

Rethinking Normalcy: A Disability Studies Reader. Edited by Tanya Titchkosky and Rod Michalko, Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc, 2009, 344 pps.

An eye-opening exploration of disability studies that challenge our deeply ingrained societal norms, the book takes us on a journey through the complex and multifaceted world of disability, urging us to question these norms along the way.

Part 1 (pg 15) the authors introduce the Social Model of Disability in Chapter 1, a groundbreaking perspective that challenges the traditional view of disability as a personal tragedy. Instead, it argues that disability is a result of society's failure to accommodate and include individuals with impairments. This sets the stage for a deeper understanding of disability as a social construct and invites readers to reevaluate the norms we often take for granted.

Titchkosky and Michalko delve into the historical development of disability studies as an academic discipline, emphasizing that disability studies didn't emerge in isolation but evolved in response to shifting societal attitudes towards disability.

Moving forward, Chapter 3 challenges conventional sociological perspectives on disability. Tanya Titchkosky introduces the concept – of disability as a "liminal space" between normalcy and abnormalcy. This perspective encourages us to explore the hidden meanings of normalcy and offers disability studies a unique vantage point to dissect societal norms. The concept of the "normate" by Rosemarie Garland-Thomson – a socially constructed idea of a "normal" body, senses, mind, and emotions is then introduced. It highlights how the normate and normate culture shapes society's perception of disability and encourages readers to critically examine their understanding of normalcy.

Chapter 5 focuses on validating disabled individuals' lived experiences. It discusses how disability characteristics are often perceived through their bodies and emphasizes the need for an "equality of condition" that validates disabled embodiment and sensibility.

In Part 2 (89) of the book, the authors delve into the profound connection between disability and suffering, a connection that is often so normalized that we rarely question it. Chapter 6, explores this connection, drawing from the works of Emmanuel Levinas. It asks whose suffering we truly confront when encountering disability and raises thought-provoking questions. "Nondisabled people are disturbed by disability. It reminds them of the fragility and vulnerability of their existence and reminds them of their morality as well. Furthermore, nondisabled people are often very uncomfortable in the presence of those of us who are disabled." (100) Chapters 7 and 8 continue this exploration by delving into the lived experiences of disabled individuals like Diane Diedger, who showcases how such experiences can lead to disability activism.

Part 3 (p.133) shines a spotlight on how institutions shape perceptions of disability. Chapter 9 critiques charity fundraisers that frame disability as a tragedy, perpetuating moral narratives that impact the lives and identities of disabled individuals. Chapter 10 explores the intersection of work and mental illness, highlighting how institutionalization can shape societal perceptions of normalcy and abnormalcy.

Part 4 (p.197) examines the role of law in shaping social spaces and reinforcing normative conceptions of disability. Chapter 12 focuses on the struggle for disability rights and advocates for viewing disability as a human rights issue, emphasizing the importance of social justice. Chapter 13 delves into the concept of "legal peripheries," where the discourse about law differs from how law is experienced. It underscores the need to consider the intersection of law, space, and disability within these peripheries.

Part 5 (227) explores the impact of education, technology, and work on disabled individuals. Chapter 14 challenges conventional notions of literacy by exploring American Sign

Language (ASL) as a distinct language and culture, emphasizing the importance of embracing diversity in education. Chapter 15 delves into the experiences of disabled students at a Canadian university, highlighting the challenges they face in navigating an educational system designed without their needs in mind.

In the final Part of the book, Part 6 (285), insights from Carla Rice, Hilde Zitselsberger, Wendy Porch, and Esther Ignani, the focus shifts to women with facial and physical differences. They emphasize the importance of community-based research that responds to the specific needs of these communities, highlights the pervasive normative conceptions of disability, and advocates for the construction of alternative narratives and embodied selves.

In Chapter 18, Corbett Joan Otoole raises important questions about sexism and racism within the disability movement. It encourages us to recognize the diversity within the movement and calls for inclusive analysis that considers the complex intersections of identity. Anita Ghai niches down and sheds light on the absence of disabled women in Indian feminism and disability movements.

In the last chapter, they delve into the intricate realm of identity. Robert McRuer challenges conventional notions of identity politics, suggesting that certain identities, including disability and queerness, are simultaneously forming and deconstructing.

This book leaves us with a resounding call to action - to continue challenging the norms that have shaped our understanding of disability, paving the way for a brighter, more inclusive future.

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