Marginalization and Self Determination

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"Self-Determination: The Fierce Urgency of Now"
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Overview

- What would the desired social system look like?
- Would such a system promote equity, justice, economic liberty, and opportunity for all?
- Would such a society have as its fundamental core the eradication of harm, the promotion of well-being?
- Would people in recovery be encouraged to participate in society, rather than live a part from the social compact?

Foundations of Self-Determination

- At the psychological level, Self-Determination Theory rests on the observation of three inter-related concepts:

  - Competence (How do we measure it in terms of results and to what end)?
    - At what point do we acquire the mastery and skills that will enable us to compete for opportunities in the social system?
  - Autonomy (Independence with the social system)
    - At what point are we able to exercise optimal control over own lives and self-control our own lives?
  - Relatededness (To each other, the environment, and other contexts)
    - The formation of relationships is a key element that characterizes our maturity and helps to sustain us over the life span.

Knowledge and Power

- Information is powerful
  - But, if we are in a closed social system or circle, how do we gain access to it, especially in this information age?
- How does knowledge of self-determination enhance our well-being and satisfaction?
- **Who defines it?**
  - Are people in recovery defining the terms of engagement or are researchers and academics—what to make of participatory research?

Who are the empowered?

- Are we empowering the empowered?
  - It is often said there can be no agenda about us, without us. How about changing the paradigm of recognition of authority?
- Who are the disempowered?
  - Does the assumption that those on the margin are necessarily marginalized hold up under scrutiny? Is this an example of societal labeling?
- Defining the Disabled
  - To whom do we as a society owe a debt or an obligation? Is the very term "disabled" a social construct? Does it purport to consign people to a less valued social role—a devalued social status?
- What is the impact of stigmatized identities?
- Is the debt a matter of social control or social justice?

Personhood and Control

- Promoting well-being—having a fulfilling life in the community of one's choosing

- Education—having access to an array of vocational & post-secondary opportunities that match the aspirations of the individual

- Health—mental and physical well-being over the life span

- Work—the ability to earn a decent living to support one and one's family

- Leisure—the opportunity to recreate and to enjoy life

- Sport—the pursuit of pastimes and passions

- Religion—the pursuits of the spiritual

- Life—the recognition and enjoyment of nature, the environment, and each day

History and Integration

- Achieving the Dream—This is a country of immense of opportunity and hard fought rights that have been won over many decades.

- Civil Rights—African Americans, Women, Addressing Civil Wrongs—Slavery, Voting Rights, Segregation, Education

- Disability Rights—Abuse and Neglect, Employment, All Areas of Public Life

- The Limits of Law—Personal Interactions

- ADA—Landmark legislation, but does this assume that the social system has fundamentally altered it attitudes regarding people with disabilities, or merely accommodated them when the burden is not too heavy or the expense not too high?

- Inclusion—This is the word *du jour*, but does it signify willingness on the part of the social system to fundamentally alter or adjust or to merely "open the door?" Is there a power shift here?

- Economic Integration—What does the evidence tell us?

- Functional Inequality—Does it follow that in our social system a certain level of unemployment will always be the norm and, if so, who will be at the bottom...people in mental health recovery, people with other disabilities?

Meanings of Social Determination

- Individual level-How can individuals at the individual level maximize control? With health care professionals, family members, friends?
- Community level—In participating on boards or at work, look for ways to optimize voice through your self-knowledge—competence and skill
- Neighborhood level—Through engagement on your block or association become an advocate for betterment, protection, and safety
- Nation level—By participating in the political process or its discourses through voting
- World level—Through communications via web, Internet
- Marginalization—It is not necessarily true that being true being on the margins make one marginalized. Some of the most creative folks are living on the periphery.
- Determinants—There are social, economic, and cultural factors (Poverty, Class, Education, Disability)

Social Policies

- Powerlessness—The historic deprivation of a group mired in limited opportunity because of societal discrimination can have devastating consequences
- Motivation—Individual self-esteem can be either helped or hindered by social policies and conditions
  - "Upward" and "downward" comparison among peers
  - Recovery has the potential for positive uplift in our community
- Potential—The ability to create an avenue of hope and a trajectory of possibility is what makes self-determination an alluring principle in the peer community
- Impacts—
  - Examples of recovery work in the field

Historical Backdrop

- Consumer Empowerment Movement has addressed societal inequalities (segregation, isolation, custodial care, institutionalization—and rehabilitation, community integration, recovery, empowerment, shared decision making)

Ill-Being

- Alienation

- Pathology

- Distress

Policy

- What constitutes good policy from peer perspectives, besides from being inclusive? The past practice has been:
- Deference toward experts
- Non-cooperation
- Paternalism vs. autonomy

Personal Responsibility and Control

- This is another word *du jour*, but what does it actually convey? The control or power still rest with a provider and the recipient of services is left on the bottom of the decision tree. Is this the desired system we seek?

- The word "consumer" connotes a "user" of services rather than a producer of services or a producer of goods. Is this message we want to send in a new system based on our values?

- Is accommodation real social change?

Apartness through Self Determination

- In responding to social change, some groups have determined to live within the boundaries of a social system by maintaining their social identities but yet living apart.
  - What is the relevance of this concept to our movement?
- Duality of character—The belief that I am a consumer and a unique individual
- Identity—That I also have a rich ethnic and racial heritage
- Apartness distinguished from legal segregation—This concept differs from racial accommodation and Jim Crowism
- Unity-Community-Autonomy-The concept attempts to blend self with the collective
- Theories of social integration—the melting pot and tossed salad

Concluding Remarks

- Social change is driven through reform, resistance, and protest.
- Self-determination and recovery are processes rooted in consumer activism with the possibility to uplift communities of difference.
- Economic integration is not the only means by which and through which consumers and their allies experience a whole life in the community.
- A self-determined life includes the decision not to join in community and not to be judged for non-participation.
- Self-determination theory rests on the recognition that individuals have psychological needs for growth over the life span that includes autonomy, relatedness, and competence.

References

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