

BOOK REVIEWS

Jan Grue. (2015) *Disability and Discourse Analysis*. London: Routledge. ISBN 9781472432926, 152 pp., £ 60.00.

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For years, the field of Disability Studies has investigated the production of the concept of disability within various sociological platforms, including politics; economics and capitalism (Oliver, 1990); social institutions; and language. Simultaneously, the field of discourse analysis, particularly Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), has explored how the language that is used by various discourse producers succeeds in influencing social systems whether in shaping our understanding of certain words and the ideas associated with them or in bringing new ideas into existence through the use of words. Grue's *Disability and Discourse Analysis* seeks to bring together these two previously separate fields to answer questions pertinent to both arenas about how language shapes the social construction of disability.

Being such a varied phenomenon, 'disability' has had no shortage of distinct understandings and explanations. This book teases apart those explanations, discussing the relevant theories and models present in disability studies, and then aims to weave them together with perspectives of CDA providing a foundation for understanding the discursive constructions of disability. In the first chapter, the author takes the opportunity to explain the need for the integration of Disability Studies and CDA, rightly noting: "disability has been under-explored from a discourse analysis perspective" (p. 23). Grue tells of the origins of CDA and discusses the concepts of discourse analysis and argumentation theory. This brief description introduces CDA to those readers unfamiliar with it and establishes the platform from which Grue will approach Disability Studies in this book.

In Chapter 2, Grue addresses the models, theories and perspectives present in Disability Studies and how a discourse approach fits in. Disability models and theories are differentiated from disability discourse since disability discourse is far too varied and complex to be boxed in as a single model or theory. Grue describes the four foundational models: the Social Model, the Minority Model, the Gap Model, and the Medical Model. However, he argues that none of these four models provide a sufficient explanation of disability since they all fail to address at least one important aspect of disability or simply reduce it to a series of dichotomies.

Grue uses Chapter 3 to focus on the medical discourses of disability, which are used in the practice of medicine to address and define issues and limitations to bodily functions. He explains that these pervasive medical discourses are

inextricably linked to disability and as such have a tremendous influence on how disability is talked about as well as how disabled identities are formed. This chapter describes how the medical profession has long served as the central control over disabled people's lives, emphasizing an assumed misfortune or disadvantage and how these abnormalities should be cured or prevented.

Chapter 4 deals with political and economic discourses. Grue explains how the disability models discussed in Chapter 2 have been implemented through political and economic discourses in Scandinavia and the Anglo-American world. Through this explanation, the reader gets a better picture of how disablement is conceptualized in the socio-political arena within which the focus is more on access to social goods and services, and participation in society.

In Chapter 5, Grue discusses discourses of identity. Despite efforts and small successes in movements of disability pride, the reader learns of some issues that arise when attempting to reclaim disability with a positive valuation. Often categorized with other social movements aiming to celebrate a valuation of difference, Grue suggests that the positive valuation of disability be instead tied to shared experience, community and collective action.

Media discourse, as described in Chapter 6, presents society with the ideal and stereotypical conceptions of disabled people. In this chapter, Grue introduces the reader to the concepts of the *supercrip* and the *technomarrow*. In both images, disability is idealized as something that can and should be overcome "through the twin forces of willpower and technological intervention" (p. 114). The problem with this is not the positive representation of people with disabilities, as Grue explains, but the fact that the positive representation is not of the impairment but rather the defeat of that impairment, which in turn only serves to further emphasize the value of normality.

Grue's *Disability and Discourse Analysis* is a welcomed introduction to the so rarely discussed intersection of disability studies and CDA. Traditionally concerned with social groups of marginalized status and unequal power share, critical discourse analysts would be interested in the societal representation of disability discussed in this book and the ways in which the use of discourse impacts the social reality of disability. Grue provides the readers with the necessary tools to understand the background of Disability Studies as well as a snapshot of the current state of discourse surrounding the conceptualization of disability.

While the book will, no doubt, be found as a valuable addition to academic literature to many scholars, some readers may be discouraged by the lack of methodological practice presented in the chapters. The introduction and first chapters describe analytical tools used in CDA, even including a table addressing collocates of the term 'disability' in three different corpora, though the subsequent chapters make little use of these tools in conducting discourse analysis outside of a brief

section of Chapter 2. Due to this, the book may be better considered as a way of theorizing the application of methods of CDA to the field of disability studies. This is not to say that the information contained therein is not useful for a critical discourse analyst, but rather to adjust the expectation of a methodological discussion of text analysis to one of an in depth portrayal of language use surrounding disability and the implications of various discourses on its social construction.

In the end, this book serves a key role in initiating discussions of Disability Studies through a CDA lens. In *Disability and Discourse Analysis*, Grue opens the door to a new and much needed area of research in the fields of CDA and Disability Studies, making evident the potential for analytical studies to reveal more about the marginalization, discrimination, and stereotypes that are experienced therein.