

## Special Issue Guest Editors' Introduction: Disability Legal Studies

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This special issue on disability legal studies calls attention to disability as a productive theoretical prism that can shed light on central questions animating sociolegal research. Disability legal studies is motivated by the conviction that “disability is everywhere” in sociolegal studies, and that important research emerges when sociolegal studies is placed in conversation with disability studies. Already well established in the arts and humanities, disability studies analyzes disability as a social and cultural phenomenon, an identity, social construct and metaphor. It has opened disability as a new site of analysis for legal scholarship as well, examining the ways by which economic relations, cultural meanings, social practices, and institutional settings contribute to the social construction of disability. It deepens the analysis of legal concepts, such as normalcy, competence, rationality, autonomy, productivity, and citizenship.

The articles featured in this special issue emerged from a growing network of sociolegal scholars that place disability at the center of their analysis. Since 2013 we have met as a collaborative research network as part of the Law and Society Association and generated interdisciplinary and cross-national scholarship on the role of law in the social construction of disability. A central focus of this research has been the globalization of disability rights discourse through the transplantation of disability rights schemes, the implementation of the UN disability rights convention, and the local translation of international efforts to address disability discrimination. This global perspective underscores the diversity of disability legal consciousness and legal mobilization and the variety of disability laws and policies which reflect differences in legal cultures and in political heritage.

Accordingly, the articles in this special issue explore disability in a variety of legal regimes. Anne Revillard asks the central question of how rights become real in the lives of persons with

disabilities by analyzing the right to access in France. She uses the French experience with disability access to theorize rights realization in unexpected ways, arguing that rights do not necessarily need to be individually activated to be made real. Aude Lejeune and Julie Ringelheim examine disability employment rights in Belgium, exploring the productive tension between anti-discrimination mandates and labor law protections. This hybrid legal regime allows Belgian workers with disabilities to mobilize the law and negotiate their evolving disability rights consciousness as both workers and disabled. Sagit Mor and Rina B. Pikkell offer an unprecedented view of sex damages in Israeli tort law following a disabling event. This is the first empirical study to investigate the ways courts frame disability and sexuality by analyzing the damages awarded for harm to sexual functioning. The final contribution to this issue is Doron Dorfman's analysis of the "moral panic" in the United States surrounding the fear of disability as fraud or faked for the sake of benefits and accommodations. His empirical investigation into the nature and extent of this fear offers important insights into the development, implementation, and legitimacy of disability rights.

The four articles in this issue exemplify the rich possibilities of disability legal studies, especially when placed in a variety of legal settings and methodological approaches. They demonstrate the reach and analytical depth of disability as a legal category, both building on and challenging the possibilities of sociolegal research.

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