**Jasbir K. Puar (2011) “The Cost of Getting Better: Suicide, Sensation, Switchpoints” by (add page no what you consider: 149-154)**

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The article of Jasbir K. Puar (2011) has been dedicated to critically analyze gay youth suicides in light of a critique of the politics of disability and debility. The article denies the claim of Dan Savage’s neoliberal spirit campaign that “it gets better” and introduces the notions of slow death, debility and switchpoints of bodily capacity. These switchpoints, which Puar describes as politics of debilitation, shift the notions of ability to capacity and notions of disability to debility. In a neoliberal and capitalist system bodies become capacitated and debilitated – sometimes at the same time – considering the normative imperatives of productivity, health, mobility, success etc. Thus Puar also argues that there is an economics of debility, where debilitation is profitable e.g. within a medical-industrial complex where those uninsured might have to forfeit their assets or just pay of interests on their debt.

The article consists two main parts. In the first part Puar critically analyses the reaction of the media on the suicide of a gay student (Tyler Clementi) in University campus that attributes the suicide to the online homophobic bullying by his Asian roommate. Clementi’s suicide brought anti-Asian backlash and found responsible Asian roommates of Clementi’s as well as other Asians from the Campus. Puar is critical of the essentialist assumptions of inherent “Asian homophobia” (p. 150), which assume that all gays are white and all Asian-Americans straight. The binary images of “the sexual other is white, the racial other is straight” (p.5) are also have been reflected in the video of Dan Savage, who organize a campaign “It Gets Better” as a response to white gay suicides. According to Puar, the internet campaign of Dan Savage, instructs you how you should reshape your life in order to be successful white gay and make you responsible individually for your life in the realm of neoliberal politics (p.6). Puar shows how in the reality, particularly in the context of ongoing discrimination and structural inequalities such as white and Asian, straight and queer, failed and capable body the situation is not getting better at all. After all, In this part Puar also discuss the role of internet technologies for these neoliberal (sexual) subjects in the lives of both Clementi and the Asian roommates, both ‘geeks’, for whom life –communication, dating, announcing of suicide – are on virtually, so that cyber surveillance became a part of life. Consequently, technologies create ecologies of sensations (150) where being a geek is new shared identity for these subjects regardless their sexual orientation, race and ethnicity; and so ethnicity and sexuality cannot be isolated as causes for suicide.

In the second part Puar refers to Berlant description of slow death as ongoing process of populations marked for waring out, when the subjects unconsciously intermittently experience the debilitating dispersion of structural inequality and ‘recapacitation of a debilitated body’ (152). In this light "(queer) suicide" is not an act of one-time bullying but rather as an act to the escape from "slow death" (p. 152). In light of this “slow death” where disability is always anticipated (McRuer) and ongoing debility denied. Even health can be considered a “side effect” (p. 152) of successful capacitated body. Puar claims that compared to disability in the futre which we are haunted by, debility is already exists and whatever capacitated body does have, “(it) is always debilitated in relation to its ever-expanding potentiality” (p. 153). (so we need to rethink disability in terms of debility) In this regard Puar explains economics of debility, and its profitability for capitalism, where bodies have to pay for physical and financial recovery and progress demanding by capitalism and where even these debts become measurements of capacitated and failed body (p.154).

Questions:

1.      What is the difference between disability and debility? How do Berlant and Puar understand “slow death”?
2.      How does the focus on debility, capacity, ‘ecologies of sensation’ and internet technologies inform Puar’s critical (re)interpretation of Clementi’s suicide and Savage’s It gets better campaign? (for those interested in more detail you might read the expanded version of the article in Puar 2017 (The right to maim), pp. 1-12)
3.      How would you analyse “neoliberal demands for bodily capacity" and "the profitability of debility” in the context of Covid 19?