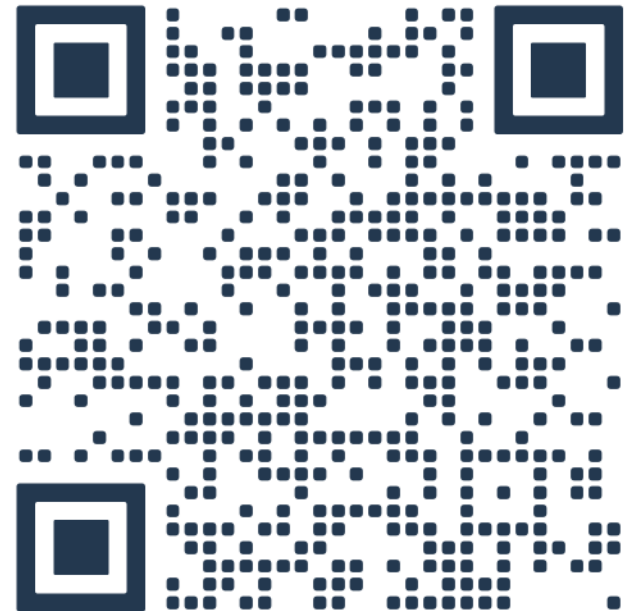


Social construction of disability

1. Administrative
2. Social constructionism
3. Social construction of disability

Error in today's worksheet

- ∴ Prompt 3 from Jan 25 originally referred to McGill's posted policy on Covid accommodations, which *McGill has taken down*
- ∴ Prompt 3 has been **changed**
- ∴ Updated worksheet available on MyCourses or at https://soci210.netlify.app/discussions/group_discussion_02.docx



Social construction



Social construction in popular discourse

- ∴ “If something is a ‘socially construct’, that means it can be whatever you want it to be.”
- ∴ “Socially constructed = fake”
- ∴ ***These interpretations are usually based on a serious misunderstanding (or deliberate misrepresentation) of social construction.***



Gender's a social construct, remember. Just have half the scientists "identify" as female. [#problemsolved](#)

2:10 AM · May 5, 2017



James Lindsay, honorary Canuck, eh
@ConceptualJames

"Unvaccinated" is a social construct. So is "fully vaccinated." All artificial. All hyperreal.

1:20 PM · Oct 1, 2021



Dr Jordan B Peterson ✓
@jordanbpeterson

Science is a social construct, remember? That's why planes fly...



Feb 16, 2018

Replying to @jordanbpeterson

Both of the statements singled out as discriminatory & harassing are scientifically established. I guess they didn't bother to consult the literature.

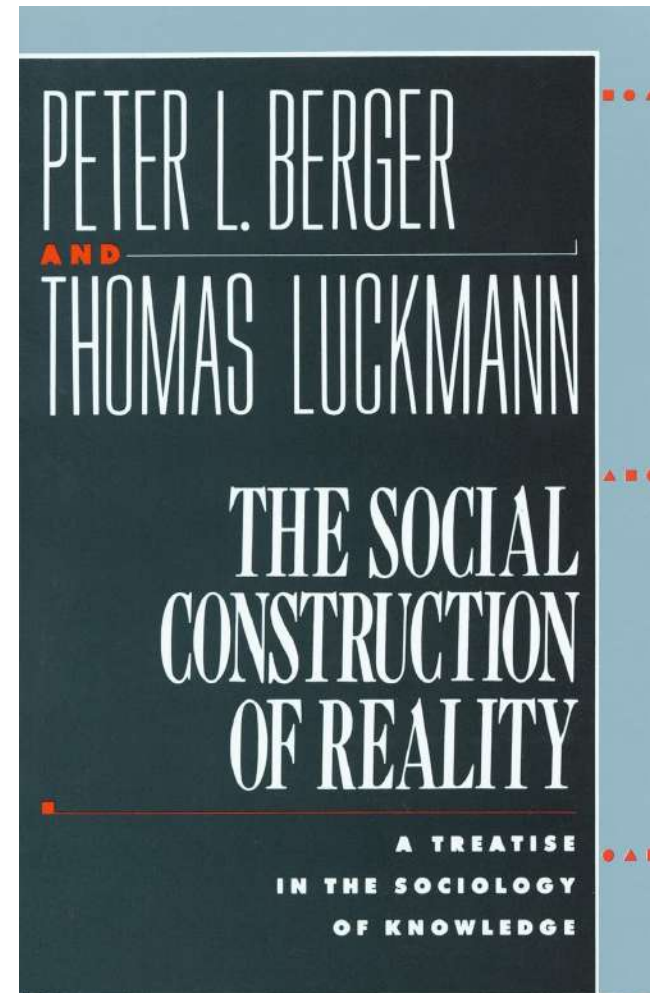
11:54 PM · Feb 16, 2018

Sociology of knowledge

- ∴ The Social Construction of Reality (1966)
Peter Berger & Thomas Luckman

Basic argument:

- ∴ Humans learn about the world through social interaction.
- ∴ Interactions reinforce the things we agree on, and push us to come to agreement on everything else.
- ∴ This process reinforces *norms* — how the world *ought* to be.
- ∴ Over time, shared expectations become so regular that we do not think of them as something we came to agree on. They become something we *know*.



Symbolic interactionism

- ∴ The *meaning* of things is not essential to those things. It is *negotiated* through social interactions.



A popular critique of social construction is that it denies the reality of the world.



Katherine Cross

@Quinnae_Moon

Follow



This is false. Religion is socially constructed, but I can't declare that a table is now a cathedral and have it mean anything. That last bit, meaning, is the key. We can play however we like. But most social constructs are like their physical counterparts: durable.

11:38 PM · Jul 27, 2018

The social is real

- ∴ We often think of the social as somehow less real than the physical or biological.
- ∴ A social construct is real because it has real consequences. It 'pushes back' on our attempts to alter it.
- ∴ Sociologists study how social systems are consequential and durable.

In short: social constructs ...

- ∴ ... have socially-negotiated definition and meaning
- ∴ ... have real consequences in the world to
- ∴ ... require widespread, collective action to subvert or change

Three terms (loosely)

Social construct

- ∴ A '*social fact*' that is actively maintained, widely held to be true, and consequential.
- ∴ E.g.: race, gender, customs, scientific method, ...

Social constructionism

- ∴ A *sociological stance* that focuses on social constructs, their maintenance, and their meanings.

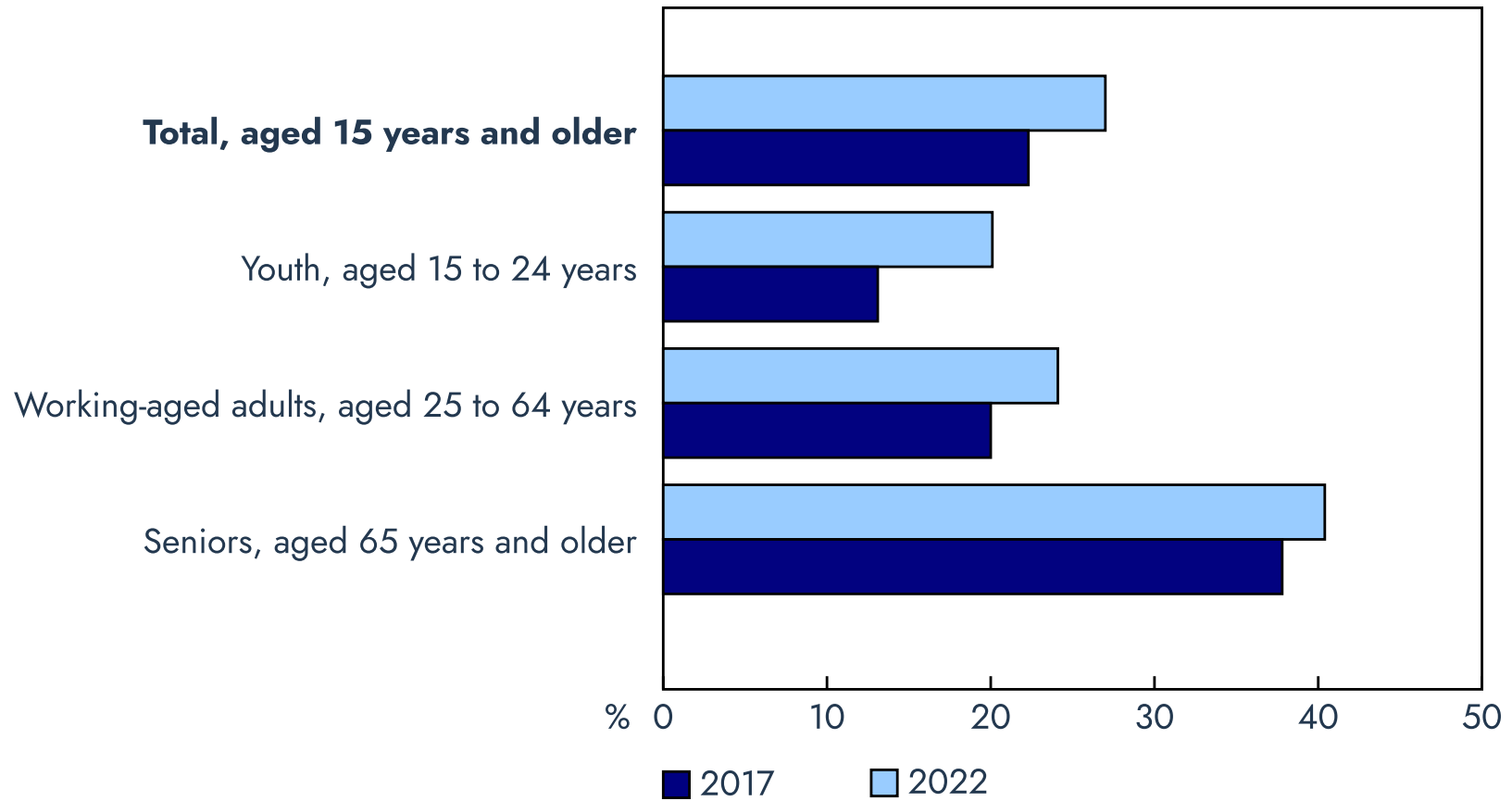
Social constructivism

- ∴ An epistemological stance that focuses on the ways that social constructs inform what people know

Social construction of disability



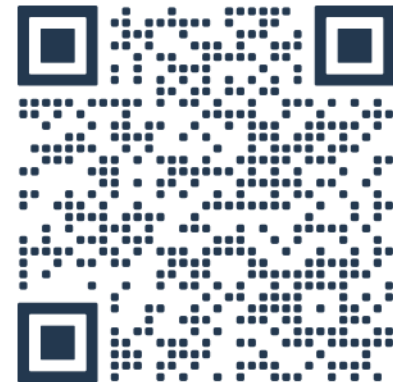
Disability in Canada



Source:
Statistics Canada, [Canadian Survey on Disability](#)

Terminology

- ⋮ “People with disabilities” (*people-first*)
or
“Disabled people” (*identity-first*)
- ⋮ Stigmatizing terms ***should not be used***
Crip/cripple (by someone non-disabled), lame, ...
- ⋮ Euphemisms that try to avoid saying the word “disability” are considered inappropriate and infantilizing
“Differently abled”
“Special needs”
...
- ⋮ A good resource for those writing about disability:
<https://cdrnys.org/disability-writing-journalism-guidelines/>



**Moral
model**

Moral model of disability

- ∴ Views disability as a *moral failing* of an individual
- ∴ Disabled person (or parents/caregivers) are culpable for disability
- ∴ Divine punishment (e.g. sin, witchcraft, etc.)
- ∴ “Deserved” disability (fatness, diabetes, lung cancer, neurodivergence, etc.)

**Medical
model**

**Social
model**



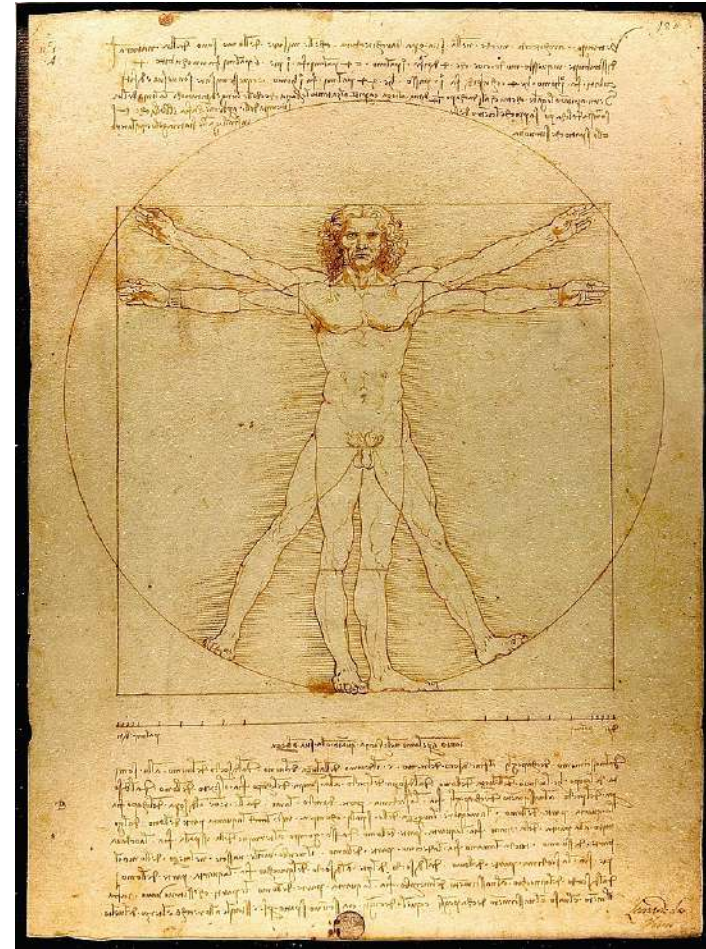
Moral
model

Medical
model

Social
model

Medical model of disability

- ∴ Views disability as a *disorder afflicting* a person
- ∴ Defines an idealized state for human body, with disability defined as deviation from norm
- ∴ Disability is 'problem' to be 'fixed'
- ∴ Encourages stigmatization, marginalization



Moral
model

Medical
model

**Social
model**

Social model of disability

- ∴ Views disability as the result of *systematic barriers to participation* in everyday society
- ∴ Differentiates between *disability* (social) and *impairment* (medical/physical)
- ∴ Disability is not deviation from a norm, as in the medical model
- ∴ Disability is the failure of society to account for human variability
Steps leading to courthouse entrance
Vancouver, BC
(Infrastructure, laws, culture, behavior, ...)
- ∴ Dominant model among disability activists



Disability ...

- ✓ has socially-negotiated definition and meaning
- has consequences in the real world
- requires widespread will to subvert or change

Contested social construct

- ⋮ The definition and meaning of disability is determined socially
- ⋮ **Conflicting models**
Medical, social, moral, ...
- ⋮ **Institutionally determined thresholds**
What are the criteria for 'blindness?' In which Contexts?
- ⋮ **Categorical delineation (medicalization)**
E.g. homosexuality, schizophrenia, drapetomania, ...

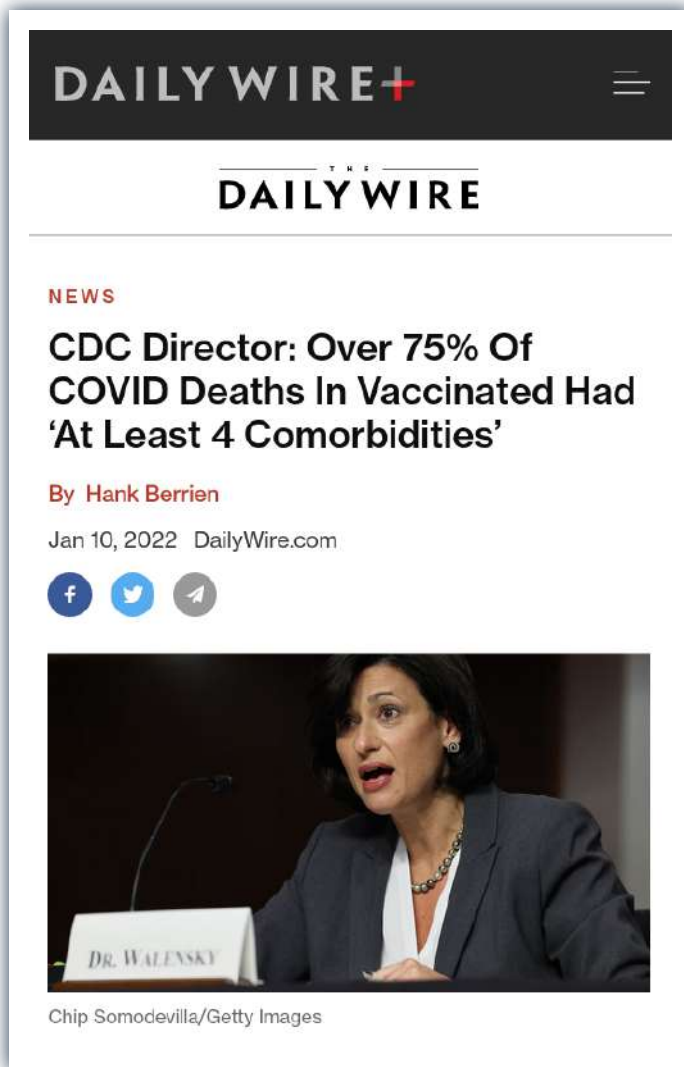
Disability ...


- ✓ has socially-negotiated definition and meaning
- ✓ has consequences in the real world

requires widespread will to subvert or change

Social consequences

- ⋮ **Employment**
Discrimination for jobs.
Minimum-wage exemptions.
- ⋮ **Immigration and travel**
People with certain disabilities are not allowed to immigrate to Canada (and many other countries).
- ⋮ **State violence**
Historically: murder, forced sterilization, forced abortion, ...
Currently: disproportionate police violence, forced sterilization, ...
- ⋮ **Non-state violence**
Increased risk of homicide, domestic abuse, and sexual violence.
- ⋮ **Intersectional**
Women, Black and Indigenous people, 2SLGBTQIA+ people, and people in poverty are all disproportionately likely to be disabled.



DAILY WIRE+ 




DAILY WIRE


NEWS

CDC Director: Over 75% Of COVID Deaths In Vaccinated Had 'At Least 4 Comorbidities'

By **Hank Berrien**

Jan 10, 2022 DailyWire.com



Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

“The overwhelming number of deaths, over 75%, occurred in people who had at least four comorbidities. So, really, these are people who were unwell to begin with. And yes, *really encouraging news* in the context of Omicron; this means not only just to get your primary series but to get your booster series. And yes, we’re really encouraged by these results.”

Dr. Rochelle Walensky, the head of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control



 **Mar Hicks**
@histoftech

“It is very encouraging news,” said the government, “that only people like you will die.”

“Excuse me?” I said.

“Very encouraging news,” they repeated 😊

1:57 AM · Jan 8, 2022

Disability ...

- ✓ has socially-negotiated definition and meaning
- ✓ has consequences in the real world
- ✓ requires widespread will to subvert or change



Image credit



Photo by [Nathan Dumlao](#) on [Unsplash](#)

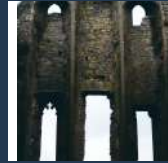
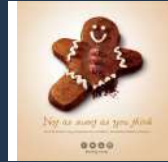


Photo of Hore Abbey by [Christian Bowen](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Photo by [Jelle van Leest](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Ad from Diabetes Association of Sri Lanka, via [Ads of the World](#)



Vitruvian Man by Leonardo di Vinci, via [Wikimedia](#)

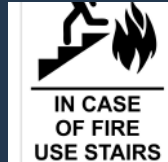


Image via [Winmark Stamp & Sign Company](#)

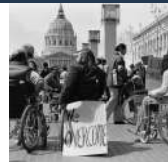


Photo via [Patch](#)