

Decoding Implicit Bias: Disability Narratives & Myths in Popular Culture and Beyond
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Disability as Pathology: Narratives that categorize various disabilities as degrees of removal from a normative standard that allows for the institutionalization of disabled characters. Disability is relegated to the realm of science and medicine.

Kill-or-Cure: The arc of a disabled person or character's life must result in either killing or curing the individual.

Overcoming or Compensating: This myth suggests that, in order to be perceived as 'good' or 'productive,' disabled people must overcome their disabilities or compensate for their disabilities with special skills or abilities. The compensating figure is referred to in disability scholarship as the 'supercrip.' Inspiration porn is rooted in the implicit bias that overcoming disabilities is heroic, moral, and necessary.

Disability as Object of Pity and/or Charity: Disabled lives are perceived as undesirable, unfortunate, and pitiable. This myth also appears when disabled people are portrayed as incapable, childlike, and as projects for others to fix through charitable acts.

Physical Deformity as Sign of Internal Flaw: Characters that fall under this category of myth represent physical disabilities and deformities as metaphorical manifestations of internal or hidden evil, malice, or unworthiness.

Disability as Isolated and Individuated: Disability is believed to be the sole responsibility of the disabled person as opposed to a construct that is created socially through sociomaterial infrastructures of a society. The pain, burden, or financial obligations related to disability fall on the shoulders of the disabled individual or their immediate caregivers.

Disability as a Sign from Above: In these narratives, disability comes to represent spiritual or religious rites or processes. In ancient Greek contexts, disabled community members were expelled in order to alleviate or prevent natural disasters (famine, floods, etc.). Disability as a sign from above can also appear as disabilities being a punishment for a parent's wicked choices or as a sign of being chosen by God.

Disability as Sign of Social Ill: Like disability as a sign from above, this myth of disabilities suggests that disabilities are manifestations of a society's deviance.

Disability Drift/Disability Hierarchy: disability drift is the assumption that a person with one disability is impacted in other ways or with other disabilities. For example, a Deaf person is perceived to also have intellectual impairments. Disability hierarchy is the belief that some disabilities are 'worse' than others. Disability hierarchy manifests in statements like 'I'd rather be X disability than be Z disability' or 'if I had your disability, I'd kill myself!'"

Disability Drop: the belief that disabled people are faking or exaggerating their disabilities, primarily in an attempt to take advantage of others.

Disability as Symptom of Human Abuse of Nature: disability is presented as a causal relationship: it is the consequence of a person's abuse of nature. Many superhero villains have disfigurements as a result of their science experiments gone wrong.

Adapted from Dolmage, J. (2014). *Disability Rhetoric*. New York, NY: Syracuse UP.