Section 5: From disability to disabilities

Disability and society, 2016

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Learning objectives/key points

- Two main sources of diversity and inequalities *within* the experience of disability: the inscription of disability within other systems of inequality (notably based on class, race and gender), and the type (and extent) of impairment
- Connection with the analysis of intersectionality
- Gender and racial inequalities
- Intellectual disabilities
- Mental health

Outline

Multiple disabilities: intersectionality and the diversity of impairments
- Thinking intersectionally
- Diversities and hierarchies of impairments

Gendering disability
- The experience of women, from margin to center
- Disabled masculinities

Racializing disability
- The mobilization of ethnic/racial minorities within the disability movement
- Racial inequalities in service provision
- The racialization of special education

The diversity of impairments
- Intellectual disability
- Mental health and "psychiatric system survivors"

Thinking intersectionally: a brief reminder on intersectionality

- A complex view of social stratification

- Class, race, gender, disability: interwoven systems of inequality

- Not just additive or intersectional, but also mutually constitutive

Diversities and hierarchies of impairments

→ Group work: list the first images/examples of impairments that come to mind

Diversities and hierarchies of impairments

Diversity of impairments:

- Type of impairment (mobility, sensory, intellectual, cognitive, psychiatric, digestive, chronic pain…)
- Visible/invisible
- Early onset/disability acquired later in life
- Stable/evolving conditions
- Pain and medical supervision

Hierarchies

- Salience within the disability movement
- Forms of stigma (ex. mental health)

Gendering disability

The experience of women, « from margin to center » (hooks, 1984)

- Accounting for the experiences of disabled women → how gender and disability interact in the experience of mothering (Malacrida 2007) or violence (Shah, Tsitsou and Woodin, 2016) for example

- Essential role of feminist theory in disability studies (ex. Morris 1991; Thomas, 1999, 2007; Garland-Thompson, 2005)

Gendering disability

Disabled masculinities (Morris, 1991; Shakespeare, 2013; Robertson & Smith, 2013)

Men's experience: generalized, yet rarely studied as such

But some studies of disabled masculinities
- Initial conflict between disability and traditional hegemonic masculinity (based on strength, autonomy) → physical disability as emasculation
- Yet reliance on masculine norms can play a role in negociation of disabled identity (« being a man », « overcoming » disability, not showing weakness)

Racializing disability

The mobilization of ethnic/racial minorities within the disability movement (Hussain, 2013)

→ In the 1990s in the UK: criticism of the social model for failing to account for the simultaneous oppression undergone by black DP

→ Specific issues that white DP failed to address in their disability activism (obstacles of citizenship and language, stereotyping of ethnic minorities by professionals)

Racializing disability

Racial inequalities in the presence and effects of impairments: US data (Sienstra, 2012):

- Earlier onset of disability among African Americans
- Quicker decline in functioning

> Inequalities in access to healthcare and socio-economic status

Racial inequalities in access to services (ex. vocational rehabilitation) and employment

Racializing disability

The racialization of special education (Moore & Slee, 2012):

- Context of escalation of diagnosis (ADHD, 'special needs')

- Over-representation of Caribbean boys in the UK, African-American boys in the US, in special education

- « an attenuated experience of schooling »

The diversity of impairments

Carey (2009) on the history of intellectual disability in the US

- Up to the beginning of the XXth century, « potential irrelevance of intellectual disability » in social life

- Beginning of the XXth century construction of the « feebleminded » as the enemy of the nation, with connections to race/ethnicity and gender:
  - Restrictive migration policies
  - Control over procreation: sterelization/institutionalization
  - Figure of the sexually deviant feebleminded woman

The diversity of impairments

Conflicts in addressing mental health as a global issue

- « Out of the shadows project » → stressing the lack of mental health care in developing countries

- Beresford (2012) and the psychiatric system survivor movement in the UK
    - A critique of the contemporary forms of medical intervention regarding mental « distress » in western industrialized countries
        - An individual, medical perspective
        - Expanding scope of mental conditions
        - « over-reliance on chemo-therapy »
    - A critique of the increased association with notions of risk and dangerousness in a context of deinstitutionalization

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