

Dis/ability, Ableism, and Redefining Accessibility

Intersectionality, Anti-Oppression and
Collaborative Leadership in Practice
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Agenda

1. Access, justice, and structural violence
2. Transnational approaches to disability
3. Group discussion
4. The limits of accommodation and universal design
5. Critiques of disability rights frameworks
6. Group discussion
7. Using rights to critique structural violence
8. Emerging recommendations

What is access? How will we know when we have it?

- For clients?
- For staff?
- For allies?
- For the public?

What is justice? How will we know when we have it?

- For clients?
- For staff?
- For allies?
- For the public?

What's at stake if we talk about access?

What is (or how would you describe):

- Accessible housing?
- Accessible healthcare?
- Accessible education?
- Accessible employment?
- Accessible income?

What's at stake if we talk about justice?

What is (or how would you describe):

- Housing justice?
- Healthcare justice?
- Education justice?
- Employment justice?
- Income justice?

What's at stake if we talk about violence?

What would our disability movements be like if we were organizing against:

- Poverty and wage exploitation?
- Settler-colonialism?
- White supremacy, racism, and anti-Black racism?
- Gender-based violence and transphobia?
- Militarization and prisons?

Theoretical Framework: Transnational Political Economy of Disability

Disability is organized through state institutions in the context of global capitalist relations. In order to analyze disability oppression, we must grasp its dimensions:

- Social determinants of disability
- Disability and status
- Disability and colonial violence
- Disability and racism
- Disability and gender/gender identity

- A framework for understanding disability and racialization in Canada must attend to contradictions between disability as social identity and disablement as social process.
- Disability, when claimed as a right through the state, can emerge as a contradictory category of privilege.
- Disability is managed and surveilled through state, medical, educational and social service relations of ruling (policy and practice). These relations may interlock and/or contradict.

What's at stake when we fight (in) the system?

- 1) Can you recall an example of when you were allowed to/encouraged to talk about disability and/or Deaf justice—in community programming; at work; in the healthcare system; at school? In what way were you expected to talk about it?
- 1) Does your organization have a policy on disability/accessibility? Whom does the policy refer to?

The hidden labour of access and inclusion

Sample study:

The limits of individualized accommodation and universal design for the success of students with disabilities in higher education

- The day-to-day practice of rendering course content and assignments ‘accessible’ is enabled (or inhibited) and performed by the course instructor.
- The day-to-day practice of navigating the space and time constraints of university life is performed by the student, with or without the support of workers, family, and peers.

Findings:

- When agreed upon accommodations do not cancel out the day-to-day work of negotiating exclusion, students may internalize feelings of guilt and failure.
- Faculty members may take on the extra work of accommodation, which puts further pressure on our negotiations of an exclusionary academic space.
- Universal design often accommodates ‘ideal type’ white middle-class disabled students, while further marginalizing students of colour.
- ‘Successful’ students draw on family support to negotiate the barriers of university life and educational labour.

Conclusions:

- Reflecting on the *work* of negotiating educational barriers allows us to move beyond individualized assessment of accommodations.
- Reconceptualizing educational research in relation to politically conscious disabled students and faculty, and their allies and support workers, reveals the struggle for successful educational relationships.
- Engaging in narrative approaches to educational in/exclusion reveals our understanding of identity and political consciousness.

The limits of universal design

Since, according to a publication by the disability services office of the suburban campus of the university (UTSC, 2004), I employ all of the recommendations on Universal Instruction Design, it is significant to look at students who still had to negotiate with me and/or their registrar at the end of the course in order to submit their coursework after departmental, college and/or faculty deadlines.

The limits of individual accommodation

The petition process reproduces 'ideal types' about who is disabled, who is unusually burdened, and who is genuinely deserving of help. Racialized narratives of who is understood as having a diagnosable disorder, and who is understood as attempting to manipulate the system, are evident in the petition process and in parallel institutional processes for emergency bursaries and housing.

The work of access

- Inaccessibility can be mitigated or exacerbated by other aspects of social privilege or oppression
- Ideas of what is accessible are organized through dominant ideologies of class, gender, race, culture, and sexual identity/orientation
- The post-secondary environment often creates barriers that students were not aware of before attending, and could not have anticipated
- Post-secondary environments and the “climate of distress”

Critiques of Rights Frameworks

- In 1983, Deborah Stone argued that gaining disability status through state-sponsored programs signaled a category of privilege—in that only certain disabled citizens, with certain medically documented impairments could qualify for disability pensions and healthcare supports.
- In the intervening years of increasing neoliberal austerity, Stone's argument seemed irrelevant, as cuts to social benefits made it difficult to see these programs as 'privileges.'

- However, in the growing context of economic apartheid (Galabuzi, 2006), we see differential and decreasing access to citizenship status for many of Canada's workers. Will disability rights and benefits be something only Canada's 'exalted subjects' (Thobani, 2007) can claim?
- Precarious work means more disablement.
- Precarious migration status means that workers cannot afford to claim disability without jeopardizing their immigration application or work permit.
- Increasing reporting requirements for LIHNs are narrowing the spaces of survival for people living in poverty (examples from consultations).

Small group discussion

1. Recalling your own work life, can you think of ways that work has become more intense and more precarious? How has this affected your health?
1. Recall a situation in which existing institutional and social barriers limited your ability to create a more accessible environment. What were the internal and external barriers?

Legal Frameworks for Disability Rights

- Ontario Human Rights Code (1962)
- Canadian Human Rights Act (1977)
- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982)
- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005)
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)

Human Rights Principles and the UNCRPD

- Dignity
- Autonomy
- Participation, Inclusion, and Accessibility
- Non-discrimination and Equality
- Respect for Difference

Psychiatric Disability and Systemic Violence

- Pathologization of distress
- Criminalization and crisis
- “Right” to coercive treatment, or right to the SDMH?
- Importance of hearing people in distress



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young people
with mental
health issues.”**

Dr. Smita Thatte, Ottawa



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Dr. Smita Thatte, Ottawa



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Disability and Impairment as Social and Embodied

- Pathologization of communities
- Individualization of health outcomes
- Right to anti-oppressive healthcare
- Supporting local knowledges about health

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“Let’s end
childhood
obesity.”

Dr. Gail Richards, Toronto



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“We’re raising children who may not outlive their parents.”

Unhealthy food choices lead to obesity, disease, disability and early death. But obesity is preventable. And it would be unforgivable not to act.”

Dr. Gail Richards, Toronto



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Emerging Recommendations

- What are some key institutional barriers to disability justice in your organization?
- What are some programming and policy recommendations you want to pursue?
- What institutional pathways are available for developing these recommendations?