BRINGING THEORY TO PRACTICE:
APPLYING A CRITICAL DIS/ABILITY STUDIES LENS TO OUR WORK

Jewls Griesmeyer Krentz, MA CRC NCC

Portland State University

We ask you to join us in creating a culture that reflects…
Access and Inclusion
and
Civility and Respect
…this week and in all aspects of our organization.

AHEAD Association on Higher Education And Disability®

LEARN

Learn about seven themes from Critical Dis/ability Studies (CDS) and dis/ability identity.

APPLY

Apply CDS themes to postsecondary dis/ability services.

ENVISION

Envision social change and dis/ability justice using a CDS lens to address systemic inequity.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

LEARN

Seven Themes from Critical Dis/ability Studies (CDS) and Dis/ability Identity

CRITICAL DIS/ABILITY STUDIES (CDS): OVERVIEW

Critical Dis/ability Studies (CDS): Overview

SEMANTICS: "DIS/ABILITY"?

- "Disability" and "ability" understood with each other

- "Disability" and "ability" are co-constructed and co-constituted

- Problematizes disability, "normalcy", and the interplay between the two

Definition of Critical Dis/ability Studies

Critical Dis/ability Studies (CDS) is an interdisciplinary field that emphasizes the ways in which dis/ability is constructed within social, political, historical, economic, and cultural contexts.

INTERSECTIONAL APPROACHES USING CRITICAL DIS/ABILITY STUDIES

Intersectional approaches combine CDS and other minoritized identity theories:

- *DisCrit*
- *Deaf-LatCrit*
- *Crip Theory*
- *Feminist Disability Studies*

1. **HEGEMONY**
2. **DIS/ABILITY-AS-PHENOMENA**
3. **DIS/ABILITY-AS-IDENTITY**
4. **INTERSECTIONALITY**
5. **EMANCIPATION**
6. **PRAXIS**
7. **CRITICAL SELF-REFLEXIVITY**

SEVEN THEMES FROM CRITICAL DIS/ABILITY STUDIES RESEARCH

HEGEMONY

Goal is to identify and disrupt ableist power systems that oppress, marginalize, and dis/able individuals or groups who do not conform to socially-constructed ideas of normalcy.

Dis/ability-as-Phenomena

- CDS opposes the traditional, medical model.

- Disability and ability as co-constructed, fluid phenomena.

- Situated in environmental, sociopolitical, historic, relational, economic, and cultural contexts

Dis/ability-as-Identity

Dis/ability:

- A positive aspect of diversity and a unique social, relational, political, and cultural identity

- A fluid, interactive process that includes an individual, their dis/ability, their other social identities, and their contexts

- Individual, community, institutional, and societal

INTERSECTIONALITY

CDS understands dis/ability as a heterogenous category that is shaped by interlocking social identities and hegemonic systems that simultaneously converge and diverge to create uniquely intersectional identities

EMANCIPATION

Research methods:

- Dismantle researcher-participant power imbalances
- Emphasize oppressed and frequently underrepresented voices
- Fully engage participants in the research process
- Empower social change

Nothing About Us Without Us

PRAXIS

CDS provides knowledge and theories that translate into concrete implications for services and practices that empower rather than recapitulate oppressive systems.

CRITICAL SELF-REFLEXIVITY

CDS researchers engage in a continual process of critical self-reflexivity wherein they interrogate their own positionalities in knowledge co-construction with participants and intentionally disrupt power dynamics in the research process.

APPLY

Critical Dis/ability Studies to Postsecondary Dis/ability Services

HEGEMONY: APPLICATION

Address power dynamics between students, faculty, and DS staff

- ❑ How can we make students more empowered in these interactions?

- ❑ What other systems of oppression may be impacting our students?

- ❑ Are there ways to diminish these dynamics in our approach to determining student eligibility and accommodations?

DIS/ABILITY-as-PHENOMENA: APPLICATION

De-pathologize dis/ability. Remember dis/ability is interactive and contextual

- ❑ How do we determine dis/ability? Who has the burden? Do our documentation guidelines promote a medical or deficit model?

- ❑ What contextualizes our students' experience?

- ❑ How do we encourage faculty to use universal design and proactive accessibility to reduced barriers?

DISABILITY-as-IDENTITY: APPLICATION

Emphasize dis/ability as a positive aspect of diversity

- ❑ How does our language and messaging encourage positive dis/ability identity exploration?

- ❑ How does our office promote dis/ability culture and pride?

- ❑ Do we engage in with other diversity efforts on campus?

INTERSECTIONALITY: APPLICATION

Be aware of the intersection between a student's dis/ability identity and their other social identities

- ❑ Are there other systems of oppression that impact the student?

- ❑ How do these identities interact with one another? Do they contradict or reinforce each other? How do they impact how students engage in services?

- ❑ What other campus resources would be helpful? How do we connect our students with these resources?

EMANCIPATION: APPLICATION

Recognize the student as the expert in their own experience

- ❑ Are we valuing the student narrative as the most important documentation?

- ❑ Do our practices further marginalize dis/abled students?

- ❑ Do we consider the voices of our students in assessment, decision-making, and policy creation, especially those from other minoritized groups?

PRAXIS: APPLICATION

Engage in intentional practices informed by theory and research

❑ Are we staying current in our field's scholarship? What about other fields closely aligned with dis/ability services?

❑ How do we use research and theory in our policies and decision-making processes?

❑ Are we contributing to the body of knowledge that informs our field?

CRITICAL SELF-REFLEXIVITY: APPLICATION

Be aware of how our personal biases and experiences impact our work and vice versa

- ❑ Do we engage in self-reflection on a regular basis?

- ❑ How do we address biases that may impact our judgment?

- ❑ Are we acknowledging how our work impacts us on a personal level and practicing self-care to diminish vicarious trauma?

- ❑ Do we engage in this reflexive practice as a team?

APPLICATIONS FOR DIS/ABILITY SERVICES

Divide into seven groups (one for each theme). In your groups, consider the following:

1. Discuss the CDS theme assigned to your group.

2. Brainstorm ways you may apply the theme to your work with students.

3. Explore ways in which your office can use this theme in your policies and practices.

4. Be specific.

APPLICATION: EXAMPLES FROM THE GROUP

Hegemony -- Examples from the Group

Dis/ability-as-Phenomena -- Examples from the Group

Dis/ability-as-Identity -- Examples from the Group

Intersectionality -- Examples from the Group

Emancipation -- Examples from the Group

Praxis -- Examples from the Group

Critical Self-Reflexivity -- Examples from the Group

(Sins Invalid, 2020)

ENVISION

Social Change and Dis/ability Justice using a CDS Lens to Address Systemic Inequity

ENVISION GREATER EQUITY USING CDS

In your groups, discuss how your office may apply a CDS lens to issues of inequity

1. Identify an issue that impacts the field of dis/ability services and/or higher education as a whole.

2. Discuss what specific CDS themes may apply.

3. Develop a list of concrete actions you and/or your office can take to promote greater equity.

4. Be specific.

ENVISION: EXAMPLES FROM THE GROUP

Envision -- Examples from the Group

THANK YOU!!

JEWLS GRIESMEYER KRENTZ, MA NCC CRC

Access Counselor and Consultant
Disability Resource Center
Portland State University

PhD Candidate
Adult and Higher Education
Oregon State University

Co-Chair
Blind and Low Vision Knowledge & Practice Community
AHEAD

Web Communications Officer
Oregon Affiliate of AHEAD (ORAHEAD) Board of Directors

(503) 567-9237 (text or call) • jewls@pdx.edu

Session Evaluation

Your feedback helps shape future programming.

Thank you for attending!

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