Assignment 1
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This assignment looks into disablism through a sociological theoretical lens of feminism and critically looks into how this issue has changed offer the decades.

Disablism according to the Council of Europe (2017) is an act of oppressive discrimination against disabled people that are 'inferior to others.' Disablism has been referred to as stereotyping, prejudice and institutional discrimination against disabled people. The main problem to Disablism is that it is no easy to identify, meaning that some people do not know that it exists. Where they focus on people's attitude where they might be conscious of their discriminatory behaviour, but people also have a way of being able to unconsciously relate to people with disabilities. Discriminatory attitudes when done unconsciously is harder to handle in comparison to conscious discriminatory attitudes, while they both need to be targeted equally while in the middle of the struggle for human rights.

There has been a line drawn between the social lives and interests of 'able-bodied' and the disabled to separate them due to people calling the latter 'set apart from the ordinary' (Hunt, 1966a). In Britain, Paul Hunt published a book entitled – Stigma: The Experience of Disability (1966), where it challenges the standard preoccupation with both of the medical and personal experiences by individuals with a disability (Hunt, 1966b). In his essay Hunt had argued that: -

> *'the problem of disability lies not only in the impairment of function and its effects on us individually, but also, more importantly, in the area of our relationship with "normal" people'* – (Hunt, 1966b)

What Hunt is stating here is that people with disabilities aren't different to people without disabilities at all. They are treated differently due to having been oppressed in the past where the "normal" people have treated them horribly because of their impairments.

Being disabled has been described as 'unfortunate' by some because they are not able to join in on certain social occasions and material benefits of the contemporary society – including simple things such as getting married and parenthood. It has been said that overwhelmingly that the "normal" people have celebrated a 'triumph over tragedy' heroics (Darlington et al, cited in Barnes and Mercer, 2003).

Social oppression has been interoperated different types where they might have included certain aspects for where they are used. People have idealised disability as a form of social oppression that was as similar to sexism and racism, but it does not have the same forms as

either (Barnes and Mercer, 2003). There are writers that have discussed and mimicked the anti-racism and feminist research by the means of stepping away from the class-based statements when looking into the historic connections to dominance between the non-classed groups (Brittan and Maynard (1982) cited in Barnes and Mercer, 2003).

When identifying disablism there is a specific form of oppression which involves people who are disabled being 'marked' as abnormal for their distinguished 'bodily deficiencies' and are treated differently or inferior because of their physical impairments

> *'for disabled people the site of oppression, both in form, and what is done with it'* – (Abberley, 1987).

Ableism is a concept that is not understood well enough and people have often used it to describe how disabled people are treated wrongly (Answer.com 2007, Merriam-Webster 2007 and Wolbring 2008.) Wolbring (2008) had stated that the current use of the term's ableism and disablism are both limited in content and opportunity. Each -ism is either understood, tolerated or valued by people or it is not.

Thoman Hehir (2002) has defined ableism as 'the devaluation of disability' that has resulted in social attitudes that have led to the undiscerning claim that it is more beneficial for a child to: -

> *'walk rather than roll, speak rather than sign, read print rather than read Braille, spell independently rather than use spell-check, and to hang out with non-disabled children as to opposed to other disabled children'.* – (Hehir, 2002).

Hehir (2002) has researched the practices of ableism and its history in relation to education of children that are either deaf, blind/visually impaired or have learning disabilities – in particular – dyslexia. Ableists assumptions have become dysfunctional as the educational developmental services provided to disabled children to a large extent, focus solely on the characteristics of their disabilities whilst excluding everything else.

Countless reports from disabled people and their parents provide examples explaining how the changing of disability had become a main focus of their lives and how they were denied many things because of their disability that the non-disabled population took for granted (Hehir, 2002).

In Shapiro's (2011) book *No Pity: People with disabilities forging a new civil rights movement* he states that: - *'Never has the world of disabled people changed so fast.'* Where he notes that the rapid changes in the technology along with new civil rights protections against discrimination and adapted educational techniques for disabled children/students outside of the mainstream classrooms and many more opportunities in 'political activism' for job seekers and to have a happier experience of everyday living in America.

But society has had low expectations and have been prejudice towards the disabled people with an old-fashioned attitude towards their welfare and social service systems that have countered the bourgeoisie's attempts at independence. Due to this, attempts have been made to create better goals for the disabled but have gone unnoticed and misinterpreted by the mainstream Americans (Shapiro, 2011).

At the beginning of the book Shapiro (2011) had noted that there are many different types of disability, such as congenital, progressive, some conditions are known as static and some disabilities are just simply 'hidden'.

Such disabilities could vary from: -

- Congenital: these disabilities are mostly known for developing later in life.
- Progressive: muscular dystrophy or cystic fibrosis; where they might take an unknown amount of time to develop.
- Static: this type of disability could be known as losing a limb or it could be cancer that might have gone away. Or
- Hidden: these disabilities could be anything from diabetes or epilepsy.
- It is also stated that each disability comes in many different degrees of seriousness – (Shapiro, 2011).

The Disability Discrimination Act was created in 1995. This act applies to anyone with a disability is protected. The Disability Discrimination Act had defined 'disability' as: -

> *'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'* – (RNIB, 2019).

The Act protected people from being: -

- *'direct discrimination (such as a ban on employing blind people)*

- *disability related discrimination (for example, a taxi driver refusing to take a blind passenger because they have a guide dog)*
- *failure by an organisation to make a reasonable adjustment to allow you access to goods, facilities and services*
- *victimisation*
- *harassment.'* – (RNIB, 2019).

The Disability Discrimination Act (1995) is no longer used within England, Wales and Scotland – it is only used in Northern Ireland today, because it was replaced by the Equality Act (2010).

The Equality act (2010) was put into effect to protect anyone that is a part of any of the 9 protected characteristics of: -

- *'age,*
- *disability,*
- *gender reassignment,*
- *marriage or civil partnership (in employment only),*
- *pregnancy and maternity,*
- *race,*
- *religion or belief,*
- *sex, and*
- *sexual orientation.'* – (Citizens Advice, 2019).

The disabled have been the victims of violence and discrimination in multiple different ways. Goodley and Cole (2011) have looked at 3 different cases in which there is a factor of violence. The 3 cases that they choose to study had all showed that for some children that were disabled – had shown results of violence aimed at disabilities and had been combined together in pathological senses (Goodley and Cole, 2011).

Goodley in 2010 had noted that Parsons – a man who was said to be a structural functionalist sociologist had influenced the early areas of the social and cultural theories of disability – where he had seen the logical consistencies of the social systems while notably calling them an: -

> *'Analogous to a biological system – a system of social structures interacting and co-existing as a consensual web of relationships'* – (Thomas 2007; cited in Goodley and Cole 2011).

This in terms state that the functionalist views of disability are that of the 'product' of the body or mind that is damaged and that they *'struggle to escape the pitfalls of essentialism and biological determinism'* - according to Donaldson (2002; p.112 cited in Godley and Cole (2011)). This then meaning that the struggle that the disabled go through to leave the dangers of the basic skills that is taught to everyone in certain methods and the persistence of the biological order of the human body.

Jenny Morris an author and a feminist that has sent her time by using her research and evidence to affect the disability policy. Morris had written an article called Feminism and Disability in 1993 (Morris, 2011).

This article talks of the various seminars that Morris had attended that covered the 'researching of physical disability'. Morris (1993) stated that the feminist theory had expanded and the issues in disability and old age – where they were not thought of. Morris states that she felt alienated and angered within her views of feminism in which she noted down in 2 points of: -

The first point being that of disablism is notably invisible within the feminist's agenda and secondly the ways that disability has been the chosen subject for many feminists to research. The researchers had a failed attitude to see the reality of what disabled people are subjected to – instead of objectifying them to the research that has alienated them from their own experiences.

After fighting to allow women to do the same work that a man does – feminists have challenged many different methods created by men as well as theories when having to wanting to change the way that many see women in society, after having to live in a male-dominated world for so long (Morris, 1993).

The feminist theory has adapted and created a change into the world, but not everything has been covered within how many should look and treat women. To this Morris (1993) then goes on to say that how certain classes and races are included, but not issues such as disability or old age are not considered at all. One example of a person that did this is Caroline Ramazanoglu. Ramazanoglu after noting that she didn't include these groups had righted herself in her research by saying: -

> *'While these are crucial areas of oppression for many women, they take different cultures, and so are difficult to generalise about. They are also forms of difference which could be transformed by changes in consciousness'* – (Ramazanoglu, 1989: 95, cited in Morris, 1993).

Morris (1993) mentions that these arguments are insubstantial, due to the fact that – yes racism also takes up the different forms within many cultures and that black women and their experiences have been a major contribution into the research done for feminist rights and movements. The second point that Morris had picked up from Ramazanoglu's statement was that the denial of the socio-economic based section of oppression – in which the experience that both the disabled and the elderly have – and that you might as well as say that racism can be suppressed or eliminated through having people be taught that racism is the wrong attitude towards anyone that is protected from discrimination.

Both disabled men and women have not been given the opportunities to depict their personal experiences within general political movements. Where they – meaning the individuals that have spoken up about their experiences – in which they talk about their isolation.

Morris (1993) in her research had looked at 3 different examples of oppression in disability through the eyes of a feminist. The 3 examples where: -

- *'the rape of a young disabled woman by an ambulance attendant while she was being taken home from a residential college with a broken arm;*
- *The recording, by a male social worker, in the case notes of a disabled client that he thought he had discovered her masturbating and the conclusions that he drew from this about her personality;*
- *A policeman and social worker waiting in a hospital corridor for a disabled woman to give birth at which point they remove her baby from under a Place of Safety Order on the grounds that her physical disability prevented her from looking after the child.'* – (Morris, 1993)

All 3 of these examples of occurrences are in violation of one or more kinds of oppression due to an unequal relationship's status between men and women (Morris, 1993).

Feminist research and theories that are connected to the non-disabled women has been disagreed with when it comes to the disabled women when concerned with their relationship with men – according to Morris (1993). To this it doesn't matter if it is a case of: -

- *'domestic violence,*
- *rape,*
- *unequal pay, or*
- *sex-role stereotyping in children's books'* – (Morris, 1993)

each of these victims are affected – whether it be through the fact that some people refuse to look through the lens of the victims that could affects and angers women during their process of rising in power within the workplace all around the world (Morris, 1993).

Professor Keith Storey from the University of Touro, California, America had stated in his article *'Combating ableism in schools'* (2007), that as schools struggle to include the students that are known to be diagnosed as disabled – whether it is physical or a hidden disability – are often excluded – in which the social model was the main model that people had followed.

Ableism has been a predisposed action dawned within schools for many years in which society had overlooked the children that needed the help more than the non-disabled children – in particular the difficulty of being included in activities inside and outside the classrooms (Storey, 2007).

Ableism has appeared to become a negative affect in people's lives due to the comments that are thrown towards the disabled through stereotyping and the lack of truly knowing what the effects of the disability are causing to the individuals and their loved ones.

Storey (2007) talks of how to tackle ableism withing schools through making disability a known factor that anyone could be disabled, embracing disablism within the classroom curriculum through multiculturalism. Another factor that he notes is that hiring teachers that have a disability or know a person who is disabled to be able to help the students that might need to talk with a teacher – in a way that they could become a role model of sorts towards the students. Another type of role model that could be used in schools is video evidence or articles on famous people that have grown up with non-disabled people and it did not stop their own dreams in wanting to do what they dreamed of as children.

Disability has caused a rift to separate people and to put labels on others for far too long – without the needed knowledge to know what truly goes on within these peoples lives. Some people – although Storey (2007) does not note who these people are specifically – say that if they ignore ableism and some other issues, while believing that they can become better teachers that can help the students learn new skills – that the teachers have done their jobs. But that is

not how things work today in comparison to the past – because of the influence of the teachers affect their studies and that the societies know that there is a need for change within their children's education.

The medical model was used as a way to view the disability as a problem that those individuals had – meaning that if there was an individual that had a disability such as needing a wheelchair to move from place to place, but they could not be able to access a building due to there not being a ramp – the medical model would blame it on the wheelchair. Other examples of the medical model would be – not printing any work with a font that is large enough for people with sight impairments, or events in schools or universities that do not allow any access for disabled students (University of Leicester, n.d.).

The social model was created by disabled people for disabled people because they did not wish to still be treated as the disability on its own rather than as the individuals who are diagnosed with a disability. It was created to help disabled people to be heard and recognise the barriers that are making anything for a non-disabled person a much harder task for a disabled person and that by removing these barriers – there is more independence in the individual's lives (Scope UK, n.d.).

Disablism has been the main cause behind the prevention of disabled people in society – where they are not able to be more open and to become the people that they wished to be in the future, or the people that they are today.

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