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Ability Privilege: A Needed Addition to Privilege Studies

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ABILITY PRIVILEGE: A NEEDED ADDITION TO PRIVILEGE STUDIES

Abstract

Ability privilege describes the advantages enjoyed by those who exhibit certain abilities and the unwillingness of these individuals to relinquish the advantage linked to the abilities especially with the reason that these are earned or birth given (natural) abilities. Privileges linked to various groups (e.g. male, race, class, gender) are discussed in the literature. I submit that ability privilege, a dynamic pervasive in society, ought to be discussed. The lens of ability privilege allows for analyzing the dynamic of what ability advantages are seen as earned vs. unearned not only across traditional social groups (e.g. race, class, gender) but also between the social group dualistic of the ability-have and ability-not-have which allows one to look at ability

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privileges as they play themselves out in human-human, human-nature and human-animal relationships. Ethics ought to give us guidance how to act. I submit that the concept of ability privilege, and which ability privileges we envision as earned or unearned is worthy of ethical deliberations. I cover in this paper ability privileges related to disabled people, human-nature and human-animal relationship, the ability of competitiveness and consumerism, and I highlight emerging new forms of ability privileges made possible through science and technology advancements and the role of ethics.

Introduction

The introductory article of the March 2012 issue of the ‘Journal of Social Issues’ which was dedicated to the field of privilege studies (Case et al., 2012) stated that “privilege is defined in relational terms and in reference to social groups, and involves unearned benefits afforded to powerful social groups” (Case et al., 2012). Privileges, the advantages that people benefit from based on exhibiting certain characteristics, are discussed in the literature and linked to various groups (e.g. male, race, class, gender) (Kruks, 2005, McIntosh, 1989, Swim and Miller, 1999, Pinterits et al., 2009, Schaumberg and Lowery, 2010, Mindrup et al., 2011, Case, 2007, McIntosh, 2003b, Case and Stewart, 2010, Neville et al., 2001, Holland, 2008, Bennett, 2012, McIntosh, 2003a). I intend to contribute with this paper to what Peggy McIntosh calls “the growing academic field of Privilege Studies” (McIntosh, 2012) by introducing the concept of ability privilege which I submit is a dominant dynamic present in society that ought to be discussed. Ability privilege is based on the *reality* that one has certain advantages if exhibiting certain abilities, and individuals enjoying these advantages are unwilling to give up these advantages. Ability privilege manifests itself through structural and governmentally perpetuated ability privilege (systemic (conscious), along with individual or interpersonal forms of ability-privilege (psychological unconscious). Which privilege is seen as acceptable changes over time and will continue to change (Kruks, 2005, Holland, 2008). Similarly which ability privilege is classified as earned or unearned constantly changes and is not only culturally constructed, but exhibition and acceptance or rejection of different ability privileges also are one aspect that shapes a culture. Ability privileges can play themselves out between traditionally defined social groups (e.g. race, gender, social class). However at the same time social groups are also formed

based on ability privileges whereby the social group is defined by whether its members have or don't have a given ability (the ability-have and the ability-non-have social groups). I submit that ability judgments exhibit themselves as justifications of certain assumptions, and behaviors of the ability-have providing ability-have group members with privileges with often disabling consequences for the ability non-have. I submit further that it might be beneficial for the 'ability not have groups' or people working on behalf of certain 'ability not have' biological entities such as animals and nature to investigate the usefulness and limitation of the privilege discourse for their agenda.

Hill Collins suggests that one of the effects of privilege is that marginalized groups are denied the ability to articulate their own experiences (Beck et al., 2001). The concept of ableism was developed by the disabled people's rights movement (Various, 2006) to question species-typical, normative body ability expectations (Harris, 2001, Watson, 1997, Duke, 1972, Carlson, 2001, Finkelstein, 1996, Mitchell and Snyder, 1997, Olyan, 2009, Rose, 2003, Schipper, 2006, Overboe, 2007) and the ability privileges (i.e. ability to work, to gain education, to be part of society, to have an identity, to be seen as citizen) that come with a species-typical body (although they did not use the term ability privilege). Disablism conceptualized within this meaning of ability privilege suggests that people with expected, normative body abilities are not willing to give up their ability privileges.

The cultural phenomenon of Ability privileges, however, can be employed beyond the social group of disabled people and their encounter with the 'ability normative' person. Every societal entity, from an individual to a country, cherishes and promotes numerous abilities. Some people cherish the ability to buy a car, some the ability to climb mountains, some the ability to perform academic work, and others manual work (Wolbring, 2011b). Some societies are structured around 'GDPism' (the ability to produce a GDP), efficiency, productivity, competitiveness and consumerism (the ability to consume) (Wolbring, 2008b, Wolbring, 2008a). Others may be organized around equity, empathy, or any other set of abilities (Wolbring, 2010a). These ability expectations lead to the exhibition of various forms of ability privileges (Wolbring, 2012c, Wolbring, 2012a) leading to various forms of disablement. Question is whether ability

based privileges are justifiable or not and on what argument the justification or denouncement of justification are based on?

I highlight in this paper various forms of ability privileges. I cover ability privilege as it unfolds in regards to disabled people and an emerging ability privilege that is based on changing ability expectations of the human body made possible through advancements of science and technology. I outline ability privilege exhibiting itself in regards to human- nature and human-animal relationships (eco-ability privilege linked to the existence of eco-ableism (Wolbring, 2012a)). I submit that a) policies and procedures can be examined in terms of what abilities are being privileged, what ability privileges are seen as earned or unearned and what criteria are used to justify the sentiment; b) that which ethics theory is used to give guidance is linked to whether its ability expectations are privileged (Wolbring, 2012b) and c) the ability privilege lens gives a means to address the intersectionality of oppressive practices which are highlighted by others outside of the ability context (Hankivsky et al., 2007, Case et al., 2012, Kendall, 2012). As to the structure of this paper I start by introducing ability privileges through the lens of disabled people which is followed by a section that looks at eco-ability privilege covering human-nature and human-animal relationships. I then look at the ability privilege linked to biological entities (humans, nature and animals) exhibiting beyond biological entity-typical abilities which is followed by another section which briefly explores the privilege discourse through the lens of the abilities of consumerism and competitiveness. I will then look at ethics theories, code of ethics and privilege and conclude with some thoughts around future research agenda's. I want to contribute to the critical animal studies field and the eco-ability field (linkage between disabled people environment and animal (2012)) the lens of ability privilege. We know that the One health framework is used to advance the human-animal relationship within the health discourse whereas the Eco-health discourse does the same for the human, animal and nature relationship (Wolbring, 2013). I submit that the ability privilege could be used to further the social justice discourse between humans and animals, humans and nature and humans, animals and nature.

Ability Privilege and Disabled People

In respect to disabled people at least four forms of privileges (systemic (conscious), psychological unconscious, earned and unearned) discussed in the literature are evident.

Structural and governmentally perpetuated ability privileges (systemic, conscious) are evident in the use of legal terms, such as ‘reasonable accommodation’ and ‘undue hardship’, that suggest that powerful social groups including governments, employers and educational institutions are only willing to give up ability privileges *they* see as reasonable. Legislations that are generated to improve the situation of disabled people, such as the United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2007), are much less absolute in their demands and have more qualifiers as to what are reasonable actions than similar laws against sexism or racism. In this it mirrors "Reasonableness" which is seen for example to preserve male privilege in law (Paetzold and Shaw, 1994) against women. However there is also the issue that many do not see themselves as still having the privilege that they felt in need of being solved. A recent study performed around access to water and sanitation for various social groups found that respondents felt that in regards to high income countries disabled people had better access to clean water and sanitation than ethnic minorities or indigenous people (Wolbring et al., 2012). The finding suggests a form of unconscious ability privilege that comes to pass not because of one's lack of awareness of one's own ability privilege of having access to a washroom but because one simply believes that the access issue has been solved for the ‘others’ and as such no ability privilege exists as everyone has access. In the case of the study, this misreading of the reality might be due to the proliferation of wheelchair signs on in this case washroom doors as to whether they are really accessible or not. Other examples are to label a parking stall with a disabled sign even if the size is the same as the stalls without the disabled sign. One could say that governments through their lax rules as to the use of the ‘disabled’ ticker and the non-existence of enforcement of even the lax use of them generates illusions of a structural reality that make individuals misjudge the privilege they have.

Another example of spinning numbers leading to a skewed perception by the ability privileged is how unemployment numbers of disabled people are reported. The numbers reported for example by the media highlight the people who look for work but cannot find work. Giving this form of reporting the unemployment numbers for April 2013 for the USA are 12.9% for disabled people vs. 6.9% for non-disabled people. Although the number of unemployment of disabled people in this way are still double than the unemployment numbers of non-disabled people, people might see these numbers as progress as people assume that like 100 years ago

disabled people were not employed. However the numbers reported in the media do not give the real story. Numbers also exist as to participation in the work force; for 2013 these numbers are 20.7% for disabled people and 68.8% for non-disabled people. If one calculates the unemployment number in the following way Total Rate Civilian population- not in labor force-unemployed (meaning not getting a job or not looking for a job) the employment/unemployment numbers for April 2013 are 18.04%/81.96% for disabled people and 64.06%/35.94% for non-disabled people (United States Department of Labor, 2013). These numbers are quite different and indicate much less progress in regards to diminishing the employment privilege of so called non-disabled people. These numbers are not much different in other countries (Buckup, 2009, Noga and Wolbring, 2012); the numbers for China (2009) are for the full population unemployment number of 3.8% and not looking for work 23.2%. However the numbers for disabled people range between 3.9-4.2 unemployed based on 'severity' and not seeking employment between 35.2%-71% (Buckup, 2009). Chinese numbers are segregated by severity which begs the question who is severe and who isn't. The questions used to classify severity (not just in China) are "Do you have difficulty seeing, even if wearing glasses? Do you have difficulty hearing, even if using a hearing aid? Do you have difficulty walking or climbing steps? Do you have difficulty remembering or concentrating? Do you have difficulty (with self-care, such as) washing all over or dressing? Because of a physical, mental, or emotional health condition, do you have difficulty communicating (for example, understanding or being understood by others)? If one answers one or more of the questions with "unable", one is classified as 'very severe'(Buckup, 2009); meaning blind people, deaf people, many wheelchair users, many so called cognitive impaired people all would be listed under severe meaning that 71% of them do not look for work. Let's have a look at deaf people and the improvement in employment. In a New York Times article from 1906 one finds that 38,5 per cent of the deaf were gainfully employed, as compared with 50.2 per cent among the general population. Of the deaf who were gainfully employed 39.7 per cent were found in occupations in which perfect, or even partial, hearing is not essential (New York Times, 1906). As to the deaf 60% are unemployed in the USA(Netsignnews, 2008). In Canada 20.6% are fully employed(Deaf, 2007). Only 30% of the blind are employed in the USA today(PRESS, 2008). According to a 2007

report from Vision Australia, of the total population of blind or vision-impaired people, 69 per cent are not employed.(matters, 2007)

Cole and others talk about “how arguments based on claims about what is natural, privilege some relationships while stigmatizing others and justifying discriminatory policies toward sexual minorities”(Cole et al., 2012). The same dynamic can be seen in regards to disabled people. Disabled people still fight to be seen as natural, because to be less able than normal is seen as unnatural. To quote the UK bioethicist John Harris, “I do define disability as a physical or mental condition we have a strong [rational] preference not to be in” and that it is more importantly a condition which is in some sense a “harmed condition”(Harris, 2000). I contend that this privileges so-called ‘normal’ sets of abilities.

As to the discussion around what is an earned or unearned privilege disabled, people constantly question what others see as earned privilege. Privileges linked to be born with certain abilities are seen as earned or natural (birth given) by many. Indeed many question laws that gives disabled people certain considerations, for example, who gets employed (affirmative action). Affirmative action is called by the ones who see their birth given abilities as earned as reverse discrimination. Reverse discrimination is extensively debated within the framework of disabled people (Hamilton and Koshan, 2013, Colker, 1997, Blanck, 1996) and also other social groups (Newton, 1973, Taylor, 1973, Dutton, 1976, Fullinwider, 1980). Ability privilege presented in this section is linked to the narrative of ableism a term coined by the disabled people rights movement and one of the cornerstone of disability studies scholarships (Wolbring, 2012c) however ability privilege and ableism is a much more widespread phenomenon(Wolbring, 2012c). In the next section I introduce eco-ability privilege reality which is linked to eco-ableism(Wolbring, 2012a).

Eco-ability Privilege and Human-Nature/Human-Animal Relationship

Currently, two main schools of thought pertaining to the human-nature relationship exist, both with vastly different ability expectations. The anthropocentric school is human-centered in its interpretation of the relationship between humans and nature (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2008, Verhagen, 2008). This behavior could be labeled as disabling for nature (Wolbring, 2011a) and as exhibiting anthropocentric privileges (Gunkel, 2007). Within an

anthropocentric view of human-nature relationship humans are unwilling to give up the ability privilege of using nature for their goals. Therefore, proposed anthropocentric remedies to ecological problems do not often attempt to give up ability expectations and the ability privilege set out by humans who caused the problem in the first place but to find ways to maintain human ability privilege through modifying nature. The eco- or biocentric school is eco- or biosphere-centered, and humans are seen to have to live in harmony with the needs of the biosphere (Wolbring, 2011a). This view allows for giving up anthropocentric ability privileges and moving away from a negative rights framework putting the onus on humans for decreasing their privilege. Some believe that there are signs that the structural and governmentally perpetuated privilege is diminishing in some areas. Verhagen states: "evidence of an emerging biocracy in the modern Western world is legislation about endangered species and the representation of other life forms during political assemblies when persons or organizations become spokespersons and keepers of rivers, forests etc"(Verhagen, 2008). Ecuador could be construed as the first country to become a legal biocracy and ecocracy as their constitution gives a new set of rights to nature. However how biocentric is the Ecuadorian approaches? Articles 71-74 of its new constitution describe the relationship of humans to nature. Article 71 can be interpreted as giving rights to the 'entity' nature. Article 72 talks about nature's right to an integral restoration and Article 73 talks about what actions against nature are prohibited. However article 74 retains anthropocentric reasoning: "Persons, people, communities and nationalities will have the right to benefit from the environment and form natural wealth that will allow wellbeing"(Wolbring, 2011a). As Bordessa states, "the removal of arguments for human privilege and the granting of moral status to nature do require the construction of a moral system that takes nature's claims for respectful treatment seriously" (Bordessa, 1993). Bordessa also perceives the Brundland report and the sustainable development agenda as an anthropocentric one (Bordessa, 1993).

As to human-animal relationships arguments are evident that defend an anthropocentric or biocentric view of human-animal relationships (Taylor, 1983, Watson, 1983, Taylor, 1991, Attfield, 1993, Jacob, 1994, Dobson, 1995, Michael, 1996, Ingensiep, 1997b, Singer, 1997, Ingensiep, 1997a, Sterba, 1998, Taylor, 2008, Watson, 2008, Attfield, 2009, Sterba, 2011, Tuohey et al., 1992, Cavalieri and Singer, 1995, Taylor, 1996, O'Neill, 1997, Bekoff, 1997, Recarte Vicente-Arche, 2001). Furthermore various arguments humans use in regards to animals

generate ability privileges (e.g. based on level of cognition; ability to experience pain or be self-aware) for some animals over other animals and in some cases for some animals over some humans (e.g. as severely cognitive impaired labeled people). I submit that the utility and limitation of ability based privilege within the framework of animal rights and human-animal relationships could be investigated further. Beyond ability privileges other forms of privileges are seen to influence the discussion around human-animal relationships (Wrenn, 2012). Katrina Fox outlines the interplay of various forms of privilege (Fox, 2011) and thematizes how to build bridges something which is solely needed and which demands that one has to be careful about which ability privilege one exhibits and perpetuates in ones arguments for a given group given its impact on another entity. In the next section I will cover some emerging issues enabled by emerging science and technology products and visions of science and technology research agenda's.

Enhancement Version of Ability Privilege Intrinsic to an Entity

As much as body-ability expectations are an issue for people who are perceived as sub species-typical, body-related ability expectation dynamics and issues also are appearing for people who are, to-date, privileged because of their as 'normal' as sufficient perceived bodies and sets of abilities.

Many forms of ability privileges are linked to the advancement of technoscience and its products. We see the appearance of an enhancement form of ability expectations that expects beyond species-typical abilities of humans; indeed some ethicists already push the argument that one is obligation to enhance oneself beyond the species-typical (Wolbring, 2012b). This form of ableism will become more prevalent the more ways exist to obtain beyond species-typical abilities. I submit that the same ability privilege dynamics that disadvantage disabled people to-date will also disadvantage those who will not want, or cannot access, enhancement products that lead to beyond species-typical abilities (Wolbring, 2006).

The term morphological freedom coined by Sandberg to support one's right to modify oneself highlights the ability privilege in a conscious albeit not necessarily government driven way. Sandberg states:

What is morphological freedom? I would view it as an extension of one's right to one's body, not just self-ownership but also the right to modify oneself according to one's desires. Morphological freedom is the right to modify oneself. Morphological freedom can of course be viewed as a subset of the right to one's body. But it goes beyond the idea of merely passively maintaining the body as it is and exploiting its inherent potential. Instead it affirms that we can extend or change our potential through various means. It is strongly linked to ideas of self-ownership and self-direction. Morphological freedom is, like the others, a negative right. It is a right to be able to do certain things, but it does not in itself imply others are morally obliged to support exercise of it. It would after all be unreasonable to demand others to support changes in my body that they would not see as beneficial or even ethical according to their personal moral. If I want to have green skin, it is my own problem – nobody has the moral right to prevent me, but they do not have to support my ambition. Of course, other ethical principles such as compassion would imply a moral obligation to help, but I will here mainly concentrate on the skeletal rights framework. (Sandberg, 2001)

The ability privilege is evident in this quote by recognizing that morphological freedom is a negative right (meaning that it is seen as a right for someone not to be hindered in their desires but that they have no obligation to help others to obtain the same). As such this negative rights framework fits with perpetuated ability privileges (systemic, conscious) and suggest that the non-enhanced impaired and disabled of the future will face the same problems the as sub species-typical and impaired labeled people of today namely that any interventions to decrease the enhancement linked ability privilege gap will come based on what the ability privileged see as reasonable.

In the future, ability privileges gained through accessing beyond species-typical ability enabling bodily assistive devices and genetic interventions will create numerous policy challenges. There is an urgent need to engage with beyond species-typical ability expectations and the ability privileges linked to them through the lens of whether they are unearned or earned. If these new ability privileges are perceived as earned privileges we will see less impetus on dealing with the appearance of the techno-poor disabled and impaired and ability-not-have

people (whether because they cannot afford the enhancements or whether they do not want them) who will not have access to certain privileges open to the enhanced people.

The drive for beyond typical abilities is not only impacting human-human relationships. It also impacts human-nature and human-animal relationships. To start with human nature relationships; human adaptation to climate change is linked by some to the ability to modify the human body to cope with harsh or disruptive climates. Within the article “Human Engineering and Climate Change”(Liao et al., 2012), the authors propose human engineering that has the end goal of changing bodily abilities in order to enable them to fight the impacts of climate change. The authors propose that human engineering is a potentially necessary alternative to geo-engineering because they believe that efforts to change the ability expectations of humans (for example modifying aspirations towards consumerism through educational programs) is not working and geo-engineering might be too dangerous. Geoengineering which is about modifying the abilities of nature (Boyd, 2009, Corner and Pidgeon, 2010, Gardiner, 2011, Porter and Hulme, 2013, Heyward, 2013, Preston, 2013, Low et al., 2013) to deal with human behavior is indeed a growing area of interest which impacts how humans relate to nature. One could say it further instrumentalizes nature and is anthropocentric.

Ability enhancement is also proposed to reshape human-animal relationships such as enhancing animals cognitive abilities as a solution to the negative treatment of animals (Chan, 2009); thereby applying an enhancement form of ableism to animals (Wolbring, 2008a). Above I introduced ability privileges through the lens of four biological entities (disabled people; nature; animals and people who do not have beyond species-typical abilities). Below I explore briefly the privilege discourse through two abilities (consumption and competitiveness) privileges that influences many other discourses around other privileges.

Ability Privilege of Consumption

As to the ability privilege of consumption structural perpetuated privilege can be observed as well as some psychological privilege where some people are not aware of their privilege of consumption ability. Question is whether the ability privilege of consumption is seen within an earned or unearned privilege and whether different forms of consumption are seen

differently as to whether they are earned or not. A recent blog piece on Pachamama by Gregory Mengel (Mengel, 2012) looked at race and class privilege in the culture of white, middle-class environmentalism. Mengel highlighted that “certain forms of consumption, such as buying local, driving a hybrid, or even voluntary simplicity, are often conferred moral weight, despite the fact that the ability to make such choices relies on the systemic unearned privileges that go with being white and middle-class in the U.S” (Mengel, 2012). Mengel stated further, “So-called “green consumption,” as a response to ecological concerns, is similarly bound up with race and class privilege” (Mengel, 2012). These two quotes highlight the interrelationship between different ability privileges in this case consumption, environment, and monetary ability. Katerina Fox outlined the linkage between consumption, animal rights and monetary abilities (Fox, 2011). Both Mengel and Fox also mention disabled people. Mengel uses the term ‘ability privilege’ to highlight the ability privilege of physical access in regards to the environment (Mengel, 2012) and Fox uses the term ableist to highlight that not everyone can perform the same level of activism whether due to income or body ability realities (Fox, 2011). Given the high level of poverty among disabled people their reasoning around consumption also is of relevance to disabled people as green and vegan consumption pattern need more money as they outline.

Ability Privilege of Competitiveness

Maintaining or achieving competitiveness is a cherished ability (The Bernard L.Schwartz Forum on Competitiveness, 2006, Pezzini and Kamal-Chaoui, 2006, Lisbon European Council, 2000) on the individual and state level (Wolbring, 2010b, Fagerberg et al., 2007). Whether one feels competitive (from a nation to the level of the individual) depend among others on past achievements and current aspirations and is constantly changing (Aiginger, 1998, Önsel et al., 2008). Even more than in the case of the ability to consume, the question arises whether being competitive is seen as an earned or unearned privilege. An athlete who wins a highly competitive race will see his or her win as an earned privilege due to hard work. Interscholastic sports is seen as “a character-building privilege earned by showing respect, playing fair, and striving to win while keeping winning in perspective” (Lumpkin and Stokowski, 2011) and being part of school sport teams is seen as an earned privilege (Lumpkin and Favor, 2012). He or she would not see it as an unearned ability privilege due to having access to equipment, support or training

opportunities. A country that sees itself as highly competitive might see it as an earned privilege. Other 'less' competitive countries might not agree and might have a line of reasoning that leads them to see it as an unearned privilege.

Given the prevalence of the different privileges where should guidance come from? Ethics is often put forward as a field that ought to give guidance but what guidance can the field give?

Ethics Theories, Code of Ethics and Privilege

Holland looked at privilege employing Martin Heidegger's concept of inauthenticity (Holland, 2008). She believes that one can "make a distinction between those who live their privilege because they are unaware of it and those who assert and experience that privilege as an entitlement" (Holland, 2008). Hollander states further that once people are 'told' the 'unaware' path is closed to them and two others are only open namely to see the privilege as an entitlement or the "alternative to entitlement is to avoid the exercise of such privilege where one can and, where one cannot, to adopt and use one's privilege, to the extent possible, in ways that benefit, or at least do not harm, those who do not have it" (Holland, 2008).

However "awareness of privilege is not about feeling guilty about one's unearned privilege as much as it is about recognizing ways to use privilege to benefit the marginalized and disadvantaged" (Cook et al., 2012). However in the end whether one has to act on one's awareness is based on the ethics theory one adheres to. Liberation ethics (Ellison, 1993), one can argue, actively uses privilege to benefit the marginalized and disadvantaged. Pattons and Townsend reason that ethic of critique illuminates power and privilege inequities and through combining this ethic with an ethic of justice positive change can take place (Patton and Townsend, 1999). They further argue that ethics of critique and justice must be complemented by an ethic of caring an ethics that requires that the sanctity, dignity, and worth of each individual is valued and becomes the basis for all decisionmaking (Patton and Townsend, 1999). Superson employs Kant to claim "that the privileged have an obligation to attend to the basic facts about humanity in the nonprivileged, despite the fact that arrogance, self-interest, and failure to accept responsibility lead them not to do so" (Superson, 2004). She argues that "the

Principle of Humanity requires not just that a person understand these facts about himself, but that a reasonable person put himself in another's shoes—step out of his position of privilege and put himself in the position of the oppressed—in order to know his obligations” (Superson, 2004). According to Superson Kant's Universal Law Formulation “requires that a privileged person imagine himself not being in a privileged position and having the maxim in question apply to him” (Superson, 2004). Callicott discusses anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric schools of environmental ethics which come with different actions in dealing with the privilege humans exhibit toward animals and nature (Callicott, 1984). I contend that some ethics theories (egalitarianism, socialism, psychological altruism, female based care ethics,) lend themselves to generate a climate of obligation to diminish the negative consequences of ones privilege on others, or use ones privilege to diminish the negative situation of others or try to diminish ones privileged position, others don't (libertarianism, individual relativism, psychological egoism). Some such as consequentialism, utilitarianism, deontology, psychological hedonism, normative ethics, could go both ways. Furthermore some ethic theories exhibit ability privileges (e.g. Merit-Platonism exhibits intelligence privilege; Merit-Seniority seniority privilege; Merit-Effort exhibits effort privilege and Merit-Output exhibits output privilege)(Wolbring, 2012b).

Ethics theories are one instrument to be used to influence ones action. Codes of Ethics are another instrument. As to disabled people I submit that many Code of Ethics might lend themselves to generate a climate of obligation to diminish the negative consequences of ones privilege on others, or use ones privilege to diminish the negative situation of others or try to diminish ones privileged position. Code of Ethics of professions linked to disabled people strongly suggest that professionals have to be involved in decreasing the negative consequences of privilege experienced by disabled people; to give excerpts of three Code of Ethics. The American Counselling Association (ACA) *Code of Ethics*, states in the Preamble: “Association members recognize diversity and embrace a cross-cultural approach in support of the worth, dignity, potential, and uniqueness of people within their social and cultural contexts” (American Counseling Association, 2005). The Canadian Code of Ethics for rehabilitation professionals states among others, “Rehabilitation professionals are committed to facilitating the personal, social, and economic well being of persons with a disability and/or disadvantage” (Canadian Association of Rehabilitation Professionals, 2002). Code of Ethics of the National Council of

Rehabilitation Educators (NCRE) states among others, “the primary obligation of rehabilitation counselors is to clients, defined as individuals with or directly affected by a disability, functional limitation(s), or medical condition and who receive services from rehabilitation counselors”(Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification, 2010). **Elsewhere (Wolbring, 2011c) the codes of ethics from the American Academy of Audiology**, Academy of Doctors of Audiology®, Audiological Society of Australia, College Of Audiologists and Speech Language Pathologists, Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (CASLPA) and the Standing Liaison Committee of E.U. Speech and Language Therapists and Logopedists were investigated and the themes identified in all suggests that professionals of these organizations have to involve themselves in decreasing the disablism linked to exhibitions of ability privileges and have to use their ability privilege for the improvement of the people they serve.

As to whether action that decreases anthropocentric privilege is mandated from environmental professionals is much less clear. The Environmental Professionals NREP Code of Ethics (National Registry of Environmental Professionals, 2013) states the following, “To use the best principles of environmental science, health, safety, and technology in planning and management to protect and enhance environmental quality”, “To cooperate with all levels of government in the furtherance and development of appropriate public policies supportive of environmental quality, occupational health and safety”, “To comply with applicable environmental quality, occupational health and safety, and product safety laws and regulations”, “ To fully disclose in writing to employers/clients all known positive and negative impacts to the environment of assigned activities, duties and/or responsibilities”. Some of the wording may be used to demand action on anthropocentric privilege other not. The code of ethics of the National Association of Environmental Professionals (National Association of Environmental Professionals, 2013) states among others, “The objectives of an Environmental Professional are: 1. To recognize and attempt to reconcile societal and individual human needs with responsibility for physical, natural, and cultural systems. 2. To promote and develop policies, plans, activities and projects that achieve complementary and mutual support between natural and man-made, and present and future components of the physical, natural and cultural environment,” and “As an Environmental Professional I will: “I will incorporate the best principles of the environmental

sciences for the mitigation of environmental harm and enhancement of environmental quality”, “It is their duty to interest themselves in public welfare, and to be ready to apply their special knowledge for the benefit of mankind and their environment”, “Recognize that total environmental management involves the consideration of all environmental factors including: technical, economical, ecological, and sociopolitical and their relationships”, “Incorporate the best principle of design and environmental planning when recommending measures to reduce environmental harm and enhance environmental quality”. As to whether code of ethics of professional groups linked to animals require a decrease in the anthropocentric angle is also not clear; the code of ethics of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, 2013) could be read by some to diminish the anthropocentric angle but it is not quite clear from the wordings how far this decrease is envisioned to go if at all. There are various other codes of ethics which suggest an adherence to an anthropocentric view. If we look not at a social group but at specific ability privileges such as consumerism and competitiveness the utility of a code of ethics is even less certain as no profession is linked to these abilities.

Conclusion

I submit that the lens of ability privilege provides opportunities to investigate positive and negative effects of existing and emerging ability privileges on numerous societal dynamics and discourses; for example what is the effect of the understanding of one’s ability to consume or be competitive as an earned ability privilege on global climate change negotiations. It especially allows deconstructing what is seen as earned and unearned privilege whether birth given or later in the life cycle. I submit research is needed to understand ability privilege hierarchies (of individuals and social structures) and the reasons for them and an ability expectation conflict map is needed to understand which ability expectations are irreconcilable and which might be reconcilable, for whom conflict resolutions might work allowing one to better understand how far a given discourse might go given the ability expectations of the players involved. I posit that so far privilege dynamics are mostly discussed within social group binaries (male/female; white/non-white...). Ability privilege is a lens that has a binary the ability have/ability non-have) that allows for different configuration of discourses as various biological entities (social groups and animals and earth) in existence might be on the same ability-have or ability-non-have side.

Furthermore for example science and technology advancement and other societal advancements might shift which biological entities are part of the ability-have or ability-non-have side and we might even have new biological entities appearing that are seen as ability haves (such as humans or animals that are enhanced beyond the normal or robots). As such the ability privilege lens is able to engage with emerging or anticipated ability expectations that might be based on existing ability privileges or unravel new ability privileges appearing and allow for anticipatory governance and anticipatory advocacy.

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