

The Origins, Development, Transitions, and Future of the “Cultural Model” of Disability

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Q. What is one of the critical issues in the social model of disability?

A. Focus too much on politics, ignoring the impairment as a material of the disabled.

⇒ The need to view impairment from a cultural rather than a medical perspective is emerging and progressing. Thus, we shall focus on the cultural model of disability.

Definition of the cultural model of disability by Waldschmidt (2018, para. 44):

Summing up, the cultural model of dis/ability starts with the premise that *impairments and dis/abilities are structuring culture(s) and are concurrently structured and lived through culture*. It implies a fundamental change of the epistemological perspective, since it does not deal with the margin but rather with the “centre” of society and culture. It offers essential knowledge about the legacies, trajectories, turning points and transformations of our contemporary world(s).

1. Origins

- ✓ **Deaf culture**, emerged in 1960s, might influence the cultural model of disability?
- ✓ **Shakespeare (1994)** suggested the objectification of disabled people by their cultural representations
- ✓ **Although not named “cultural model”**;
Affirmation model (**Swain & French, 2000**):
Denying and resisting the traditional view of disability is supported by the old culture creates a new culture.
- ✓ From a feminist disability studies perspective, **Garland-Thomson (2002:2)** mentioned disability as “a category of analysis and knowledge, as a cultural trope, and a historical community”
- ✓ Based on the theoretical foundations of Foucault, Derrida, and Marx, **Devlieger (2005)** named the cultural model of disability officially early in the field of disability studies. (The first appearance of cultural model of disability?)
- ✓ Based on the American history of institutionalization and eugenics, **Snyder & Mitchell (2006:3)** named the cultural location of disability as the location where “disabled people find themselves deposited, often against their will”. They also argue that the disability should be viewed not medically, but culturally
- ✓ **Twardowski (2022)** argues that **Snyder & Mitchell** are the creators of the cultural model of disability

3. Future

- Overcoming the above pitfalls, disability studies could become more interdisciplinary by incorporating natural sciences that focus on impairment as materialistic elements of disabilities
- Social work (**Dupré, 2012**) is an example of interdisciplinary applications: To address disability culture, social work education must include cultural considerations, not only as a means to recognize and celebrate ethnicity and difference, but also as a space for critical analysis, consciousness-raising, and change. For social work practice to effectively address the oppression of people with disabilities and others, we believe that critical cultural studies courses should be an integral part of the social work education curriculum
- Based on **Matsuoka (2018)**'s concept of インペアメント文化 (*inpeamento bunka* / impairment culture), disability studies will be able to focus on a rich set of cultural elements in the survival of disabled people in the world

As the above points are to be solved in the future, we shall continue theoretical and empirical examination.

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