

# Disability, Identity, Diversity

## Disability and Identity

- Disability has been neglected as an identity category (Davis, 2002; Mladenov, 2016; Mollow, 2004,).
- “Race, ethnicity, and/or gender concordance should be taken into consideration when linking historically excluded and underrepresented groups in medicine with mentors” (Wilson, Milliken, Cagande, & Stewart, 2021)
- “We tend to talk about race inequality as separate from inequality based on gender, class, sexuality or immigrant status.” (Crenshaw, 2020)
- 15% of people have disabilities globally (WHO, 2019; in Simpican, 2021).
- #Wethe15

## Social groups

“A social group is a collective of persons differentiated from at least one other group by cultural forms, practices, or way of life” (Young, 1990, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, p. 43.)

- People in groups may create a shared identity and/or they may have one forced upon them.
- Bi-directional relationship: individuals constitute groups and through shared language, experiences, history etc., groups constitute individuals (Young 1990).
- People can be oppressed secondary to membership in social groups. (Young, 1990)

## Today’s question: Why is disability excluded from diversity discussions?

• Wicked question

“Wicked Questions act as a driver for investigation and improvement.”

## How can we reduce separation related to diversity?

## Dismantling artificial boundaries

- “Ain’t I a women”
- Attributed to Sojourner Truth at a 1851 Women’s Rights Convention, Akron, Ohio (3 hours from the Canadian border).
- “We also often find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously.” Combahee River Collective Statement, 1977
- Intersectionality is a lens, a prism, for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other (Crenshaw, 2020).

## Disability Invisibility

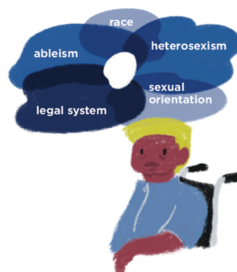
Theorists/advocates may leave disability unnamed:

- Intersectionality is an "analysis claiming that systems of race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age form mutually constructing features of social organization..." (Collins, 2000, p. 299).

Or named:

Black Lives Matter guiding principles:

- Sexual identity, gender identity, gender expression, economic status, ability, **disability**, religious beliefs or disbeliefs, immigration status or location (Matthews and Noor, 2013, p. 7; in Simpican, 2019)



## Intersectional Framework

(Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, 2021, p.5)

## Insisting upon intersectionality

We must insist upon the relevance of disability to a wide range of contemporary theoretical and political discussions (Mollow, 2004)

**Call on Black Studies:** Take up gender and disability more comprehensively

**Call on Disability Studies:** Take up Black studies and critical race theory and displace white disabled bodies as the norm.

Black feminist disability framework (Bailey & Mobley, 2019)

## Disability Justice

•A movement created by people of colour who hold multiple marginalized identities including disabled women and LGBTQ+ people (MackKeigan, 2021 p. 659; Sins Invalid, 2021)

•Embraces difference, confronts privilege, and challenges what is considered 'normal'.

•Disability justice is "pushing for an understanding of how ableism affects disabled and nondisabled movements for justice. It draws connections between systems of oppression" (MackKeigan, 2021, p. 660)

## Disability Justice Principles

Community based Initiative

- Intersectionality
- Collective access
- Collective liberation
- Commitment to cross-movement organizing
- Commitment to cross-disability solidarity
- Leadership of those most impacted
- Anti-capitalist politic
- Recognizing wholeness
- Sustainability
- Interdependence

(Sins invalid, 2015)

## Caution: Disability justice and Rehabilitation necessitates a distance relationship

•Critical disabilities studies and disability justice keep a necessary and healthy distance from medical model fields

•Expertise of disabled OTs can be used to maintain this relationship

•Non-disabled OTs must evaluate how they may be and can be complicit in perpetuating systemic ableism

(Mahipaul, 2021)

## Shared narratives

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- Connecting race, gender and disability
  - Challenging whose values and ideas of “normal and natural” is promoted in curriculum, research projects and work environments
  - “Crippling”, “indigenizing” curricula
- Focus on collectivity and interdependence (vs individualist model)
- Strong critiques of eugenic medicine
- Historical narratives
  - Recognizing intersectional identities of “heros”/role models.

(Bailey & Mobley 2019, Mahipaul, 2021)

## Shared priorities

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- Change in health care
  - History of exploitation within the medical system
  - Advocacy for access to medical care
  - Caregiving practices
- Advocating for labor practices
  - Hiring (including academia)
  - Unsafe working conditions that lead to disability
- Gaining access to academia and “expert spaces”
- Managing and navigating oppression
  - The experience of feeling silenced and being tolerated

## In summary

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- Disability has been neglected in diversity initiatives.
- Insisting on intersectionality promotes more diversity in disability and more disability in diversity; representing a bidirectional challenge.
- Disability justice is one activist based framework that promotes inclusivity.
- Shared narratives and priorities can focus attention on issues of shared importance between disability groups and minority groups.