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Addiction in *Deep Space Nine*: What the Dominion teaches us about A Dis/Ability as an Intersectional Spectrum

La dépendance dans *Deep Space Nine* : Ce que le Dominion nous apprend sur le handicap et l'absence de handicap comme spectre intersectionnel

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Abstract:

It is easy to overlook Garak, Damar, and the Jem'Hadar as examples of disability in *Star Trek*, given how underacknowledged and under-theorised addiction is both in relation to the series and from a disability studies perspective more broadly. This paper will demonstrate that addiction is, by any widely accepted definition, a disability and thinking about it as such has the potential to nuance and deepen our understanding of how disability is defined and stigma propagated. *Deep Space Nine* illustrates how, following Waldschmidt's configuration of the cultural model, dis/ability can best be understood as a culturally specific, intersectional spectrum. The spacefaring world of *Star Trek* – and in particular the complex interplay between race, gender, and varying cultures on display in *DS9* – provides an ideal opportunity to explore this. In particular, this paper argues that the series illustrates how the 'norm' – so often treated as a cultural monolith – can better be understood as constructed of two connected, yet distinct, phenomena: the 'real' expectations of individuals and overarching cultural ideals. I argue that it is the former which dictates whether an impairment is perceived as a disability, whilst the individual's perceived relationship to the latter determines their experience of stigma.

Il est facile de ne pas considérer Garak, Damar et les Jem'Hadar comme des figures du handicap dans *Star Trek*, puisque la dépendance demeure largement ignorée et peu théorisée, tant dans le cadre de la série que dans les études sur le handicap en général. Cet article montre que la dépendance constitue, selon toute définition largement admise, un handicap, et que l'envisager comme tel permet d'affiner et d'approfondir notre compréhension des mécanismes de définition du handicap et de propagation de la stigmatisation. *Deep Space Nine* (DS9) illustre que, dans la perspective du modèle culturel proposé par Waldschmidt, le handicap et la validité corporelle peuvent être

compris comme un spectre intersectionnel propre à chaque contexte culturel. L’univers spatial de *Star Trek*, et plus particulièrement l’entrelacement complexe des questions de race, de genre et de cultures diverses dans *DS9*, offre un terrain idéal pour explorer cette conception. Cet article soutient en particulier que la série montre que la « norme », souvent envisagée comme un bloc culturel homogène, peut être mieux comprise comme composée de deux phénomènes liés, mais distincts : d’une part, les attentes « réelles » qui pèsent sur les individus et, d’autre part, les idéaux culturels plus larges. Je défends l’idée que ce sont les attentes réelles qui déterminent si une déficience est perçue comme un handicap, tandis que la relation perçue de l’individu aux idéaux culturels façonne son expérience de la stigmatisation.

Keywords: Star Trek, Deep Space Nine, Disability, Addiction, Cultural Model, intersectionality.

Mots-clés

Star Trek, Deep Space Nine, handicap, dépendance, modèle culturel, intersectionnalité

Introduction

When considering the topic of disability in *Star Trek*, Garak, Damar and the Jem'Hadar might not immediately spring to mind. I suggest that this is reflective of a broader tendency within disability studies, which continues to underacknowledge and undertheorize addiction as a disability. The presence of these three characters, or groupings of characters, is however illustrative of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine's* (henceforth *DS9*) surprisingly sustained focus on addiction – addicts appearing in at least forty-two episodes (excluding those focused on Klingons, whose cultural celebration of functional alcoholism warrants its own, separate discussion). This paper then aims to demonstrate how focusing on addiction, a marginalised impairment even within the disability community, can provide a new perspective on existing theory, expanding our understanding of how disability is defined and stigma propagated.

This paper proceeds from the basis that addiction, defined by the National Institute on Drug Abuse in clinical terms as 'a chronic, relapsing disorder characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use despite adverse consequences', clearly meets the requisite criteria to be considered a disability.[1] It cannot be ignored, however, that viewing addiction in this way remains controversial, those experiencing addiction all too frequently being labelled as simply weak-willed, morally lacking, or guilty of poor life choices. This controversy is evident in addiction's contentious legal status, with some countries, like the United Kingdom, explicitly excluding addicts from anti-discrimination legislation, whilst Canada offers parity between addiction and other impairments, and the United States occupies a position between these two poles.[2] Notably, the two countries identified as offering little or no legal protection for addicts are those which

employ a definition of disability based upon the medical model, characterising it as a 'physical or mental impairment' which has 'substantial' 'long-term' effects on the individual's 'ability to do normal daily activities.'[3] Disability is thus viewed as an inevitable consequence of an individual deficit, and implicitly something which should, where possible, be corrected. Canada, meanwhile, draws on the social model, classifying disability as 'any impairment' or 'functional limitation [...] that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society.'[4]

Despite meeting these criteria, I will nevertheless argue that neither model alone is able to account fully for addiction, a situation which is symptomatic of their shortcomings and the consequent need for a vision of disability which addresses these limitations. To this end I follow and expand upon Waldschmidt's formulation of a cultural model, which treats disability as an embodied state constructed culturally as difference, possessed of qualities both innate and ascribed to it.[5] The focus on this construction thus emphasises the role of cultural specificity in understanding disability, a quality well-illustrated in *DS9*, via its focus on similar individuals (all of my examples being adult males who belong to races depicted as 'enemies' of the Federation), whose divergent experiences of disability and stigma are then legible as a consequence of interactions with divergent cultures. The cultural model further serves to denaturalise the binary between disabled and nondisabled, instead focusing on a spectrum of dis/ability which I explore as an innately intersectional phenomenon, with its roots in individual culture's expectations and ideals. My choice of words here is a pointed one, offering an alternative to 'the norm' which is all too frequently presented as a monolithic construct when discussing disability. This is perhaps best

encapsulated in Garland-Thomson's conceptualisation of 'the normate' – an imagined white, middle class, nondisabled, heterosexual (and implicitly cisgender) male.[6] Far from representing an average 'the normate' represents an 'ideal' against which all lives in Western culture are measured, deviation from which marks one as raced, gendered, or indeed disabled, potentiating stigmatisation.[7] In what follows I argue, however, that this figuration of the norm amalgamates two distinct cultural phenomena – expectations and ideology. The former here refers to what is 'really' expected of individuals based upon the totality of their observable or known characteristics, including gender, race and so forth, in a given cultural context. An impairment is only then understood as a disability when it prevents the individual from meeting these expectations, and as such is not a stable construct, but a facet of existence and identity constantly renegotiated between observer and observed based on the former's knowledge of the latter, and their belief system. Ideology, on the other hand, names the often unspoken rules of society, particularly those things that it is agreed we are collectively striving toward, crystalised in concepts like 'the American dream'. It is on the ideological level that stigma is created – occurring when an individual's impairment is perceived as being caused by, or creating, an incompatibility with collective ideals – whether that impairment is understood to be a disability or not. *DS9* is then an ideal case study for exploring how this delineation nuances our understanding of disability, showcasing how the link between impairment and disability can be severed by differing cultural expectations (the Jem'Hadar), how impairment can be stigmatised without being recognised as a disability (as with Damar), and how stigma related to visible differences like race can complicate the stigmatisation of invisible impairments (Garak).

The case for and against the social and medical model.

I begin by demonstrating how Damar, the first of my two Cardassian subjects, demonstrates the applicability of both the social and medical model of disability to addiction. Damar's alcoholism is first introduced against the backdrop of the Cardassian/Dominion occupation of the titular space station during *DS9's* sixth season, the combined forces of the two powers having wrested control of the station from the Federation at the end of season five. Though still a relatively new alliance tensions between the two are already evident, culture clashes between the Cardassians and the Vorta (the race which act at diplomats on behalf of the Dominion) being exacerbated by setbacks in the ongoing war with the Federation. By this stage Damar's propensity toward heavy drinking has already garnered sufficient attention among his superiors that when a PADD containing military secrets is 'misplaced' and finds its way into the hands of a group of Jem'Hadar fighters (Dominion troops), there is little question as to his guilt in the matter[8]. In order to regain his former esteem following this incident, Damar devises a plan to strike a significant blow against the Federation. His alcoholism, however, again proves detrimental, as he drunkenly reveals his plan to Quark, the station's barkeep (and occasional smuggler), who in turn passes the intelligence to the same pro-Federation resistance cell responsible for stealing the PADD Damar was believed to have lost. The Cardassian/Dominion forces subsequently lose DS9, Damar discovering in the midst of their retreat that the daughter of his friend, Cardassian leader Gul Dukat, was involved with the resistance movement. Damar subsequently murders her in front of her horrified father, who suffers a mental breakdown. Damar then replaces the incapacitated Dukat as Cardassia's leader, only to discover that the title is a hollow one, the Dominion blaming their military setbacks

on their Cardassian allies and increasingly cutting them out of key decisions. A combination of disenfranchisement and guilt regarding the fate of Dukat and his daughter then sees Damar slipping deeper into alcoholism, a fact upon which the Dominion's Vorta representative Weyoun frequently comments derisively, complaining that it 'has become increasingly hard to get a full day's work out of him.'[9] Damar's functioning is eventually shown to be so affected by his alcoholism that he is subjected to the humiliation of being personally awoken by Weyoun, who is forced to enter his quarters when Damar cannot be roused via the comm system. Despite this experience, he still begins his day with a drink, regarding his reflection with disgust as he does so.

According to both the medical model and the social model Damar thus clearly meets the requisite criteria to be considered disabled. In the case of the former, he is possessed of a mental impairment – his addiction – which endures for at least two years (the approximate duration of the Dominion War, which officially begins with the occupation of DS9). This has a significant, negative impact on his capacity to perform day-to-day tasks, including attending work, and getting out of bed. Equally Damar's disability can be seen as is in part produced by the interaction between his social environment and his impairment. Most obviously, Damar faces significant prejudice, his alcoholism leading him to be wrongly blamed for the lost PADD, as well as making him the subject of offensive and belittling remarks at work. His self-loathing further suggests a degree of internalised stigma, resulting from his own Cardassian culture (a topic to which I return shortly) which subsequently limits his capacity to seek and receive help.

Compared to Damar's alcoholism, which is arguably the most straightforward manifestation of addiction in *DS9*, and thus most easily related to real, contemporary experiences, Garak's addiction takes full advantage of science fiction possibilities, introducing a futuristic cranial implant which functions like a drug. This renders his impairment invisible, enabling it to be revealed only in the character's fourth appearance, effectively reframing his prior actions. The single episode arc then reveals how 'functioning' addicts, invisible impairments, and the concept of 'enabling' as opposed to inclusivity problematise the social model of disability.[10]

The Wire begins as a medical mystery focused on Garak, whose health rapidly deteriorates after he starts experiencing headaches for which he refuses to seek medical care, instead engaging in clandestine dealings with Quark.[11] The cause of his symptoms is finally identified after he collapses, enabling the station's medical officer, Bashir, his only real friend, to examine him, discovering a malfunctioning cranial implant he initially mistakes for a high-tech torture device. Garak however explains it is in fact the opposite – having been designed to enable members of the Cardassian intelligence agency the Obsidian Order to resist torture by releasing massive amounts of endorphins automatically in response to extreme pain. In his case the device has begun malfunctioning due to prolonged use for which it was not designed, Garak having modified it to be triggered not by pain but by the push of a button. He explains to Bashir that life in exile onboard DS9 had become a kind of 'torture'- the environment being controlled with its majority Bajoran inhabitants in mind, the temperature is thus always 'too cold' the lights, 'too bright' for his Cardassian physiology. His very presence is further the subject of 'loathing and contempt' – his race having been responsible for the

occupation of Bajor and the genocide of its people, as well as a brutal war with the Federation. Eventually he simply 'couldn't live with it anymore' and left the implant on permanently. His dealings with Quark were a failed attempt to source a replacement, nearly causing the deaths of the Ferengi and his Cardassian contact who unwittingly attempted to access data on the top-secret device. Unable to obtain a replacement, Garak finally allows the device to be switched off, subsequently suffering though painful withdrawals which Bashir warns could result in lasting brain damage, or even death, due to the device's long-term effects.

Despite the object of Garak's addiction being fictional, his experience nevertheless highlights some of the real complications which arise when attempting to apply the social model of disability to addiction. As a 'functioning' addict with an invisible impairment that requires few, if any, adjustments to his environment, Garak 'passes' as nondisabled and subsequently faces few identifiable societal barriers (at least as a result of his addiction). Indeed, the negative consequences he does experience are mostly those arising directly from his impairment – specifically the unseen damage to his brain, the degradation of the implant, and, arguably, the depletion of his free will. The only identifiable societal barrier related to his impairment is thus the implied internalised stigma that leads Garak to conceal his addiction, though whether this is due to fear of being judged, or fear that someone like Bashir might try and convince him to stop (or perhaps most likely both) is unclear.

Though the lack of societal barriers is, in Garak's case, the consequence of futuristic technology, his experience nevertheless illustrates the potential complications of removing barriers to participation for addicts in the manner generally

advocated for by the social model of disability. Most evidently, the absence of obstacles related to his addiction contributes to a lack of motivation to recover, prolonging his active addiction, leading to near-fatal brain damage. His dealings with Quark further illustrate the potential for impaired judgment as the consequence of addiction to harm others. In prior episodes Garak's skill as a former undercover operative and assassin is consistently alluded to, thus his failure to pre-empt the alarm triggered by attempting to access information on the implant is an uncharacteristic oversight attributable to his desperation. Garak's situation then highlights the potential danger for inclusivity to become enabling, the latter referring to patterns of behaviour adopted by those around the addict which limit their exposure to negative repercussions. Without these consequences the individual may lack the motivation to stop, prolonging their active addiction, leading to more severe long term consequences.

Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and the Cultural Model

Seitz argues that the Dominion is legible as a means (intentional or not) of externalising some of United States culture's more dystopian traits.[12] Building upon this notion, I argue that the Dominion highlights the interconnectedness of the cultural model of disability and what McRuer terms 'compulsory able-bodiedness'. The latter term articulates the unspoken duality of neoliberal capitalism in which 'free to sell ones labour' means 'not free to do anything else', and thus by necessity one is 'free' to have an able body-mind, and 'not free to have anything else.'[13] Overlooked by McRuer's definition is the extent to which individuals are free only to sell specific *types* of labour, dependent on class, gender, race, and so forth. Although not completely inescapable,

moving beyond these bounds does, to briefly employ the other meaning of the word free, require additional expenditure of unpaid labour in order to accrue relevant cultural capital, contacts, etc. In contrast to the contemporary Anglo-American world, the Dominion dispenses entirely with the illusion of choice – openly embracing the compulsory nature of labour and able-bodiedness, implementing a system of meticulously engineered biodeterminism. As a direct consequence the link between impairment and disability is selectively severed, in the process exposing the mechanics of disability as intersectional, culturally specific spectrum.

The Dominion then encapsulates the labour practices McRuer associates with neoliberal capitalism. At its head, a race of shapeshifters known as the Founders, who naturally exist as part of 'the Great Link' - a communal gelatinous state, from which they are capable of separating into countless individuals each capable of taking on any form they choose. Seitz consequently argues that the Founders function as a metaphor for the unmarked fluidity of whiteness compared to the Jem'Hadar's heavily racialised image.[14] They can, however, equally be seen as embodying the 'flexibility' which McRuer sees as characterising the ideal neoliberal subject - an individual who is capable of seamlessly adapting to any 'crisis', becoming whatever is needed to meet societal demand.[15] Despite their capabilities, the Dominion's day-to-day running is mostly left to the Vorta, a species genetically engineered by the Founders to serve as ideal administrators, diplomats and scientists working on their behalf. They are intelligent, ruthless, and unquestioningly loyal to their creators. They also possess only a minimal sense of taste, can appreciate neither aesthetics nor music, and have impaired vision, being unable to distinguish distant explosions clearly visible to their

Cardassian allies.[16] Serving under the Vorta are the Jem'Hadar, an exclusively male race of warriors with a craving for violence, who, like the Vorta, see the Founders as Gods and will stop at nothing to fulfil their orders. They cannot reproduce, being grown in specialised 'hatcheries', and do not need to sleep, eat, or drink, being sustained entirely by the drug ketracel-white, to which they have a genetically programmed unbreakable addiction.[17] The need for ketracel-white ensures loyalty to the founders, the only beings capable of synthesising the drug, which is ritualistically dispensed by the Vorta to troops under their command. Both the Jem'Hadar and the Vorta are so loyal to the Founders that they will willingly end their own lives if ordered to do so, including as punishment for failure or in the Jem'Hadar's case as a means of preserving resources.[18]

The Dominion thus dispenses with a number of key myths which disguise the truth of labour practices under neoliberal capitalism, particularly social mobility, control over one's own labour, and the acceptance of diverse embodiment. The Vorta and the Jem'Hadar see their leaders as unattainable Gods to be served, rather than aspired to. They are further designed not only to suit specific roles, but to be incapable of fulfilling any role for which they are *not* designed. The Jem'Hadar for example require combat as a means of releasing their violent tendencies, and are ideally suited to it, their ability to exist without food, water or rest enabling them to survive on even the harshest battlefields. They further understand themselves to be disposable, existing solely for the greater good of the Dominion – willingly accepting death if rendered incapable of fighting for even the shortest period due to injury.[19] The Dominion thus

unabashedly pursues to their logical extreme the values McRuer identifies as central to the labour practices of neoliberal capitalist cultures.[20]

Whilst the Jem'Hadar and the Vorta both possess obvious impairments, neither race is treated as disabled, nor faces the associated stigma, a fact which, taking the former as an example, is attributable to several factors. Firstly, and requiring little discussion, the fact that all Jem'Hadar are addicted (save rare anomalies), means that addiction is normalised within their culture. Equally, they are not subject to potentially unflattering comparisons to other races within the Dominion, as the strict racial hierarchy means they are not expected to adhere to the same standards as the Vorta or the Founders. Most importantly, the meaning of their addiction within the Dominion's culture differs in comparison to the other cultures they encounter. Genetically encoded as a failsafe to ensure loyalty to the Founders should the Jem'Hadar's belief in them as Gods falter, their addiction is associated with positive values. Ketracel-white is dispensed by the Vorta to the leader of each Jem'Hadar unit at an appointed time daily, a ritual which involves the lead Jem'Hadar pledging loyalty on behalf of his men, receiving the drug as a 'reward' from the Founders accompanied by the words 'may it keep you strong.'[21] Addiction is thus associated with loyalty and devotion to the spiritual covenant they have with the Founders, as well as with strength, and thus their successful performance of hypermasculinity, a quality which defines the Jem'Hadar via their obsession with competition and violence, and their intolerance for weakness. Indeed, this performance is only interrupted by their species' lack of females, who are an absent presence, implied by the qualities the Jem'Hadar lack. This has further significance when considering the Founders as a genderless species with advanced

genetic engineering skills – there is thus no logical reason for them to have chosen one gender over another when manufacturing the Jem'Hadar, or indeed to have made them gendered at all, save a desire to exploit the meaning masculinity has in other cultures. The successful performance of hypermasculinity is thus clearly prized by the Founders in their creation. Addiction then stands as a marker of the Jem'Hadar's adherence to expectations of their role within the Dominion - as formidable soldiers, and further demonstrates their unwavering devotion to the Founders, the core ideological principle of their culture.

Damar's contrasting experience with the Dominion then highlights the centrality of cultural expectations, ideals, and their interaction with race. While the Vorta appear, at worst, mildly irritated by the ceremonial aspects of dispensing ketracel-white, Damar's alcoholism is met with outright contempt. This is well illustrated by Weyoun's frequent belittling commentary, typified by his asking Damar 'when you're alone do you even bother with a glass or do you just drink that swill directly from the bottle.'[22] The impropriety of his remarks is heightened by Damar's position as leader of his people, a role which should command respect, particularly in comparison to the demonstrably disposable Jem'Hadar. It is Weyoun's commentary on Damar's eventual sobriety, however, which reveals the underlying reason for this antipathy. Shocked to find Damar already at work when he arrives, Weyoun greets him derisively, observing that he looks 'different' 'almost [..] half dressed' before realising it is because he does not 'have a bottle in [his] hand.'[23] His tone then becomes more positive, wrongly attributing the change to Damar's renewed confidence in himself and the Dominion. Weyoun's response then reveals that Damar's alcoholism was subject to stigma because it

served as a signifier of his relationship to the Dominion's ideology. Nominally a body akin to the Federation, consisting of member states based on voluntary agreements, the Dominion amplifies the pre-existing colonialist undertones, coercing states into membership, conquering them by stealth and even committing genocide when faced with resistance.[24] The leaders of member worlds are thus intended to believe that they still control their planets, and, unlike the Jem'Hadar or Vorta, are serving the Founders of their own freewill based on shared goals and benefits to their people. Damar, as a Cardassian, is thus subject to differing expectations based on his race – his addiction being ascribed the inverse meaning of the Jem'Hadar's, symbolising his disillusionment with the Dominion and an acknowledgement of his disempowerment. He thus experiences stigma for failing to project belief in the Dominion's ideology but is not considered by their representative to be disabled as he conforms to their 'real' expectations of him – serving as a puppet leader. Indeed much as the Jem'Hadar's reliance on ketracel-white makes them easier to control, Damar's alcoholism can be seen as facilitating the Dominion's efforts to erode Cardassian influence – ensuring he is frequently absent, preoccupied, or too drunk to care when decisions are made which affect his people.

Damar's experience is further complicated by the fact that he is beholden to two distinct ideologies and sets of cultural expectations, as a citizen of both the Dominion and Cardassia. Although there are similarities in the two cultures' ideologies – both prizing service to the state above all else, Cardassians view their second duty as being to the family – a concern which is absent for both the Vorta (who do not reproduce but are instead cloned) and the Jem'Hadar, who are manufactured. Cardassian attitudes

regarding gender are thus more familiar in their conservatism – with an emphasis on paternal lines, heterosexual relationships, and gendered division of labour. Despite women being permitted to pursue military and political careers, for example, they rarely do so, *The Next Generation* being the only *Star Trek* series to include a female Gul, who is characterised as an anomaly.[25] Conversely STEM fields are female-dominated, a Cardassian scientist implying that this is because in their culture men are considered less rational.[26] This division of labour combined with the idealisation of service to the state results in strong competition among Cardassian males for high ranking political and military postings, leading to a cutthroat culture, characterised by individuals scheming against one another and exploiting any sign of potential weakness. Cardassian society is thus at its core contradictory –emphasising service to others, despite Cardassians appearing more naturally inclined to serve themselves. Service to the state is then most often interpreted in terms of shaping institutions to serve one's own ends. Similarly, service to the family has little to do with loyalty or the formation of a functioning family unit – as evidenced by Garak's father, Enabran Tain, being responsible for his son's banishment, as well as the demonstrable promiscuity of Cardassian males (many of whom took Bajoran 'comfort women' during the occupation.) Family in Cardassian culture then has more to do with the maintenance of a (legitimate) paternal line – both Dukat and Damar alluding to creating a future for their sons in key political speeches.[27]

Damar then lives up to the Dominion's expectations of him, but falls short of the standards set for Cardassian males, and in doing so fails to live up to the ideological credo of his people. The relationship of this to his alcoholism can be seen in his

interactions with Dukat, who returns to Cardassia unexpectedly in order to seek the Dominion's assistance towards the end of season seven. Damar's alcoholism has by this point escalated such that he is shown regularly consuming alcohol first thing in the morning, appearing unkempt and making little attempt to hide his deteriorating health.[28] Dukat appears shocked by the state of his former aide, whom he hasn't seen since the loss of DS9 almost two years prior. In a rare human moment Dukat broaches the subject, expressing his concern that his friend does not 'look well'. Damar attempts to brush off the comment, but Dukat is insistent, asking 'what happened to the brave officer [he] served with?' and encouraging Damar to 'grab hold' of the man he once was, in order to become the leader Cardassia needs. Dukat's language differs from Weyoun's not just in expressing concern rather than contempt, but in focusing on Damar's health and on the qualities expected of a Cardassian male, rather than a servant of the Dominion. Given that Cardassian males are effectively judged by their capacity as soldiers and leaders in service of the state, Dukat's emphasis then acknowledges Damar's alcoholism as a disability, calling attention to the ways in which he has ceased to live up to expectations of him. In particular he emphasizes who Damar was when last they spoke – an officer in the Cardassian military, a brave man who served the state alongside Dukat. This highlights the contrast to the Damar he finds on returning to Cardassia – a military officer in name only, hiding from his responsibilities and fears for Cardassia's future by drinking, isolated from his people, accepting, albeit miserably, his role as puppet leader of a conquered world. His alcoholism is thus legible as caused by his disempowerment and emasculation, beginning whilst serving as a glorified lacky to Dukat (who despite their friendship took delight in having him perform menial tasks), himself responsible for the Dominion

'alliance', and escalating after he attained the leadership of Cardassia, only to discover its meaninglessness. His alcoholism then in turn exacerbated these underlying causes – contributing to his passivity and disinterest in fighting back against the Dominion despite enduring Weyoun's taunts daily and witnessing his own soldiers being used as cannon fodder to slow down their enemy's advance. Although it is hard to imagine him successfully fighting back against the Dominion's superior military power, the fact he does not even attempt to do so means that he fails to live up to not only expectations of him, but to his culture's ideals – his inaction making him complicit in the decimation of the Cardassian state. These factors then contribute to his aforementioned self-stigmatisation, his look of disgust when viewing his reflection suggesting he has become the antithesis of everything his culture prizes.

Much like Damar, Garak finds himself caught between two cultures with differing expectations and ideologies – that of the joint Federation/Bajoran DS9, and that of his Cardassian heritage. Much like Damar, this leads him to experience internalised ableism, however he is not subjected to external stigma in the same way. Whilst intelligence work is not as highly prized in Cardassian culture as the military, it is nevertheless a respected means of serving the state. Garak's addiction however demonstrates that, in addition to being denied the opportunity to continue his work, his capacity to do so is diminished. As the implant's existence suggests, it is vital that operatives of the Obsidian Order be capable of withstanding extreme torture – Garak's addiction to it in order to survive day-to-day life then implies he no longer has this ability. Worse still, Cardassian culture appears to frown upon expressions of strong emotion – Tain admonishing Garak for 'sentiment' in a later meeting between the two,

building upon the aforementioned Cardassian scientist's implication that emotion is an impediment to reason.[29] The fact that withdrawal then entails for Garak an inability to regulate his emotions compounds what is already likely a source of self-stigmatisation. This is implicitly confirmed by his recounting the story of his exile to Bashir, each repetition being different to the last, with the 'true' story never being revealed. These retellings then appear to be the actions of a man scrabbling for the sense of identity he found through his former career. The source of Garak's self-stigmatisation, implied by his failure to disclose his addiction, then becomes legible as the consequence of incongruence between his impairment, its causes, and Cardassian values – particularly the emphasis on service to the state, and the resulting value placed on the skills and career path necessary to achieve that end.

Despite internalised ableism Garak's addiction does not appear to be a source of stigma among the station's mostly Federation and Bajoran inhabitants. While this could be interpreted as an inclusive vision of the future, I suggest it is instead indicative of the low esteem in which Garak is already held due to his race, the greater visibility of his Cardassian heritage giving it primacy, his addiction then only serving to confirm the prejudices against him. Explaining his addiction, Garak acknowledges his depression at being the subject of Bajoran contempt – something to which he is subject even prior to the revelation of his history with the Obsidian Order. Whilst Bashir appears not to share this antipathy, his belief that the implant is a torture device suggests the brutality he believes the Cardassians capable of. The station's inhabitants however treat Garak's collapse like any other medical emergency, with no additional judgement shown or implied, and he is never referred to as disabled, merely ill. The reasons for

this, I suggest, are twofold – firstly the implant confirms Garak's status as a spy and thus implicitly the duplicity of Cardassians – as such it only confirms negative beliefs regarding his race, rather than being a source of stigma in and of itself. Secondly – Garak's ability to participate in life aboard the station is already impaired by virtue of being stigmatised and hated as a Cardassian, rather than as an addict, thus the barriers he faces are those related to his race, as opposed to his impairment. Thinking of dis/ability as a spectrum then enables us to acknowledge societal barriers to participation which originate from sources other than impairment as potentially disabling. Equally, it demonstrates that if a barrier would exist even were the impairment with which it is associated absent, owing to factors such as race, then the impairment is unlikely to be recognised as a disability.

This last point is further illustrated by *The Abandoned* which, like *The Wire* begins as a medical mystery, this time centred on an abandoned infant who is later revealed to be a Jem'Hadar.[30] The child's accelerated aging then further demonstrates how race and impairment interact in the production of stigma and beliefs about disability. Discovered in the wreckage of a ship, the child's species is initially a mystery, DS9's crew having only seen adult Jem'Hadar. They thus respond positively, Sisko holding the child and lamenting how quickly his own son grew up, requesting regular updates from Bashir who dedicates himself to the infant's care. The child begins developing rapidly, becoming fully grown in mere days, however before the traits characteristic of his species develop, Bashir notes a 'fault' in his genome – resulting in his addiction to an as-yet unidentified substance. Bashir searches for an alternative to the drug in order to help the child, who begins suffering withdrawals, until eventually a

small quantity of ketracel-white is discovered in the same wreckage the boy came from. The crew's attitude however changes drastically when the child's species becomes apparent. Although Bashir continues to do his duty as a physician, medicating and monitoring his patient, he shows substantially less interest in finding a viable treatment than in other, similar medical mystery episodes, including *The Wire*, *The Quickening* and *Melora*, among others.[31] Sisko's behavioural change is more marked – he consents to Starfleet medical taking the boy for 'testing' and seems eager to have him off the station. His perspective is echoed by his senior staff who view the boy as innately dangerous and a potential killer, despite minimal evidence to support their hypothesis. Odo's is then the only dissenting voice, himself an outsider from a feared race (the Founders) and a victim of experimentation, he feels responsible for the child and tries to free him from his programming. Despite his best efforts, however, the boy's violent urges grow, and Odo ultimately decides to return him to his own people.

The Jem'Hadar begins the episode as the ultimate symbol of possibility – an infant, capable of becoming anything, inspiring the entire crew's investment in securing his future. Once his race is discovered, however, he becomes not a life to protect, but at best an opportunity to learn more about a feared enemy, and at worst a threat. The possibilities the child presented are then closed down as the Jem'Hadar's loyalty, addiction, and violence are all revealed to be genetically hardwired traits – not a consequence of malice. Despite the revelation that the Jem'Hadar are then effectively victims of the Founders, unable to make their own choices, the crew expresses no sympathy, only fear and hatred. Addiction then ceases to be legible as a disability, instead being reframed as merely another aspect of the child's hopeless, violent future,

already so limited by his racial identity that addiction makes no difference. Indeed, much as in Garak's case, it serves only to confirm the worst fears and prejudices regarding his race – that they are so abjectly opposed to the Federation's ideology that there is no hope of reconciliation. Despite Odo presenting an opposing viewpoint, seeking signs of the boy's humanity, the episode functions to prove him wrong, and by extension demonstrate to the audience that the Jem'Hadar are irredeemable, making the later Dominion war storyline more palatable by denying the reality that the enemy soldiers are disabled, enslaved victims of a totalitarian regime. Seitz identified the representation of the Jem'Hadar as at times recreating the racialised discourse surrounding the crack epidemic, a comparison *The Abandoned* makes it hard to ignore*,* as a heavily racialised enemy, portrayed disproportionately by Black actors, is presented as destined for a life of drugs and violence, their addiction registering not as an impairment, but confirmation of their hopeless future.[32]

Conclusion

Too often in disability studies we become entangled in a vision of the norm as a monolithic cultural construct, an oversimplification that elides the importance of cultural specificity and intersecting identities. Through a discussion of *DS9's* addicted characters I have demonstrated the value in dividing the norm into its constituent parts – expectations, and ideology. Further, I have shown that it is expectations which define whether an impairment is understood as a disability, and perceived deviation from overarching cultural ideals which leads to stigma. This has then enabled me to explore the way in which gender, race, and interactions with other cultures result in Garak, Damar and the Jem'Hadar all occupying complex, at times contradictory positions in

regard to disability. The Jem'Hadar and Damar both experience the same impairment, and are both citizens of the Dominion, yet only the latter is subjected to stigma, for failing to comply to an ideological ideal to which the Jem'Hadar are not subject. Meanwhile Garak's Cardassian heritage results in internalised ableism – yet onboard DS9 his race already excludes him from integration into society, his impairment being rendered moot, a mere confirmation that he always was what he was expected to be, a reality he shares with the abandoned Jem'Hadar. *DS9* thus illustrates the value in rethinking dis/ability as an intersectional spectrum acknowledging that the concept of ability is culturally produced according to what the individual is expected to become, based on factors including gender and race, and how that imagined future interacts with wide-ranging shared cultural ideologies.

Endnotes

[1] NIDA. Drug Misuse and Addiction.
[2] See United Kingdom Equality Act 2010 c.1, Accessible Canada Act 2019 c.1 and Americans with Disabilities Act 1990 (amended 2008)
[3] United Kingdom Equality Act 2010
[4] Accessible Canada Act 2019
[5] Waldschmidt. "Disability Studies Goes Cultural: The Cultural Model of Disability as an Analytical Tool." 19-27
[6] Garland-Thomson. Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature 8
[7] See Davis. Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body and Garland-Thomson. Extraordinary Bodies.
[8] Burton. "Behind the Lines."
[9] Auberjonois. "Strange Bedfellows."
[10] I focus on the limitations of the social model of disability rather than both the social and medical model due to the significant pre-existing wealth of criticism related to the medical model – see for example Davis, Enforcing Normalcy.
[11] Friedman. "The Wire."
[12] Seitz. A Different Trek: Radical Geographies of Deep Space Nine.
[13] McRuer. Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability. 19.
[14] Seitz. A Different Trek. 112.
[15] McRuer. Crip Theory.25-26.
[16] Kolbe. "Favor the Bold."
[17] Posey. "Penumbra."

[18] Auberjonois. "Hippocratic oath."
[19] Auberjonois. "Hippocratic oath."
[20] McRuer. Crip Theory.
[21] Burton. "To the Death."
[22] Landau. "Image in the Sand."
[23] Vejar. "The Changing Face of Evil."
[24] Kroecker. "What You Leave Behind."
[25] Frakes. "The Chase."
[26] Landau. "Destiny."
[27] Landau. "By Inferno's Light." And Williams. "Statistical Probabilities." Respectively
[28] Kolbe. "'Til Death Do Us Part."
[29] Livingston. "The Die is Cast." And Landau. "Destiny." Respectively.
[30] Brooks. "The Abandoned."
[31] See Friedman. "The Wire," Auberjonois. "The Quickening," and Kolbe. "Melora."
[32] Seitz. A Different Trek. 121.

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