Ableism: The Causes and Consequences of Disability Prejudice

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SPSSI: Contemporary Social Issues Series

▪ What does ableism look like? Where does it come from?
▪ Who and what does ableism impact
▪ What solutions to consider
The A, B, C’s of Ableism:

▪ **Attitudes** (Emotions / Affective Reactions)

▪ **Cognitions** (Ideologies, Stereotypical Beliefs)

▪ **Behaviors** (Actions, Practices and Policies)
Ableism Origins: Iceberg Metaphor
Ableism: Evolutionary Origins
Ableism: Evolved Disease Avoidance?

“Students didn't want to sit by me, they asked to be moved out of my class because they thought they could catch blindness. I hated this time of my life. I cried every day” (2015).
The only museum of its kind in the U.S.

Educational exhibits, programs and activities that expand disability awareness.
Ableism: Existential Origins

Disability Threatens Significance
Cultural Values Human Uniqueness
Ableism: We ARE animals
Ableism: Ugly Laws

“No person who is diseased, maimed, mutilated or in any way deformed so as to be an unsightly or disgusting object or improper person to be allowed in or on the public ways or other places in this city, shall therein or thereon expose himself to public view”

Ableism: Dehumanization
Disability hate crimes are more common when the perpetrator knows the victim. But police are most likely to drop hate crime charges when there is a preexisting relationship.

Documented incidents include being: beaten with one’s crutch, dumped out of wheelchair, set on fire, made to eat feces, overmedicated, sexually assault, raped, murdered (Sherry, 2010)
Ableism: Ideological Origins

Social Darwinism and Eugenics

Meritocratic and Just World Beliefs

Biomedical Model of Disability
People laying wreaths at the **24 meter long 80 foot tall blue glass monument in Berlin commemorating the 240,000+ victims with mental and physical disabilities and chronic illnesses killed in the Nazi Euthanasia program.**
Parental Rights Include Disability Equality
parentalrights.org disabledparents.org

35 states include disability as grounds for TERMINATION of parental rights.

70%
ASSIST US TO LIVE NOT DIE
merit = IQ + Effort
Ableism: Models of Disability

To treat the emotionally distressed victims of discrimination, of exploitation, of impoverishment, as if their problems are all the result of biological/genetic defects is clearly a form of blatant Social Darwinism.

To drug them into silent passivity rather than to fight for social justice is to join the powerful exploiters” –Albee, 1996, p. 15.
Ableism: Language and Media Portrayals

Blind to Condition

Lame Duck

Crippled or Paralyzed by Fear

Confined to Wheelchair / Wheelchair Bound
Inspiration porn ~ Exploitive practice that uses images of disabled people doing everyday tasks (working, shopping, going to class) to motivate others (Pulrang, 2013).
EMPLOYMENT

Accept. Respect. Include.

85%
Employee Retention on highest turnover jobs

285 adults received paid work opportunities

74 community employment partners

97% rated average or above average in safety...equal to non-disabled peers

Gatepath.org
Claiming Disability

Disability Identification Articles


Ableism: Cultural Stereotypes
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Captain Hook from Peter Pan
Hunchback of Notre Dame
Mr. Magoo
Dopey from Snow White
Ableism: Ambivalent Emotions & Interactions

PITY and ENVY
Interventions to Reduce Prejudice

Intergroup Contact

Disability Simulations
Legal, Policy and Social Change Initiatives

President Obama (2015) Anniversary of the ADA
“We’ve got to do better—our country cannot let all that incredible talent go to waste.”

10 Disability Policy Questions Every Presidential Candidate Should Answer
LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES AND ISSUES

Disability Integration Act and Domestic Workers Act

For the People Act

The Inclusive Home Design Act

Marriage Access for People with Special Abilities Bill

Real Emergency Access for Aging & Disability Inclusion for Disasters Act

Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act

Disability Access Credit Expansion Act

Restoring the Affirmative Furthering Fair Housing Rule, Housing Choice Vouchers, Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, National Housing Trust Fund
Congressional Seminar, 2019

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“If you do not name that which has to be defeated, it will not be beaten.”—Miller et al., 2004, p. 5

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