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Theories and Models of Disability

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The subject of disability has had a long history of development in our society. Over the years PWDs were treated with undeserved discrimination and inequality. As time went on models as to how to treat and determine how disabilities occurred were created. The earliest model used was the Religious-Moral.

This paradigm is based on the notion that the cause of a person's impairment is a result of their transgressions, wrongdoing, or demonic possession. An example of this model in use is the history of “lames” or “crippled beggars” not being allowed inside of holy temples due to their disability. The model with the second longest history is the Biomedical Model. This model is used to define normal, which is defined as "being free of pathology." An example of this model in use is when doctors utilize medical treatments and diagnoses. The use of eugenics became prevalent which is the forced sterilization of PWDs, “to stop the spread” of impairments.

The Environmental Model is based on adapting one’s environment for better accessibility. Making a ramp and automatic door system for wheelchair users to gain access to a building with steps is an instance of applying this method. The definition of disability is much influenced by the functionality of an individual. The Functional Model is based on capabilities, an example of that is a well-known dancer suffering a spinal cord injury as a result of an automobile accident. Their capability to perform will be altered by this permanent impairment.

The Socio-political model is based on the concept of society playing a major role in the development of disability and that it is a collective concern. It emphasizes the civil rights of PWDs by offering advocacy against prejudice and discrimination as well as "universal" accommodations like ASL. An example of this paradigm in use is the creation of braille and auditory descriptions for people without eyesight.

The first disability model I would like to focus on is the Religious-Moral Model. The initial appearance of disability dates to 1552 BC. During those times having a disability made you less than and inferior to the "normal" man. PWDs were often thought to be individuals that brought shame upon their families and were frequently murdered or concealed by them to keep the person out of the public eye. Having a child with a disability was also associated with guilt and sin. The fact that this model is still used by some today is unfortunate.

Personally, this paradigm happens to be my least favorite of the bunch. Its principles promote discrimination and hate which is contradictory to the Christian faith. This use of this model has caused innocent people getting killed due to being different. Instead of being a "Good Christian" by helping PWDs they ridiculed and abused them. As a Christian, I believe it paints a mutilated picture as to what our faith is along with our morals. However, one model that goes against putting the blame on the individual, and society instead, is the Socio-Political Model.

The Socio-Political model emphasizes that inaccessible environments and negative viewpoints from others were the primary causes of limitations for PWDs. A theme I can connect to this model is "Exclusion." Prior to the creation of this paradigm, PWDs were labeled with degrading names such as "idiots" and "retards" that excluded them from equal education opportunities. To provide complete access to equal opportunities in areas including education, work, transportation, and technology, various policies have been developed. Historical social

movements also took place in advocacy of PWDs, such as the Australian Disability Rights movement. Individuals saw the disparity PWDs faced and decided to make a change to promote equality and equity within our society.

As time went on, it was recognized that PWDs had rights as independent individuals that deserved to be treated with equality. I would agree that this model should be used more than the others due to the influence of society on disability. The occurrence of a disability isn't the result of the individual's doing but rather outside forces. We as citizens should be able to take the steps needed to ensure that everyone is accommodated no matter the circumstances.

In conclusion, it's a great thing that the rights of PWDs were acknowledged to make the proper changes needed to make a prospering society. PWDs have endured unjustified prejudice and inequity over the years. As time passed, models for the diagnosis and treatment of impairments as well as their causes emerged creating positive solutions. As of today, I would like to expand my knowledge of disabilities so that I can be more conscious of how I can be supportive, and an advocate for anyone with a disability. No matter how it may be present.

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