Models of Disability

The Traditional Model
- views people with disabilities as pennant sinners, inhuman freaks, or subjects of ridicule
- often vilifying or de-humanizing, perpetuate strongly negative conceptions of disability

The Medical Model
- perpetuates negative, “personally tragic” perceptions of disability
- treats disability as a flaw residing in individuals to be cured, normalized or segregated
- emphasizes a need for individual “rehabilitation” over social transformation

The Social Model
- views impairments as innate, but disabling barriers as arising from the interaction between an individual and environments
- describes negative aspects of disability as a social construction
- emphasizes the need for improving accessibility in the context of physical and social environments (rather than changing the individual)

Affirmative-Social Ability Theory
- views disability as largely an artifact of social construction
- claims a continuum of human differences in ability, and recognizes all individuals as impaired
- rejects view of “personal tragedy”, focuses on the benefits of diverse abilities
- claims that variations in human ability are valuable, socially-situated aspects of diversity

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