

Gender-based Violence and Disability Oppression: An Intersectional Analysis

Tammy Bernasky, PhD Candidate,
Critical Disability Studies, York University

About Me

- PhD Candidate, Critical Disability Studies, York University.
- Areas of interest:
 - gender-based violence
 - socio-economic oppression, and
 - intersectionality





Objectives

- Give an overview of my dissertation.
- Discuss important concepts in my work.
- Offer some highlights from my participants.



Committee Members (aka My Dream Team)



- Supervisor: Dr. Rachel da Silveira Gorman, Critical Disability Studies
- Dr. Marcia Rioux, Critical Disability Studies
- Dr. Annie Bunting, Law & Society

About my Project

- Interviewed community advocates and organizers about gender-based violence in the disability community.
- Motivations and challenges to doing the work.
- Looking at impact of community organizing.



Methods

- Interviewed participants globally
- Questions related to motivations, hopes and challenges
- Content analysis
- Stories



13 Participants

- Australia
- Bangladesh
- Canada
- Ghana
- India
- Kenya
- US
- Nepal
- Yemen



Background

- Women with disabilities,
 - are more likely to live in poverty and on less total income than women without disabilities and men.¹
 - are less likely to be employed.²
 - are less likely to get married, more likely to get divorced.³
 - are more likely to experience physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse⁴.



¹DisAbleD Women's Network, 2019; Malacrida, 2010; Crawford, 2013 ²DAWN, 2019; Crawford, 2013 ³Muthukrishna, Sokoya & Moodley, 2009 ⁴DAWN, 2019; Canadian Women's Foundation, 2014; DAWN, 2013; Olsvik, 2006; Brownridge, 2006; Vecova Centre for Disability Services and Research, 2011.

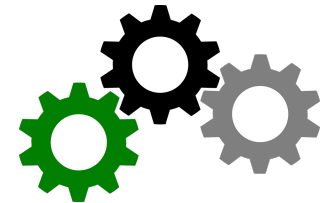


Gender-based Violence and Disability

- Gender-based violence
 - violence committed against someone because of their gender identity
 - Violence rooted in power imbalances / gender inequality
- Disability-based violence

Forms of Violence

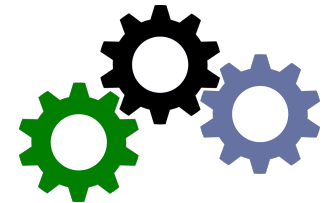
- Withholding care or medication, isolation, financial abuse.
- Reproductive rights, sterilization, the right to parent.⁶
- Forced institutionalization and psychiatric interventions.⁷



⁶Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009. ⁷International Network of Women with Disabilities, 2010.

Other Aspects of Identity

- Race, Class, Citizenship Status
- For example, Indigenous women in Canada with disabilities
 - Disability and other supports are provincially regulated
 - For Indigenous women with disabilities these issues fall under federal jurisdiction





Oppression

Iris Marion Young's describes five forms of oppression⁸ which are:

- ✿ *Exploitation*
- ✿ *Marginalization*
- ✿ *Powerlessness*
- ✿ *Cultural imperialism*
- ✿ *Violence*

⁸Young, 1990



Disability Oppression

- Contributing factors⁹,
 - ✓ Political Economy
 - ✓ Negative attitudes about disability
 - ✓ False consciousness

⁹Charlton, 1998

Intersectionality

- Term coined by Kimberle Crenshaw.¹⁰
- Discrimination = traffic at an intersection; may flow from many directions increasing the risk of harm.
- Intersection is where discrimination takes place.



¹⁰Crenshaw, 1989



Why is Intersectionality Important?

- Helps with understanding oppression.
- Privilege and oppression are complex. We may experience both at the same time.
- intersectionality recognizes the systems, structures, and norms that create multiple disadvantage and discrimination.

Social Movements

- Historical exclusion of concerns of women with disabilities from disability and feminist movements.
- To organize¹¹:
 - Disability and gender are political issues
 - Must be accessible in terms of communication and space
 - Connect with each other
 - Address exclusion from other movements



Highlights - Experiences

- Lack of representation in movements
- Negative perceptions
- Extensive barriers trying to access basic education
- Abuse at university
- Harassment when trying to enter the workforce
- Institutionalization

Highlights - Challenges

- Government understanding or policy commitment
- Lack of awareness or control of rights
- Access to justice

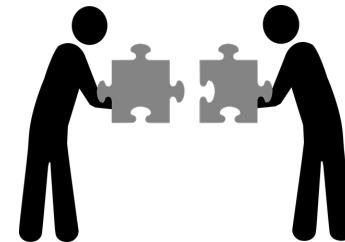


Highlights – Structural Violence

- Abuse of young women with disabilities in respite centres.
- Relying on service providers even after complaints have been filed.
- Being kept at home and away from community.
- Systemic barriers combined with negative perceptions.

Highlights - Motivations

- Started organizations because they did not feel represented.
- Raise awareness about gender-based violence in the disability community.
- Wanting better for others.



Highlights - Transformations

- Empowerment
 - Seeing oneself represented.
 - Community organizing.
 - Networks of support.



Conclusion



- Overall participants build community through resisting oppression.
- Participants had a range of experiences, disabilities, social and geographical locations, contexts, and gender identities.
- Participant experiences demonstrated the importance of addressing intersectionality.



References

- Brownridge, D.A. (2006). Partner violence against women with disabilities: Prevalence, risk and explanations. *Violence Against Women*, 12(9), 805-822.
- Canadian Women's Foundation. (2014). Fact sheet: Moving women out of violence. Retrieved from: <http://www.canadianwomen.org/facts-about-violence>
- Charlton, J. I. (1998). *Nothing about us without us: Disability oppression and empowerment*. University of California Press.
- Crawford, C. (2013). Looking into poverty: Income sources of poor people with disabilities in Canada. Toronto: Institute for Research and Development on Inclusion and Society (IRIS) & Council of Canadians with Disabilities.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, 139-168.
- DisAble Women's Network of Canada. (2019). *More Than A Footnote: A Research Report on Women and Girls with Disabilities in Canada*. DAWN Canada.
- DisAble Women's Network Canada. (2013). Women with disabilities and violence: Factsheet. Retrieved from: <http://www.dawncanada.net/issues/issues/factsheets-2/violence/>
- de Silva de Alwis, R. (2009). Mining the Intersections: Advancing the Rights of Women and Children with Disabilities Within an Interrelated Web of Human Rights. Faculty Scholarship at Penn Law. 1697. https://scholarship.law.upenn.edu/faculty_scholarship/1697
- International Network of Women with Disabilities (INWWD). (2010). Document on Violence against Women with Disabilities. <http://wwda.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/inwwdviol2010.pdf>
- Malacrida, C. (2010). Income support policy in Canada and the UK: Different, but much the same. *Disability & Society*, 25(6), 673-686.
- Meekosha, H. & Shuttleworth, R. (2009). What's so "critical" about critical disability studies? *Australian Journal of Human Rights*, 15 (1), 47-75.
- Muthukrishna, N., Sokoya, G., & Moodley, S. (2009). Gender and disability: An intersectional analysis of experiences of ten disabled women in Kwazulu-Natal. *Gender & Behavior*, 7(1), 2264-2282.
- Nixon, J. (2009). Domestic violence and women with disabilities: locating the issue on the periphery of social movements. *Disability & Society*, 24(1), 77-89.
- Olsvik, V. (2006). Vulnerable, exposed and invisible: A study of violence and abuse against women with physical disabilities. *Scandinavian Journal of Disability*, 8(2-3), 85-98.
- Price, J. (2011). *The seeds of a movement – disabled women and their struggle to organize*. In S. Batliwala (Ed.). *Changing Their World* (2nd Edition). Association of Women's Rights in Development.
- Vecova Centre for Disability Services and Research. (2011). Violence against women with disabilities: Violence prevention review. Toronto, ON: Canadian Women's Foundation.
- Young, I. M. (1990). Five faces of oppression. In *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (pp. 39-65). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Note: All graphics from <https://pixabay.com/> unless otherwise stated

Thank you!



Contact Information:

Tammy Bernasky

E-mail: tammybernasky@hotmail.com