

Introduction

Disability and society

Anne Revillard

Introduction

- The emergence and development of disability studies as a new field of research
- Aims and scope of the course
- Logistics

The emergence and development of disability studies as a new field of research

- Disability as part of human diversity. Estimated 15,6% of adult population (WHO, 2011)
- Yet disability studies as a field of inquiry in social science = relatively new (1970s-)
- Disability was seen as medical condition → paradigm shift was needed (DeJong, 1979)
- Connection to the disability movement

The emergence and development of disability studies as a new field of research

In the UK (Barnes, Oliver & Barton 2002)

- Fundamental input of UK research: the social model
- Yet slow acceptance in sociology departments
- First course: Open University 1975
- First journal: *Disability, handicap and society* created by Len Barton and Mike Oliver in 1986 (became *Disability and society* in 1993)
- A milestone: Mike Oliver's *The politics of disablement* 1990
- Leeds Center for disability studies

The emergence and development of disability studies as a new field of research

In the US (Barnes et al., 2002)

- Easier acceptance in academic departments
- First course 1977 → 23 courses in the US in 1986
- 1981 Irving Zola founded the *Disability studies quarterly* and co-founded the *Society for disability studies*

The emergence and development of disability studies as a new field of research

Common elements in the way disability studies developed in the US and in the UK:

- Initial connection to social movements
- Paradigm shift
- Interdisciplinarity

The emergence and development of disability studies as a new field of research

Yet different orientations (Meekosha, 2004):

- UK: a more materialist perspective, dominance of sociology (Barnes & Mercer, 2010; Oliver & Barnes, 2012; Swain, French, Barnes, & Thomas, 2013; Watson, Roulstone, & Thomas, 2012)
- US: more focus on discourse analysis and cultural representations of disability → cultural disability studies (Davis, 2013)

Reasons:

- Different theoretical traditions in social science
- Different disciplines
- Different forms of activism/social movement framing (oppression/identity politics)

The emergence and development of disability studies as a new field of research

Disability research in French social science:

- A more recent development
- Less connected to activism
- Research less systematically done by disabled researchers
- *Institut fédératif de recherches sur le handicap*
- ALTER Association and journal (European journal of disability research) (Ville & Ravaud 2007)

Aims and scope of the course

Disability, interdisciplinarity and the sociological imagination

- An interdisciplinary approach: sociology, political science, history, law, philosophy, cultural studies
 - Disability as a way to train the sociological eye
- Apply core sociological reasoning to a new theme, notably in terms of:
- The social construction of categories
 - Social inequality and intersectionality
 - Deviance and social control

Aims and scope of the course

- Theoretical orientation and geographical scope
 - Drawing mainly on British research
 - But comparative perspective (US, France...)

Aims and scope of the course

Disability mainstreaming within sociology

- Triple stigma of disability in sociology
 - A reflection of the stigmatization of disabled people themselves
 - Medical issue
 - Activist knowledge
- Need for mainstreaming
 - Disability as cross-cutting issue
 - Disability and concept transformation

Aims and scope of the course

The political underpinnings and implications of disability research

- Initial connections to activism
- Policy implications
- Interplay between politics, policy and the production of knowledge

Course outline

1. Where it all began: The disability movement
2. Disability policy at the crossroads
3. From stairs to stratification: The social production of disability
4. Bringing impairment back in? The social model and its critiques
5. From disability to disabilities
6. Cultural representations of disability
7. Education
8. Disability and care
9. Employment

Assignments

- Reading assignments
- Group presentations
- Cultural representation assignment
- Final « takeaway » note

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