgannon, 'A "forgettable minority"? Psychiatric institutions and the intellectually disabled in Ireland, 1965–84', *Social History of Medicine*, 34/3 (2021), pp. 808–827; Cornelia H. Dayton, '"The oddest man that I ever saw": assessing cognitive disability on eighteenth-century Cape Cod', *Journal of Social History*, 49/1 (2015), pp. 77–99; Simon Jarrett, *Those They Called Idiots: The Idea of the Disabled Mind from 1700 to the Present Day* (London, 2020); Patrick McDonagh, C. F. Goodey and Tim Stainton (eds), *Intellectual Disability: A Conceptual History, 1200–1900* (Manchester, 2018), Stef Eastoe, *Idiocy, imbecility and Insanity in Victorian Society: Caterham Asylum, 1867–1911* (Cham, 2020); Gerald V. O'Brien, *Framing the Moron: The Social Construction of Feeble-Mindedness in the American Eugenic Era* (Manchester, 2016).

[52] David M. Turner and Kevin Stagg (eds), *Social Histories of Disability and Deformity* (Abingdon, 2006); Helen Deutsch and Felicity Nussbaum (eds), *Defects: Engendering the Modern Body* (Ann Arbor, 2000); Rosemarie Garland Thomson (ed.), *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body* (New York, 1996); Whitney Dirks, '"Weighty celebrity": corpulency, monstrosity, and freakery in eighteenth-and nineteenth-century England', *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 39/3 (2019), https://dsq-sds.org/article/view/6602/5410 [accessed 28 May 2022]; Eilis H. L. Boyle, '"An uglier duckling than before": reclaiming agency and visibility amongst facially-wounded ex-servicemen in Britain after the First World War', *Alter*, 13/4 (2019), pp. 308–22; Patricia Skinner and Emily Cock (eds), *Approaching Facial Difference: Past and Present* (London, 2018); Jasmine Wood, '"Lashings of grog and girls": masculinity and sexuality in the rehabilitation of facially disfigured servicemen in the Second World War', *War & Society*, 40/4 (2021), pp. 296–314.

shaped by, other powerful social categories, particularly gender, race and class.[53]

Given the field's tendency to invoke the 'medical model' when examining disability in modern Western cultures, medicalisation has also received substantial attention. Often perceived in a negative light, historians have examined the 'medicalisation of disability' from multiple angles, revealing the complexity of the medical model's evolution and influence.[54] Recognising the importance of the medical professions, but moving beyond them, disability historians have shown how state policies, technology, and charitable fundraising have also been motors of medicalisation.[55] Furthermore, scholarship on the early modern period indicates that medical experts were significant to the validation of 'disability' before the eighteenth century.[56] Such work adds nuance to the schematic portrayals of the medical model's ascent found in earlier scholarship, illuminating not only the diverse drivers of medicalisation, but also the unevenness of the process and disabled people's complicated relationship to it.[57] As Bohata, Jones, Mantin and Thompson note in their disability history of British mining: 'medicalisation was complex and varied, with impetus coming from miners and disabled people just as much, perhaps, as from the medical profession'.[58] Findings like these challenge popular depictions of medicalisation as a top-down process. Rather than resisting medicalisation, disabled people have often promoted it for their own benefit. After all, as Longmore recognised, medicine and medicalised understandings of human difference not only led to oppression or marginalisation. By improving 'health and functioning' or undermining stigmatising superstitious or religious beliefs about disability, they have also had more positive outcomes for disabled people.[59]

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[53] For example: Kathleen M. Brian and James W. Trent, Jr (eds), *Phallacies: Historical Intersections of Disability and Masculinity* (New York, 2017); Susan Burch and Lindsey Patterson, 'Not just any body: disability, gender, and history', *Journal of Women's History*, 25/4 (2013), pp. 122–37; Jenifer L. Barclay, *The Mark of Slavery: Disability, Race, and Gender in Antebellum America* (Urbana, 2021); Daniel Blackie, 'Disability, dependency, and the family in the early United States' in Susan Burch and Michael Rembis (eds), *Disability Histories* (Urbana, 2014), pp. 17–34; Amy W. Farnbach Pearson, 'Restoration to usefulness: Victorian middle-class attitudes towards the healthcare of the working poor' in Hutchison, Atherton, and Virdi (eds), *Disability and the Victorians*, pp. 21–37; Clare Stainthorp, 'Activity and passivity: class and gender in the case of the artificial hand', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 45/1 (2017), pp. 1–16.

[54] Kuuliala, Mustakallio, and Krötzl, 'Introduction', p. 9.

[55] Jaipreet Virdi, 'Medicalising deafness in Victorian London: The Royal Ear Hospital, 1816–1900' in Hutchison, Atherton and Virdi (eds), *Disability and the Victorians*, pp. 73–91; Heather R. Perry, *Recycling the Disabled: Army, Medicine, and Modernity in WWI Germany* (Manchester, 2015); Laurel Daen, 'Revolutionary war invalid pensions and the bureaucratic language of disability in the early Republic', *Early American Literature*, 52/1 (2017), pp. 141–67; McGuire, *Measuring Difference*; Longmore, *Telethons*.

[56] Geoffrey L. Hudson, 'The relief of English disabled ex-sailors, c. 1590–1680' in Cheryl A. Fury (ed.), *The Social History of English Seamen, 1485–1649* (Woodbridge, 2012), pp. 248–49.

[57] Longmore, 'Uncovering the hidden history of disabled people', pp. 355–6.

[58] Bohata, Jones, Mantin, and Thompson, *Disability in Industrial Britain*, p. 12.

[59] Longmore, *Telethons*, pp. 105–6; 92–3; Julie Livingston, 'Insights from an African history of disability', *Radical History Review*, 94 (2006), p. 123.

Recognising this complexity, recent historical work is prompting a radical re-evaluation of the medical model and its consequences.

Another well-studied theme in disability history is activism. While American and European perspectives dominate, this area is arguably the one where insights from Africa and Asia are most common. This broad geographical scope has enabled historians to recognise the transnational influences acting on national and global disability movements while simultaneously illuminating the diverse historical trajectories disability activism has taken in different places.[60] Furthermore, research on activism has underscored the role institutions such as schools, rehabilitation facilities and hospitals have played in fostering disability identities, solidarity and political mobilisation.[61] The ways in which dominant cultural forces constrain the radicalism of disability organisations have also received attention. For example, as Audra Jennings and Jennifer Erkulwater demonstrate, despite their demands for equality, US disability activists in the twentieth century struggled to transcend the gender and racial politics of the time.[62]

As impressive as disability scholarship on activism is, its lack of chronological depth obscures the full range of disabled people's political actions. Most studies focus on the last one hundred years, especially the period after the emergence of the modern DRM in the 1970s.[63] This

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[60] Galer, *Working towards Equity*; Audra Jennings, *Out of the Horrors of War: Disability Politics in World War II America* (Philadelphia, 2016); Scot Danforth, 'Becoming the Rolling Quads: disability politics at the University of California, Berkeley, in the 1960s', *History of Education Quarterly*, 58/4 (2018), pp. 506–36; Fred Pelka, *What We Have Done: An Oral History of the Disability Rights Movement* (Amherst, 2012); Doris Fleischer and Frieda Zames, *The Disability Rights Movement: From Charity to Confrontation* (Philadelphia, 2011); Gildas Brégain, 'An entangled perspective on disability history: the disability protests in Argentina, Brazil and Spain, 1968–1982' in Barsch, Klein, and Verstraete (eds), *The Imperfect Historian*, pp. 133–53; Fernando Fontes, 'The Portuguese disabled people's movement: development, demands and outcomes', *Disability & Society*, 29/9 (2014), pp. 1398–411; Special Issue on 'Disability movements: national policies and transnational perspectives', *Moving the Social: Journal of Social History and the History of Social Movements*, 53 (2015), https://moving-the-social.ub.rub.de/index.php/MTS/issue/view/101 [accessed 28 May 2022]; Reiss, *Blind Workers against Charity*; Marie Sépulchre and Lars Lindberg, 'Swedish disability activism: from welfare to human rights?', in Maria Berghs, Tsitsi Chataika, Yahya El-Lahib and Kudakwashe Dube (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Disability Activism* (Abingdon, 2019), pp. 398–411; Maria C. Galmarini, 'A common space of international work: disability activism, socialist internationalism, and the Russian Union of the Blind', *The Russian Review*, 2021, 80/4 (2021), pp. 624–40; Muyinda, 'Negotiating disability'; Chander, 'Self-Advocacy and Blind Activists'; Sam de Schutter, 'Transnational activism: an entangled history of the disability movement in Tanzania', *Mambo!* XIV/3 (2017), https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01707813/document [accessed 28 May 2022]; Fikru Negash Gebrekidan, 'Disability rights activism in Kenya, 1959–1964: history from below', *African studies review*, 55/3 (2012), pp. 103–22.

[61] Chander, 'Self-Advocacy and Blind Activists'; Lindsey Patterson, 'The Disability Rights Movement in the United States' in Rembis, Kudlick and Nielsen (eds), *Oxford Handbook of Disability History*, pp. 439–57.

[62] Audra Jennings, 'Engendering and regendering disability: gender and disability activism in postwar America' in Burch and Rembis (eds), *Disability Histories*, pp. 345–63; Jennifer L. Erkulwater, 'How the nation's largest minority became white: race politics and the Disability Rights Movement, 1970–1980', *Journal of Policy History*, 30/3 (2018), pp. 367–99.

[63] For a sense of the chronological bias of historical scholarship on disabled people's activism, see footnotes 60 and 62 above.

limits our understanding of disabled people's activism by implying that their engagement in meaningful political action is a relatively recent phenomenon, concerned primarily with the fight for disability rights. Yet, disabled people have a longer and richer history of activism than this. From factory reform to women's suffrage, they have fought for many causes, often taking up prominent roles in the process.[64] Until that history is better known and documented, the true scope and impact of disabled people's political activities will remain hidden, limiting our appreciation of them as significant agents of historical change.

Long recognised as a major creator of impairment, war has become a central theme in disability history. Twentieth-century wars involving nations from the global North, particularly the First World War, have been especially well studied.[65] Yet research into earlier periods is emerging, adding much-needed historical depth to this scholarship.[66] For example, work on England by Geoffrey Hudson and Caroline Nielsen examining the 'relief' given to former sailors and soldiers during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, reminds us that, while military pensions and domiciliary care for ex-servicemen have a long history, rehabilitation programmes for them are a more recent invention.[67] Such studies offer a useful point of comparison for gauging the impact of industrial warfare on the way disability and disabled people have been viewed and treated historically. By laying important groundwork for a broader historical

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[64] Turner and Blackie, 'Disability and political activism in industrializing Britain'; June Purvis, 'The prison experiences of the suffragettes in Edwardian Britain', *Women's History Review*, 4/1 (1995), p. 113; Ian Miller, 'A prostitution of the profession'? Forcible feeding, prison doctors, suffrage and the British state, 1909–1914', *Social History of Medicine*, 26/2 (2013), p. 243; Tom Shakespeare, *Disability: The Basics* (Abingdon, 2018), pp. 35–6.

[65] For an indication of the geographical and chronological bias of scholarship on disability and war: David A. Gerber (ed.), *Disabled Veterans in History*, enlarged and rev. ed. (Ann Arbor 2012). For a sense of the voluminous work examining twentieth-century conflicts involving belligerents from North America or Europe: John M. Kinder, *Paying with Their Bodies: American War and the Problem of the Disabled Veteran* (Chicago, 2015); Eric Story, 'The Indigenous casualties of war: disability, death, and the racialized politics of pensions, 1914–39', *Canadian Historical Review*, 102/2 (2021), pp. 279–304; Julie Anderson, *War, Disability and Rehabilitation in Britain: 'Soul of a Nation'* (Manchester, 2011); Helena da Silva, 'Consigned to oblivion: rehabilitation of First World War disabled veterans in Portugal (1917–1927)', *War & Society*, 37/4 (2018), pp. 262–79; Perry, *Recycling the Disabled*; Anita Magowska, 'The unwanted heroes: war invalids in Poland after World War I', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 6/2 (2014): 185–220; Pieter Verstraete, Martina Salvante and Julie Anderson (eds), Special Issue on 'Commemorating the Disabled Soldier, 1914–1940', *First World War Studies*, 6/1 (2015).

[66] For examples of studies that examine war-related disability topics before 1900: Sarah Handley-Cousins, *Bodies in Blue: Disability in the Civil War North* (Athens, GA, 2019); Daen, 'Revolutionary War invalid pensions'; Erik Petersson, 'Wounded veterans and the state: the precursor of the veteran's home in Sweden (1560–1650)', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 39/2 (2014), pp. 185–97; Daniel Blackie, 'Veterans, disability and society in the early United States' in Stephen McVeigh and Nicola Cooper (eds), *Men After War* (New York, 2013), pp. 36–51; Korneel Van Lommel, 'Heroes and Outcasts: Ambiguous Attitudes Towards Impaired and Disfigured Roman Veterans', *Classical World*, 109/1 (2015), pp. 91–117.

[67] Hudson, 'The relief of English disabled ex-sailors'; Caroline Nielsen, 'Disability, fraud and medical experience at the Royal Hospital of Chelsea in the long eighteenth century' in Kevin Linch and Matthew McCormack (eds), *Britain's Soldiers: Rethinking War and Society, 1715–1815* (Liverpool, 2014), pp. 183–201.

consideration of the intertwined histories of war and disability, recent research is helping to make changes and continuities in these areas more apparent. However, while the chronological scope of research on disability and war has broadened, studies of the topic almost always centre on disabled veterans or the policies, institutions or treatments aimed at them. As David Gerber notes, little attention has been paid to the countless number of civilians injured in conflicts around the world.[68] Until this neglect is properly addressed, disability histories of war will remain incomplete.

Although a distinct field of research in its own right, work on disability and war mirrors the orientation of disability history more broadly. Many studies, for instance, focus on specific impairment groups, such as shell-shocked, blind, or paraplegic veterans.[69] Institutional, policy and medical perspectives are similarly popular, as disability historians interested in war have also been drawn to charities, government programmes and institutions when searching for insights.[70] Cultural representations of disabled veterans – from those found in films to advertisements – have also been investigated, along with the gendered consequences and understandings of war-disability.[71] The impact of war on the design, production and supply of 'disability things' used by disabled people, such

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[68] David A. Gerber, 'Disabled veterans and the wounds of war' in Rembis, Kudlick and Nielsen (eds), *Oxford Handbook of Disability History*, p. 478. For a notable exception to this lacuna: Muyinda, 'Negotiating disability'.

[69] Tracey Loughran, *Shell-Shock and Medical Culture in First World War Britain* (Cambridge, 2017); Peter Leese, *Shell Shock: Traumatic Neurosis and the British Soldiers of the First World War* (New York, 2002); Julie M. Powell, 'Shock troupe: Medical film and the performance of "shell shock" for the British nation at war', *Social History of Medicine*, 30/2 (2017), pp. 323–45; Michael Robinson, *Shell-Shocked British Army Veterans in Ireland, 1918–39: A Difficult Homecoming* (Manchester, 2020); Maria C. Galmarini, 'Turning defects to advantages: the discourse of labour in the autobiographies of Soviet blinded Second World War veterans', *European History Quarterly*, 44/4 (2014), pp. 651–77; Evan P. Sullivan, 'Finding "the man behind the handicap": gender, rehabilitation, and the war blind of the First World War' in Frank Jacob and Stefan Karner (eds), *War and Veterans: Treatment and Reintegration of Soldiers in Post-War Societies* (Paderborn, 2020), pp. 75–97; Beth Linker and Whitney Laemmli, 'Half a man: the symbolism and science of paraplegic impotence in World War II America', *Osiris*, 30/1 (2015), pp. 228–49.

[70] Julie Anderson, 'Stoics: creating identities at St Dunstan's 1914–1920' in McVeigh and Cooper (eds), *Men After War*, pp. 79–91; Beth Linker, *War's Waste: Rehabilitation in World War I America* (Chicago, 2011); Fiona Reid, *Broken Men: Shell Shock, Treatment and Recovery in Britain, 1914–1930* (London: 2010); Mike Mantin, 'Coalmining and the national scheme for disabled ex-servicemen after the First World War', *Social History*, 41/2 (2016), pp. 155–70; Bethany Rowley, ''We will never forget you': Christian charities and the rehabilitation of disabled ex-servicemen in inter-war Leeds', *Local Population Studies*, 101/1 (2018), pp, 47–63.

[71] Alexandre Sumpf, 'War disabled on screen: remembering and forgetting the Great War in the Russian and Soviet cinema, 1914–1940', *First World War Studies*, 6/1 (2015), pp. 57–79; John M. Kinder, 'Marketing disabled manhood: veterans and advertising since the Civil War' in Brian and Trent, Jr (eds), *Phallacies*, 93–125; Julie Anderson, 'British women, disability and the Second World War', *Contemporary British History*, 20/1 (2006), pp. 37–53; Wendy Jane Gagen, 'Remastering the body, renegotiating gender: physical disability and masculinity during the First World War, the case of J. B. Middlebrook', *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'histoire*, 14/4 (2007), pp. 525–41, Joanna Bourke, 'Love and limblessness: male heterosexuality, disability, and the Great War', *Journal of War & Culture Studies*, 9/1 (2016), pp. 3–19; Martina Salvante, 'Introduction: gender and disability in the Two World Wars', *Journal of Social History*, 53/3 (2020), pp. 595–603.

as prosthetic limbs or adapted cars, has likewise attracted significant attention.[72]

Most disability histories of war tend to adopt a national framework, zooming in on a specific country. Deborah Cohen's 2001 book examining disabled veterans in Britain *and* Germany demonstrated the feasibility and potential of a comparative approach.[73] Yet, since then, few historians have examined disability and war from a wholeheartedly comparative angle.[74] However, while systematic comparison between countries may be lacking, studies complicating national perspectives on war and disability are emerging. Recognising that many of the major conflicts of world history have involved imperial powers, disability historians are increasingly turning their attention towards the experiences of colonial subjects wounded in war. For example, disabled African and Indian veterans who fought for Britain and France in the First World War, or Franco's forces in the Spanish Civil War have all come under the spotlight. By examining disability in imperial contexts, such studies illuminate how colonial ideologies and racism have shaped understandings and experiences of physical and cognitive difference, as well as the provision of medical and social care.[75] This work further infuses the historiography of disability with insights from the majority world, opening up new vistas on the embodied consequences of colonialism in the process.

Other areas of disability history are also witnessing an increase in interest in imperial connections and colonialism. For example, Stefanie Hunt–Kennedy's study of disability and slavery in the British Caribbean adopts an 'Atlantic World' perspective.[76] This marks her work out from other important studies of disability and American slavery, which is fast becoming a vibrant area of research in its own right.[77] By situating

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[72] Williamson, *Accessible America*, pp. 7, 17–42; Perry, *Recycling the Disabled*, pp. 45–83. For more on 'disability things': Ott, 'Disability things'.

[73] Cohen, *The War Come Home*.

[74] One of the few studies of war disability to adopt a comparative analysis since 2001 is Anderson and Perry, 'Rehabilitation and restoration'. As suggested above, there is also space and potential for comparative studies of war disability examining two or more different conflicts. The frequent limitation of current analyses to individual conflicts hampers the field's ability to explore change over time and from place to place. One example is Edgar Jones, Ian Palmer and Simon Wessely, 'War pensions (1900–1945): changing models of psychological understanding', *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 180/4 (2002), pp. 374–79.

[75] George N. Njung, 'Amputated men, colonial bureaucracy, and masculinity in post-World War I colonial Nigeria', *Journal of Social History*, 53/3 (2020), pp. 620–43; Gildas Brégain, 'Reintegrating without changing colonial hierarchies? Ethnic and territorial inequalities in the policies to assist war-disabled men from the French colonial empire (1916–1939)', *Alter*, 13/4 (2019), pp. 244–62; Aparna Nair, '"These curly-bearded, olive-skinned warriors": medicine, prosthetics, rehabilitation and the disabled sepoy in the First World War, 1914–1920', *Social History of Medicine*, 33/3 (2020), pp. 798–818; Hilary Buxton, 'Imperial amnesia: race, trauma and Indian troops in the First World War', *Past & Present*, 241/1 (2018), pp. 221–58; Stephanie Wright, 'Glorious brothers, unsuitable lovers: Moroccan veterans, Spanish women, and the mechanisms of Francoist paternalism', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 55/1 (2020), pp. 52–74.

[76] Stefanie Hunt-Kennedy, *Between Fitness and Death: Disability and Slavery in the Caribbean* (Urbana, 2020).

[77] Boster, *African American Slavery and Disability*; Barclay, *The Mark of Slavery*. For a brief discussion of other work examining disability and slavery in America: Laurel Daen, 'Beyond

slavery within the broader transatlantic system that sustained it, Hunt–Kennedy demonstrates the potential of 'transnational and comparative' frameworks for illuminating 'the global intersections between colonialism and disability'.[78] This approach reveals how disability and slavery shaped each other, highlighting not only the powerful interactions between the two and the significance of racial thinking, but also slavery's importance to the 'development of modern understandings of disability and the disabled body', both within the British empire and beyond.[79]

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As Esme Cleall suggests, examining disability in imperial or colonial contexts can unsettle popular views about disabled people. Most histories of disability and empire tend to consider the impact of colonialism *on* disabled people. Yet, Cleall takes a radically different approach. In her study of an emigration scheme devised and promoted by Jane Groom (1839–c. 1911), a deaf Briton, Cleall invites us to 'think not just about how disabled people were oppressed by colonial endeavour, but also how they participated and benefited from the practice of Empire'.[80] Groom's plan proposed and facilitated the settlement of deaf British migrants on land taken from First Nations people in North-West Canada. In highlighting this, Cleall complicates our understanding of disabled people's relationship to colonialism, reminding us that they too have been agents of empire, complicit in the colonial project.

Like recent work on medicalisation, Cleall's research indicates that disability history is maturing. While disability histories continue to explore the impact of momentous historical processes *on* disabled people, there is now a growing recognition of disabled people's contribution to those processes. Colonisation, medicalisation, and industrialisation, for instance, were not things that simply happened to disabled people. Often, disabled people helped to propel them. This shift in interpretative balance adds nuance to our understanding of disabled people's historical agency by showing that it not only manifests itself in resistance to 'oppressive' or 'discriminatory' forces. Sometimes disabled people have embraced or promoted such forces for their own ends.

In 2012, Geoffrey Reaume wrote that disabled people 'can be as inspiring and as discriminatory… as can anyone else'. Consequently, he

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impairment: recent histories of early American disability', *History Compass*, 17/4 (2019), DOI: 10.1111/hic3.12528.

[78] Hunt-Kennedy, *Between Fitness and Death*, p. 163. For another deeply thought-provoking study that adopts an 'Atlantic World' approach to slavery, suggesting the significance of transnational influences on experiences and understandings of 'disability': Jenifer L. Barclay, 'Differently abled: Africanisms, disability, and power in the age of transatlantic slavery' in Jennifer F. Byrnes & Jennifer L. Muller (eds), *Bioarchaeology of Impairment and Disability: Theoretical, Ethnohistorical, and Methodological Perspectives* (Cham, 2017), pp. 77–94.

[79] Hunt-Kennedy, *Between Fitness and Death*, p. 164.

[80] Esme Cleall, 'Jane Groom and the deaf colonists: empire, emigration and the agency of disabled people in the late nineteenth-century British Empire', *History Workshop Journal*, 81/1 (2016), p. 41.

argued, for disability history 'to be taken seriously, people classified as disabled need to be shown in historical work as having faults, virtues and mixed blessings like anyone else'.[81] In short, disabled people need to be presented as fully human, capable of troubling or 'uncomfortable' deeds as much as inspiring or heroic ones.[82] Thus, disability historians must recognise all the positions disabled people have occupied historically. These not only include culturally valorised or marginalised roles, but also those stemming from unequal power relations that have had oppressive or disadvantageous consequences for other groups. For example, in addition to colonialism, disabled people also benefitted from the enslavement of others, as slave owners, traders, or the recipients of services provided by enslaved people.[83] In an effort to boost their own position, status or feelings of self-worth, specific impairment groups, such as the deaf, have also, at certain times, promoted 'ableist rhetoric' at the expense of disabled people with other kinds of impairment.[84] By complicating narratives of disabled people as victims, recent work in disability history is helping to fully humanise them, recasting the nature of their historical agency in interesting and important ways.

Disability history, then, is in a promising place. More integrated approaches, combining institutional, vernacular and experiential perspectives, and recognising the full gamut of roles disabled people have occupied historically, are increasingly common. Recent work on the premodern world, as well on war, colonialism, activism and slavery indicates that the chronological and geographical scope of disability history is expanding in exciting and productive ways. While North American and European perspectives remain dominant, insights from the majority world are appearing with greater frequency. Such work further illuminates the diversity of historical and cultural responses to human variation, providing a wider basis for much-needed comparative analyses. The increasing use of material culture and approaches located at the intersection of design and science and technology studies also looks set to continue, as does disability historians' deepening consideration of the ethical implications of their work.

The future of quantitative studies, however, remains unclear. Although the value of quantitative methods has been demonstrated, few disability historians currently appear to have the skills or inclination to significantly move in this direction. However, the rise of multiperson projects in recent

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[81] Geoffrey Reaume, 'Disability History in Canada: Present Work in The Field And Future Prospects', *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, 1/1 (2012), pp. 39, 41.

[82] Cleall, 'Jane Groom and the deaf colonists', p. 57.

[83] Penny Richards, 'Thomas Cameron's "Pure and guileless life," 1806–1870: affection and developmental disability in a North Carolina family' in Burch and Rembis (eds), *Disability Histories*, pp. 35–57; Esme Cleall, 'Imperial lives: confronting the legacies of empire, disability and the Victorians' in Hutchison, Atherton and Virdi (eds), *Disability and the Victorians*, p. 51.

[84] Tavian Robinson, '"We are of a different class": ableist rhetoric in deaf America, 1880–1920' in Susan Burch and Alison Kafer (eds), *Deaf and Disability Studies: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Washington, D.C., 2010), pp. 5–21.

years gives cause for optimism on this front. Such initiatives suggest that new teams with expertise in quantitative methodologies may not be far off. The emergence of large research groups similarly bodes well for ambitious disability histories that range *across* traditional periodisations and beyond the global North to chart changes and continuities across time and place. The appearance of such teams also reflects the growing collaboration between disability historians and experts in other areas of history. For example, a recent collaboration between Cleall and Onni Gust, a cultural and intellectual historian, offered a disability reading of the Scottish Enlightenment, demonstrating disability's value as a conceptual tool for intellectual history.[85] Such work suggests that disability scholarship is starting to influence more mainstream fields of history and we see significant revelatory potential in increased cooperation between disability historians and colleagues in other areas of history.

Finally, given the broadening chronological and geographical scope of the field and the recent upsurge in interest in intellectual disability, we suggest now is a good time for disability historians to fundamentally rethink the way they approach impairment. Most disability historians, us included, have tended to adopt a Cartesian framework, drawing a distinction between bodies and minds. However, this division is artificial and very modern, and may misrepresent historical meanings of disability. In early and premodern Western cultures, body and mind tended to be regarded as an integrated whole. Little differentiation was made between physical and mental impairments.[86] Even in the late modern period, the boundary between the two was not always clear cut. As Catharine Coleborne notes, in nineteenth-century Australian and New Zealand asylums, many of those institutionalised as 'insane' were regarded as physically *and* mentally impaired. So common, in fact, was the presence of conspicuous bodily differences amongst patients that 'physical impairments became part of the insanity diagnosis'. Moreover, as Coleborne observes, these physical differences shaped the institutional experiences of patients in profound ways.[87] In this context, separating the body from the mind obscures historical perceptions and experiences of 'insane' people.

Only through a holistic approach that integrates bodies and minds can we uncover the many meanings of 'disability' in different times and places. Consequently, echoing suggestions made by others in disability studies, we believe a more concerted application of the *bodyminds* concept

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[85] Esme Cleall and Onni Gust, 'Disability as a problem of humanity in Scottish Enlightenment thought', *The Historical Journal*, 65/2 (2022), pp. 328–48.

[86] C. F. Goodey and M. Lynn Rose, 'Disability history and Greco-Roman antiquity' in Rembis, Kudlick, and Nielsen (eds), *Oxford Handbook of Disability History*, pp. 42–3, p. 46; Miettinen, '"Disabled" minds', p. 56; Chris Gabbard and Susannah B. Mintz, 'Introduction' in Gabbard and Mintz (eds), *A Cultural History of Disability in the Long Eighteenth Century* (London, 2020), p. 4.

[87] Catharine Coleborne, 'Disability and Madness in Colonial Asylum Records in Australia and New Zealand' in Rembis, Kudlick and Nielsen (eds), *Oxford Handbook of Disability History*, pp. 281–82, 287.

within disability history would be fruitful. Already popular with scholars in other areas of disability studies, this concept is *slowly* working its way into historical scholarship with encouraging results.[88] As recent studies employing a bodymind framework by Jenifer Barclay and Susan Burch indicate, jettisoning the mind/body dichotomy underpinning modern Euro-American understandings of disability makes historical work better attuned to 'nonwestern' or Indigenous worldviews regarding health and human difference.[89] It also enables historians to approach premodern Europe and America in a less conceptually anachronistic manner.[90] A widespread and sustained use of a bodyminds approach, then, promises to generate new insights and usher in another exciting era in the study of disability history – one in which the field is better placed to incorporate more historically nuanced perspectives from both the majority world and the more distant (premodern) past.

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[88] Building on the work of Margaret Price, Sami Schalk employs the 'term bodyminds to "refer to the enmeshment of the mind and body, which are typically understood as interacting and connected, yet distinct entities… The term bodymind insists on the inextricability of mind and body and highlights how processes within our being impact one another in such a way that the notion of a physical versus mental process is difficult, if not impossible to clearly discern in most cases"'. Sami Schalk, 'Bodyminds, science fiction, and disability studies', Foreword to the Special Issue on Disability Studies, *MOSF Journal of Science Fiction*, 3/2 (2019), p. 10, https://publish.lib.umd.edu/?journal=scifi&page=article&op=view&path%5B%5D=346 [accessed 28 May 2022]; Margaret Price, 'The bodymind problem and the possibilities of pain', *Hypatia*, 30/1 (2015), pp. 268–84. Others in disability studies, such as Eli Clare, have used 'body-minds' to signal a similar conceptualisation. We prefer Price and Schalk's term, as 'body-minds' still seems to imply the existence of a binary rather than an integrated whole. For the reasons behind Clare's choice of terminology: Eli Clare, *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure* (Durham, 2017), p. xvi.

[89] Barclay, 'Differently abled'; Susan Burch, *Committed: Remembering Native Kinship in and beyond Institutions* (Chapel Hill, 2021), esp. pp. 8–11.

[90] Goodey and Rose, 'Disability history and Greco-Roman antiquity', p. 43.