Liminality and Disability:
Rites of Passage and Community in Hypermodern Society

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Abstract

Physical disability functions in modern society as a status betwixt and between everyday assumptions about "normal" physical strength and functioning. This creates a situation of permanent liminality, or a failure to be incorporated, in hypermodern society especially in the economic marketplace and architectural construction of everyday life and movement. Turning to more traditional societies to interpret liminality and rites of passage helps contemporary people with disabilities interpret their social status and its problematic, powerful construction.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, many disabled Americans still find themselves at the margins of society. Individuals with disabilities are less likely to be employed and have lower levels of social interaction than the able-bodied (National Organization on Disability [hereafter referred to as NOD] 1998). This paper adopts the processual rite of passage developed by Arnold van Gennep (1908), Victor Turner (1967, 1969, 1974), and Deegan (1989, 1998) to examine the status of the disabled.

We argue here that individuals with disabilities are in the potentially unending, liminal stage of a symbolic rite of passage. Our goal in this paper is to present the symbolic connections between liminality and disability in hypermodern society (Deegan 1998; Giddens 1990). This type of society often prevents the reincorporation of disabled members, the end of the liminal stage, because it fails to provide them with stable, socially valued roles (see Davis 1962; Deegan 1975, 1978, 1997, 2000; Deegan and Brooks, 1985; Goffman, 1963; Roth, 1963; Roth

and Eddy, 1967). In other words, our society is a "disabling society" that systematically limits the opportunities for individuals who experience a wide range of impairments: we focus on the society's limits on an individual with physical limits here. Finally, we stress the positive aspects of liminality as a method to improve or remove these social restrictions on individuals with disabilities.

RITES OF PASSAGE
     In his book *Rites of Passage*, the French ethnographer Arnold van Gennep (1908:189) explored the fundamental process underlying the change of an individual's status in society:

     For groups, as well as for individuals, life itself means to separate and to be reunited, to change form and condition, to die and to be reborn. It is to act and to cease, to wait and rest, and then to begin acting again, but in a different way.

     Life, for van Gennep, is characterized by transitions from one social group or situation to another. This is evident as an individual passes through various age grades, social relationships, and occupations during their lifetime. Van Gennep declared that all of these transitions share a processual similarity that he calls "rites of passage."
     Van Gennep analyzed small-scale societies where changes in status are strictly regulated and are accompanied usually by ceremonial rituals. In contrast, changing status in hypermodern societies is relatively easy but also more ambiguous. To illustrate the difference, van Gennep compares society to a house with rooms that represent the various roles or social positions available. The more a society resembles our hypermodern industrial civilizations, the thinner its walls and the "wider and more open are its doors of communication" (van Gennep 1908:26). Passage from room to room, from social state to social state, is easy. In smaller-scale societies, the rooms are carefully isolated with narrow doors and corridors. Ceremony and ritual regulate the passage between these rooms. While rites of passage are easier to identify in small-scale societies, the process applies to all civilizations, "from the most primitive to the most evolved" (Zumwalt 1982:301).
     Rites of passage are subdivided into three stages: separation (preliminal), transition (liminal), and incorporation (post-liminal). Rites of separation symbolically detach the individual from an existing point in the social structure. After this separation, the former social status no longer applies to the individual. In the transition or liminal stage, the individual is a symbolic outsider with no clearly defined status or role. The liminal personae (or "liminar") resides at the margins of society while they prepare to adopt a new role. The final stage of incorporation allows the individual to adopt a new social status and re-enter society. If this re-entry does not

occur, liminality does not end, a status possible in hypermodern society but not in small-scale society.

LIMINALITY: BETWIXT AND BETWEEN SOCIAL STATUSES
     Victor Turner, the anthropologist and sociologist, expanded our understanding of liminality, and described its relevance in both traditional and hypermodern societies. Like van Gennep, Turner analyzed society as a "structure of positions" (Turner 1967:93) where the liminal stage marks the transition between two socially viable positions. "Liminality," according to Turner (1974:274), "is a movement between fixed points and is essentially ambiguous, unsettled, and unsettling." Liminars "are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial" (Turner 1969:95). Their social condition is "a confusion of all the customary categories" (Turner 1967:97).
     Ambiguity and paradox characterize the social situation of liminal persons (Tuner 1967:97). They are neither this nor that, child nor adult, woman nor mother. As a result, the liminal individual is often invisible both structurally and physically. Structural invisibility is the inevitable result of losing or being without a social status, what Michelle Fine and Adrienne Asch call the "roleslessness" of persons with disabilities. Other members of society find it difficult, if not impossible, to interact with individuals who defy all social categories, who are in a sense non-persons. The myriad taboos that apply to the liminal person limit their social interaction and maintain their structural invisibility. Liminality is accompanied often by the seclusion of the transitional person: "since it is a paradox, a scandal, to see what ought not to be there" (Turner 1967:98). Among some traditional people, the term for the liminal period itself is a form of the noun for seclusion site (Turner 1967:98).
     Frequently, there is an androgynous quality to the liminal individual (Turner 1967:98). They may be assigned characteristics of both genders, the opposite gender, or treated as genderless. During some nonmodern ceremonies involving both sexes, the liminal participants often dress alike and behave similarly (Turner 1974:246). The liminal state also modifies sexual activity, sometimes stressing sexual abstinence or a greater degree of sexual freedom. Because sex and gender are components of any social structure, it is not surprising that they are treated as malleable characteristics during the liminal state. These differences in gendered status are reflected in the marriage, divorce, and single statuses of people with disabilities in comparison to the able-bodied populace in hypermodern societies. Perceptions of being asexual, nonsexual, or unattractive are particularly problematic for women with disabilities (Deegan and Brooks 1985).
     In many rituals, the liminal state is symbolically related to death, decomposition, or other negative physical attributes (Deegan 1975; Turner 1967:96). Without a position in the social system, it is difficult to classify a liminal person as alive or

dead. Consequently, the individual may be treated like a corpse, and even buried (Turner 1967:96). A related notion is that the liminar is potentially polluting (Turner 1967:97). Anyone who comes into contact with the liminar may be contaminated, unless they have been inoculated by having undergone the same ritual transformation. These components of liminality force the individual to submit to the will of the entire community (Turner 1969:103). During liminality, a person's former status is effectively erased, creating a blank slate upon which expectations for the new status are imprinted. Because the liminal person must act submissive and humble, the society's values, norms, and relationships are easily absorbed.

Turner compares states of outsiderhood and structural inferiority to the betwixt and between status of liminality (Turner 1974:231). Individuals of each state are at the margins of society, and occupy its lowest social positions (Turner 1969:125). Outsiderhood occurs when an individual is cut off from positions within the social system. Outsiders are set "apart from the behavior of status-occupying, role-playing members of that system" (Turner 1974:233). Outsiderhood can be involuntary, as in the case of a homeless, unemployed person, a social status that often is associated with physical disability. Such a status may establish a permanently liminal way of life in contemporary society (Turner 1974:261). Structural inferiority, such as unemployment or jobs with poor wages, characterizes individuals in the lowest, most involuntary positions of a social class hierarchy. The weakness and passivity of liminal individuals is similar to the structural weakness of groups oppressed by political, legal, and economic systems (Turner 1969:99). These liminal characteristics can become unending in hypermodern societies.

LIMINALITY AND COMMUNITAS IN HYPERMODERN SOCIETIES
Liminality in hypermodern society can be blurred, confusing, mysterious, exciting, or disorienting (Deegan 1989, 1998). The lack of clear cohorts, symbols, anti-structure, rituals, and the meaning of the sacred characterizes Western life and experience. This diffusion of meaning, symbols, and rules for ritual action can be individually a peak experience (Czikzentmihaly 1975), but overall social liminality is more difficult to characterize or finalize.

This ambiguity limits the power of liminality in a traditional society where liminars treat each other as equals regardless of any hierarchical differences that existed prior to the transition (e.g., Turner 1967:7). Turner calls this unique form of social interaction "communitas." In communitas there is "full, unmediated communication, even communion" (Turner 1992:58) between the participants. The relationships formed during communitas often extend beyond the liminal stage.

Communitas is an "anti-structure" that is different from the stratified, role-playing nature of the established social structure (Turner 1992:59). Communitas is limited in post-

industrialized society, however, because of weaker community ties, and an overriding emphasis on individuality (Deegan 1989, 1998; Turner, 1969:202). Social anti-structure is harder to establish in our supra-hierarchical society with its high level of specialization, and strict division of labor. It is evident, nonetheless, in some liminal positions such as military boot camps, certain forms of monastic life, and within hippie communes (Turner 1974:231). Communitas, therefore, is possible in hypermodern society, but it is more difficult to establish and maintain than in traditional societies.

THE SYMBOLIC CONNECTION BETWEEN DISABILITY AND LIMINALITY IN HYPERMODERN SOCIETY

Many, many researchers (e.g., Deegan 1975; Murphy et al. 1988; Shalinsky and Glascock 1988; Murphy 1990; Nicolaisen 1995; Devlieger 1995) analyze the similarities between liminal status during rites of passage and the status of individuals with disabilities. Marilynn J. Phillips (1990:851), for example, writes that the majority of those with a permanent disability can never be cured, restored, or normalized in a physical sense. They perceive themselves in hypermodern society, therefore, as suspended between the sick role and normality, between wrong bodies and right bodies. Certainly, those with disabilities seem to occupy an ambiguous state; they are neither sick nor well. In a number of cultures, the physically disabled are not even considered human (see the discussion of the Punan Bah of Central Borneo in Nicolaisen 1995:42). In other small-scale societies, disabled children and the elderly are killed during times of environmental crises, because of the nonhuman, liminal status of the disabled individuals (Shalinsky and Glascock 1988).

Like the more transient liminars, people with disabilities are often hidden away from society. This seclusion is most obvious in the case of people who are institutionalized. Although there is a declining number of disabled individuals in institutional settings, their social invisibility has assumed more subtle forms. Robert Murphy (1990:91), for example, writes that he often is ignored for long periods of time, even by close colleagues, during parties and other social gatherings, despite his physical presence as a person in a wheelchair. This type of socially invisibility is learned at a young age when curious children who stare at individuals with disabilities are scolded and pulled away by their parents.

In both disability and liminality, there is a symbolic relationship with death and other negative physical attributes. Deegan (1975:1) explores shared symbolic liminality between physical disability and death. A person facing traumatic injuries may even literally face a life crisis that is a rite of passage (Deegan 1975:6). Many Americans deny the symbolic association between disability and death, but Dale E. Fish (1986) found a direct correlation between counselor trainees and high levels of death anxiety that influenced their attitudes toward people with disabilities. Unlike liminars in other rites of passage, however,

social re-incorporation is not guaranteed for disabled individuals. Symbolic incorporation is often only possible with death, and the accompanying funeral rites. There is a somewhat common perception that suicide is often preferable to disability, suggesting that the disabled occupy a status lower than death.

Negative physical signs, such as colostomy bags, amputated limbs, and scarring can also accompany disability. Public aversion to these characteristics often associates the disability with contagion or pollution (Deegan 1978). A woman who had undergone 16 joint replacement surgeries because of arthritis reacted being labeled as afflicted by a journalist. "Who would want to go to dinner, to a movie, or even to bed," she asked," with someone who is afflicted! My god, she made it sound as if I have fleas," (Phillips 1990:851). Other individuals with disabilities say that others "act as if we were contagious" regarding interactions with the able-bodied (Scheer 1984).

The androgynous quality of liminality is also evident with disability. The public often views individuals with disabilities as sexless, or sexually inferior. Murphy describes an experiment in which he intentionally caught the eye of women walking across a college campus (Murphy 1990:127). Rather than looking away, Murphy reports that most of the women would return the gaze and smile. He also found that his relationships with women overall were more open and relaxed when he began using a wheelchair. Because he was "no longer a source of danger," the women were able to open up to him (Murphy 1990:128). While in a rehabilitation hospital for paralytics, Murphy spent time on a coed floor where men and women slept together in the same rooms (Murphy, et al. 1988:240). Throughout the rehabilitation process, gender differences and roles were diminished and relationships between men and women were more open. Deegan (1975:9) states that one of the most significant contributions to the liminal status of the physically disabled concerns sexuality. Losses of sexuality and attractiveness, moreover, may threaten the preservation or formation of close relationships.

DISABILITY AND COMMUNITAS
Carol S. Goldin (1984) identified the elements of communitas in her research among persons who are visually impaired. She found that blind individuals who were involved in advocacy organizations had created a community of the blind. A member of one such organization describes her experiences as follows:

I look forward to going to national conventions, and not just because it's a political issue, but because we all have some kind of relationship together.

There is something that is very binding. It borders on being religious or it has a religious fervor, some kind of spirit to it (Goldin 1984:123).

Organization members were brought together by the "shared experiences" of their socially stigmatized status (Goldin

1984:121). This community of the blind represents the power of communitas to generate "new meanings of blindness." The existence of communitas among other disabled individuals is also likely: half of all disabled individuals report a sense of common identity with other disabled persons (NOD 1998).

Communitas among individuals with disabilities is also evident in self-help groups. Activity in these groups improves health, reduces stigma, and increases acceptance of disability (Cohen and Syme 1986; Wasserman and Danforth 1988; Gitterman and Shulman 1986). Turner (1985:124) describes communitas as "relatedness among individuals without judgementality" and this is certainly true of self-help group meetings. Since they all are "in the same boat," they share an equal position. Due to this egalitarian status, self-help meetings are characterized by open and empathetic communication. There is also the predictable mutual aid and support which allows group members to rely on one another for assistance. The group also helps build self-concepts of normality as members actively discover and construct identities different from those given them by society.

DISABILITY AND PERMANENT LIMINALITY
Liminality becomes systematically flawed when it fails to end in reincorporation with society. This "permanent liminality" creates a social space that is no longer betwixt and between in a journey ending in a new social position. Bonds to society are weakened because of the failure to ritually incorporate individuals with disabilities into the wider world. Unending liminality becomes a permanent outsider status, losing its power to connect the self and the other in everyday life. When individuals with disabilities experience unending liminality, this reflects an unsatisfactory or flawed status betwixt and between legitimated conditions.

The ADA is oriented to creating statuses for people with disabilities as citizens, pedestrians, and people with access to public life. But the most important status in a hypermodern capitalist society is paid employment (discussed more later). Attaining all these opportunities and their subsequent positions stops unending liminality. Barriers to these rights are constructed in hypermodern society, our next topic.

HYPERMODERN SOCIETY IS A DISABLING SOCIETY
Our society is a "disabling society."[1] This concept is compatible with T.R. Young and Garth Massey's (1978) dramaturgical society. It defines an able-bodied world as normal, thereby making a world that incorporates the able-bodied and physically disabled as deliberately problematic. Hypermodern society creates permanent liminality for most people with physical disabilities. This is easily revealed through the choice to limit access for individuals with mobility impairments.

The present forms of architectural structures and social institutions exist because statutes, ordinances, and codes either required or permitted them to be constructed in that manner.

These policies imply values, expectations, and assumptions about the physical and behavioral attributes that people ought to possess in order to survive or participate in community life (Hahn 1988:40).

The disabling society creates forbidden spaces and intentions. Taboos and limitations, that are temporary for the liminal initiate in a traditional society,[2] are permanent barriers for persons with disabilities in hypermodern society. The taboos that govern the lives of the disabled permeate every level of society. These taboos have religious, political, spatial, and social consequences (Durkheim 1915). They are exhibited in core aspects of culture such as communication and architecture. Taboos are also legislated by the government as evident in the education system and the provision of separate and unequal access to persons with disabilities.

For an individual in a wheelchair, the symbolic meaning of a flight of stairs is simple and direct. The area beyond is off-limits. There is a taboo against the individual's entry into that area. This form of architectural segregation is regarded as "natural" in a disabling society and the limitations presented by stairways often go unrecognized. Joseph Shapiro (1993:142) relates the story of a small town postmaster who was told that his post office would have to be made accessible to people in wheelchairs. A flight of steps led to the only public entrance to the post office and the doorway was too narrow for wheelchairs. The postmaster could not understand why any changes were necessary. He protested, "I've been here for thirty-five years and in all that time I've yet to see a single customer come in here in a wheelchair."

Similar taboos are apparent everywhere. The width of doorways and the layout of classrooms and office areas can make mobility difficult or impossible. The design of automobiles prevents their use without expensive modifications. The location of curb-cuts determines where the individual can cross the street. It is the prevalence of these social barriers that create disability, not the physical impairment. The court system in the United States, moreover, has repeatedly supported and defended the rights of business, employers, and other public institutions to continue to maintain such barriers despite the enactment of the ADA.

Disabling barriers are not just found in the physical environment. Claire Liachowitz (1988) offers a thorough analysis of how the United States created barriers through its attitudes and policies regarding public education. Children with disabilities were historically prevented from receiving equal educational opportunities. Barriers to education, in turn, led to social barriers in adulthood. Although many barriers to public education have been addressed, Clark and Lillie (2000) show that many disabled children find the transition to adulthood difficult without careful planning and assistance.

Dominant cultural attitudes regarding gender and sexuality also create social barriers for disabled individuals. Gerschick

and Miller (1994) suggest that disabled men are marginalized because they fail to meet and may actually undermine the demands of hegemonic masculinity. The authors describe how disabled men struggle to maintain their autonomy, athleticism, and sexuality despite the stigmatization of their disabilities. Ideals regarding feminine beauty and sexuality also create social barriers for women with disabilities. The employment and occupational discrimination facing all women are significantly higher for women with disabilities (Deegan and Brooks 1985; Brownworth and Raffo 1999).

A disabling society justifies keeping the physically disabled liminal by adopting profane reasons for this separation. The physically disabled are tainted with a profane status outside the sacred space of the community (Durkheim 1915). Individuals with disabilities are considered dirty and must be set apart (Douglas 1966). Rites of incorporation in a disabling society become impossible because they would contaminate the larger group.

"Blaming the victim" is another profane justification used in our disabling society. The physical disability, in this argument, is responsible for limits on employment, access to buildings, and social interaction. The "disability," by definition, prevents "normal" social interaction. Individuals with disabilities cause problems in a disabling society: they "ask too much" and demand special treatment when they participate in everyday life. Thus, physically disabled people are kept off the streets, unemployed, or socially isolated because it is too costly to put in ramps, employ the disabled, or include them in social interactions.

With the passage of the ADA in 1990, society has begun to deal with accessibility issues, but certainly it has not provided such access. One response has been the provision of "accommodations" for individuals with mobility impairments. But such changes are usually far too limited in number or implementation. For example, the number of hotel rooms and parking spaces cannot meet demands or one of the truly absurd patterns is providing accessible rooms in largely inaccessible buildings. Thus, while there may be several entrances to a building the accessible entrance may be at the rear or side of the building requiring the person with a disability to travel two or three times farther to enter that building than the distance needed to use the able-bodied entrance. Such entrances are usually poorly signed and may require getting help from a person located at an able-bodied entrance. Ramps leading to these entrances may be the last to be cleared of ice or snow. Elevators may be poorly situated, slow, or too small. The accessible restroom could be on a floor requiring steps to enter. Many large lecture halls and movie theaters force people in wheelchairs to sit at the back. Airlines may state they have wheelchair services, but lack wheelchairs or attendants to push them. Those with physical disabilities may not be delivered at points of departure. Flight crews may try to abandon the physically

disabled on planes. Failure to have such services may cause missed flights, a problem of greater severity for the physically disabled than the able-bodied. On one flight on Lufthansa, an airline representative told a woman in a wheelchair that disabled people should walk and not "bother" the airline (witnessed by one of the authors). On another flight, hostile airline employees reduced another physically disabled woman to tears.

The labor market in hypermodern societies often creates permanent liminality for those with disabilities. Success at one's career largely determines an individual's status in industrialized nations. The United States, in particular, views the work ethic as one of its bedrocks (Weber 1930). Individuals with disabilities, however, face discrimination and structural barriers preventing success in the job market. Compounding their inferior status is the perception that the disabled are a drain on society because of their reliance on government benefits and services.

This liminal status of unemployment is easily documented. The 2000 N.O.D./Harris Survey of Americans with Disabilities, for example, found that only 32% of individuals with disabilities are employed full or part-time, compared to 81% of the able-bodied. Of the unemployed disabled over two-thirds report that they want to work. Despite the goals of the ADA, the percentage of disabled Americans who are employed has remained relatively unchanged since 1991 and actually dropped between 1994-1997 (McNeil 2000). The NOD study also shows that lack of money is the biggest problem facing Americans with disabilities. In fact, disabled individuals are more likely to live in households earning less than $15,000 a year and many of them and their families live in poverty. Like the liminal initiate in a traditional society, a person with a disability in hypermodern society may lose property or be restricted in property ownership because of their low economic status.

Society also creates disability in the education system. Children who fail to achieve at prescribed performance levels are labeled "slow learners." Attention deficit disorders and dyslexia were unknown in the societies studied by Van Gennep and Turner. Only a social system dependent upon an educated and skilled labor force regards these children as disabled and stigmatizes them as a result.

Disability itself is a culturally constructed phenomenon, and the degree to which physical, mental, and sensory impairments disable an individual is highly variable (Ingstad and Whyte 1995). Nora Groce (1985) reveals that the residents of Martha's Vineyard adapted a core aspect of social interaction, communication, to accommodate hearing impaired members. Between the 17th and early 20th centuries, this island's population exhibited a high level of hereditary deafness and this was defined as part of everyday life. Thus the majority of the hearing population was bilingual in English and sign language. This adaptation was not a planned decision, but rather the spontaneous creation of an inclusive culture. The hearing

impaired residents of Martha s Vineyard were not disabled, because their status in society was unaffected by deafness.

TAPPING THE POWER OF LIMINALITY IN A DISABLING SOCIETY
    The liminal status has the power to redefine and reshape the disabling society. It is "a fructile chaos, a storehouse of possibilities, not a random assemblage but a striving after new forms and structures, a gestation process, a fetation of modes appropriate to postliminal existence" (Turner 1986:42). It exposes "the basic building blocks of culture" (Turner 1967:110). In liminality, the individual is forced to think about the established social structure as they prepare to re-enter that structure. The liminal person learns what is expected of viable members of a social system while they are between fixed states. The individual also discovers new patterns of relationships with other members of the society.
    Disability in a disabling society also exposes the building blocks of society. What is considered a disability here reveals who is and is not incorporated as a viable member. Thus disability has very little to do with any physical, mental, or sensory impairments, but it is a social definition of who is and is not valued. Disability exposes the social barriers, or taboos, that restrict the full participation of all the members of society. Disability also questions the meaning of a community when a member can be marginalized so easily. Because of the permanent liminality of disability, the arbitrariness and hostility of the disabling society can be revealed and shattered.
    In liminality, an individual is allowed "to play with the factors of sociocultural experience" (Turner 1985:236). Experimenting with the social structure allows the person to develop "a potentially unlimited series of alternative social arrangements" (Turner 1974:14). In this way, liminality becomes a primary source of social change. Individuals with disabilities play with their sociocultural experience by adapting to the social limitations they face.
    Emily Bonwich (1985:62), for example, reveals how some women who experienced spinal cord injuries adapt to their impairment. Several women found that their injuries had released them from the constraints of traditional female roles and others adopted roles that seemed impossible before their injuries. The women also had increased levels of self-esteem because of their mastery of these unique roles. "These women often said that they now had different ideas about what a woman s role should be, giving less importance to conventional wife-mother roles and `man-pleasing' attributes than to their own self-actualization and accomplishments" (Bonwich 1985:62).
    Individuals with physical impairments may modify their environments and thereby lower social barriers. Wheelchair users, for example, build ramps where there once were stairs. They remodel their homes to reach cupboards, sinks, and shelves. They widen doorways and shower entrances. Individuals with arthritis replace traditional doorknobs with those that are easier to

grasp. They create new tools to button shirts, put on socks, and mop floors.

Individuals with all forms of impairments modify their work environments to have successful careers. Workers who fatigue easily utilize flex-time or part-time work schedules. Others restructure their work activities to avoid heavy lifting or carrying. Simply reorganizing the physical environment of the work area provides benefits for many disabled individuals. With advances in computing and communications technologies, people who lack personal or physical mobility may create other forms of transportation. Other advances such as Braille printers and text telephones can assist working individuals with sensory impairments.

An inclusive rather than a disabling society reflects such redefining adaptations as well as alternative social roles, particularly in the labor force. Greater opportunities for paid employment must be provided for individuals with disabilities. Accessibility barriers need to be completely eliminated so disabled individuals can participate more in all aspects of social life. Adopting social changes that provide greater visibility and higher status roles for the disabled will lead to the elimination of the permanent liminality of disability in hypermodern society.

CONCLUSION

When viewed within the symbolic framework of a "rite de passage," individuals with disabilities in hypermodern societies often experience permanent liminality. These disabling societies create barriers that prevent disabled individuals from completing the passage to social reincorporation. These barriers do not allow individuals with disabilities to achieve stable, socially viable roles. This unending liminality reveals the structural and experiential creation of society because the social construction of disability reveals what is and is not important in a society.

Clearly, not every disabled person in hypermodern society is in a liminal status and not every part of life is altered by disability. Many individuals with a substantial disability occupy socially viable roles. These individuals provide examples of how to create a more inclusive society. Creating such a hypermodern society that incorporates individuals with disabilities to move toward the core and away from the margins of society is our goal: "today's liminality is tomorrow's centrality" (Turner 1975:33).

Notes

1. This concept is compatible with T.R. Young and Garth Massey's (1978) dramaturgical society.
2. Permanent liminality is not an option in traditional societies. Of course, some traditional societies, as noted earlier, end the liminality of a person with a disability when the society approves of killing the physically disabled, a dire

solution to the problem of reincorporation

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