

Now is the Time to Incorporate the Social Justice Model of Disability

Molly Grodey, MSE & Sara Vogt, PhD

Center for Students with Disabilities

<https://www.uww.edu/csd>

Presentation Outline

- Introductions and Group Reflection
- Definitions
- Language
- Stella Young, "I'm not your inspiration, thank you very much"
- Models of Disability
- Group Discussion

Introductions

- Molly Grodey, MSE
 - She/her
 - Disability Services and Assistive Technology Coordinator, CSD
 - Taught Special Education in K-12 system
 - Specializing in Behavior
- Sara Vogt, PhD
 - She/her
 - Associate Director, CSD
 - PhD in Disability Studies
 - Dissertation focused on intersection of disability, gender, and eugenics in early 20th century United States

Group Reflection

- Who currently works in the following fields:
 - Higher Education
 - K-12
 - Counseling
 - Social Work
 - Self-Advocacy
 - Other
- How do you define disability?
- How would you rate your knowledge of the social model of disability/disability justice/disability identity?

Definitions

- Disability:
 - American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) – “a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment.” ([ADA National Network](#))
 - “Major life activities” include walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning

Definitions cont.

able·ism

/ˈābəlɪzəm/ noun

A system of assigning value to people's bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normalcy, productivity, desirability, intelligence, excellence, and fitness. These constructed ideas are deeply rooted in eugenics, anti-Blackness, misogyny, colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism.

This systemic oppression leads to people and society determining people's value based on their culture, age, language, appearance, religion, birth or living place, "health/wellness", and/or their ability to satisfactorily re/produce, "excel" and "behave."

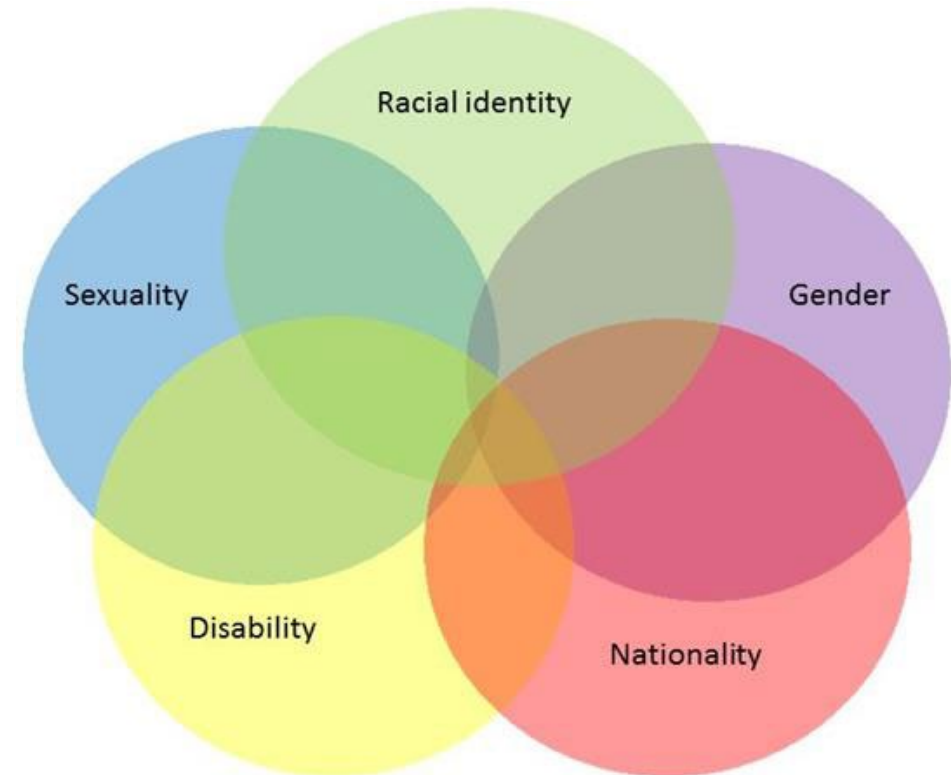
You do not have to be disabled to experience ableism.

working definition by @TalilaLewis, updated January 2022, developed in community with disabled Black/negatively racialized folk, especially @NotThreeFifths. Read more: bit.ly/ableism2022



Intersectionality

- Kimberle Crenshaw (1989)
 - How does a person's social and political identities combine or interact to create different modes of discrimination and privilege?
 - Interlocking systems of power
 - Opposes theories in which discrimination is summed up (e.g. triple oppression)



Language: Person First vs. Identity First

- Person-First
 - “A student with autism”
 - Distance person from disability
 - Literally a person “first”
 - “I am separate from the stereotypes and stigma you associate with disability.”
- Identity-First
 - “Autistic student”
 - Claim disability directly
 - All bodyminds vary
 - Role of inaccessible and oppressive systems, structures or environments in making someone disabled

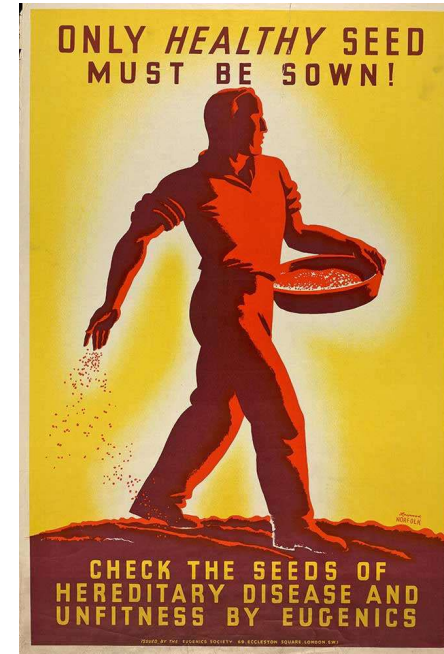
Stella Young, “I’m not your inspiration, thank you very much”

- Stella Young, comedian and journalist, editor of “Ramp Up,” an online space for news, discussion, and opinions about disability in Australia
- TED Talk (2014): [Stella Young TedTalk](#)

Models of Disability

Moral Model

- Disability = defect caused by sin or immorality
- “God’s punishment” (historical)
- “God’s will” or “the cross we bear” (present day)
- Arguments against government assistance



Propaganda poster of the British Eugenics Society (1930s)

Medical Model of Disability

- Disability = medical problem; resides solely in individual; defect in need of treatment or cure
- “Inherently abnormal” – pathological
- People with disabilities are victims in need of help and support



1975 magazine ad for Labor Day Telethon

Rehabilitation/Functional Limitation Model of Disability

- Disability = deviation from norm; limited functional capacity
- Focus on the person
- “Overcome” disability and functional limitations to succeed; assimilation
- Gatekeeping: who is really in need?



Autism Speaks Organization Logo

Social/Minority Model

- Impairment vs. Disability
 - Impairment = mental or bodily difference impacting ones functioning
 - Disability = interaction of individual with inaccessible environment
- Disability as aspect of human diversity
- Focus on Societal and Environmental Change
- Disabled people are the experts, not professionals



Courtesy of Tom Olin

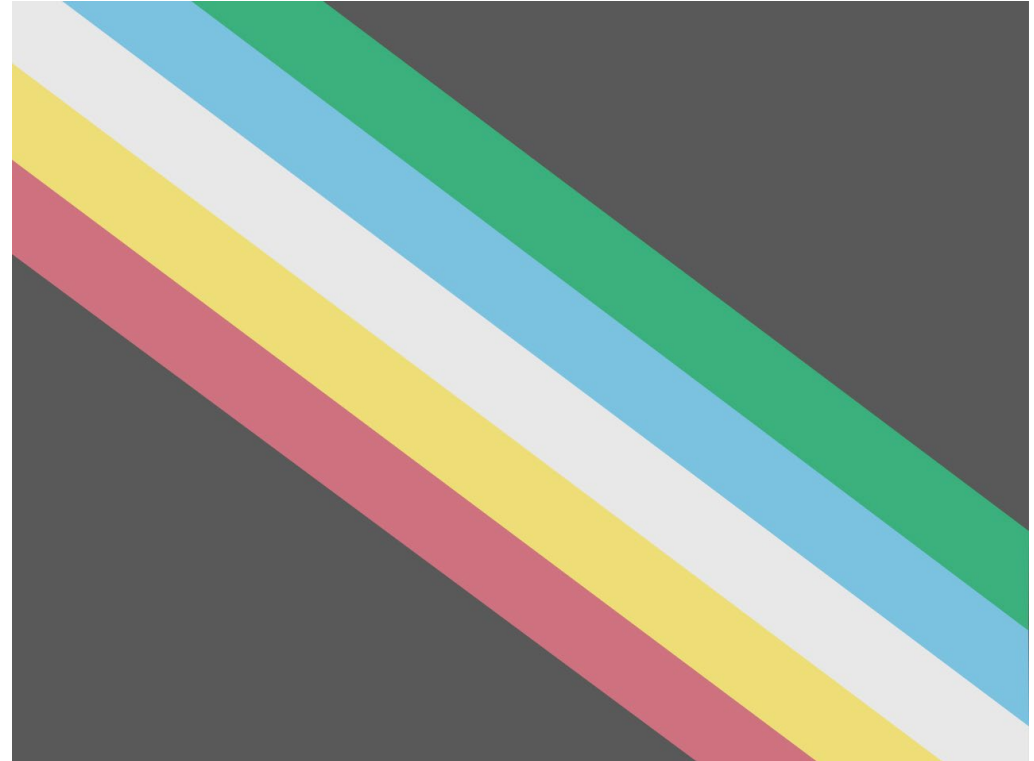
Photo by Tom Olin, "Capitol Protest for ADA" (1990)

How do these Models impact Disabled People?

- Labeling Disability
- Power, Privilege, and Disability
- Disability Community and Pride
- Disability Justice

Disability Pride

- Embrace disability as natural part of human diversity
- Break down and end internalized shame and ableism



Disability Justice

10 Principles of Disability Justice by [Sins Invalid](#) (2015)

10 PRINCIPLES OF DISABILITY JUSTICE

- 1 INTERSECTIONALITY** *"We do not live single issue lives"* --Audre Lorde
Ableism, coupled with white supremacy, supported by capitalism, underscored by heteropatriarchy, has rendered the vast majority of the world "invalid."
- 2 LEADERSHIP OF THOSE MOST IMPACTED**
"We are led by those who most know these systems." --Aurora Levins Morales
- 3 ANTI-CAPITALIST POLITIC**
In an economy that sees land and humans as components of profit, we are anti-capitalist by the nature of having non-conforming body/minds.
- 4 COMMITMENT TO CROSS-MOVEMENT ORGANIZING**
Shifting how social justice movements understand disability and contextualize ableism, disability justice lends itself to politics of alliance.
- 5 RECOGNIZING WHOLENESS**
People have inherent worth outside of commodity relations and capitalist notions of productivity. Each person is full of history and life experience.
- 6 SUSTAINABILITY**
We pace ourselves, individually and collectively, to be sustained long term. Our embodied experiences guide us toward ongoing justice and liberation.
- 7 COMMITMENT TO CROSS-DISABILITY SOLIDARITY**
We honor the insights and participation of all of our community members, knowing that isolation undermines collective liberation.
- 8 INTERDEPENDENCE** We meet each others' needs as we build toward liberation, knowing that state solutions inevitably extend into further control over our lives.
- 9 COLLECTIVE ACCESS** As brown, black and queer-bodied disabled people we bring flexibility and creative nuance that go beyond able-bodied/minded normativity, to be in community with each other.
- 10 COLLECTIVE LIBERATION** No body or mind can be left behind -- only moving together can we accomplish the revolution we require.

www.sinsinvalid.org
SINS INVALID 2015

Discussion

- What models do you find in your community(ies)?
- How do these models impact your day to day work? Your personal lives? How you interact with people with disabilities?
- Do you feel that the social/minority model of disability could be incorporated into your work?
- What does the social/minority model lack?

Questions?