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People with Disabilities: Sidelined or Mainstreamed? By Lisa Schur,  
Douglas Kruse, and Peter Blanck.

**Keywords**

Book review by Linda Barrington

*People with Disabilities: Sidelined or Mainstreamed?* By Lisa Schur, Douglas Kruse, and Peter Blanck. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 306 pp. ISBN 978-1-107-00047-6, \$99.99 (Cloth).

People with disabilities are about 15% of the world's population—as many as 1.056 billion people across the globe (p. 22). Persons currently able-bodied or without some disability may join this demographic at any point in time; and, odds are, will do so before the end of their lifetimes. *People with Disabilities* offers the reader an introduction to not only the economic, political, and social barriers for this large and growing population worldwide but also the opportunities available to them. The ground to cover in such a book is vast with myriad possibilities to devolve into confusing minutia of technical definitions, statistical jargon, or organizational acronyms. Lisa Schur, Douglas Kruse, and Peter Blanck avoid the many pitfalls. They have successfully written a substantive overview that is objective and evidence-based, and at the same time engaging, clarifying, and thought provoking.

The authors organize their overall discussion into three broad categories of inclusion: economic, political, and social. The importance of inclusion in employment receives special emphasis and a chapter of its own. A separate chapter is also included on the overlaying identity dimensions of gender, race, and ethnicity. The concluding chapter provides the requisite summary, restating highlights and key points of preceding content, but it also stands as a valuable contribution of its own through the incorporation of commentary from 21 in-depth interviews with leaders and scholars in the disabilities field. A reader with less affinity for data may find that these experts' words and eyewitness testimony provide the most poignant and convincing evidence of the barriers—overcome and remaining—for full inclusion of people with disabilities.

Schur, Kruse, and Blanck do a good job of weaving global considerations throughout every chapter of the book and have not relegated “international examples” to a separate section or chapter. Research and data are presented that include people with disabilities from countries around the globe. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and World Health Survey data chart country comparisons of average incomes and numbers of benefit recipients among people with disabilities; disparities between them and their nondisabled countrymen in poverty rates and employment rates; and employment rates by gender, part-time status, and education. Cited studies introduce research on wide-ranging topics including improved perceptions of disability in Lebanon following the 1987 Intifada, limited options for migrant female workers in China following a serious work-related injury, country comparisons in the likelihood of marriage among people with disabilities, sexual violence against women as a cause and consequence of disability, and the varying approaches among countries to the education of children with special needs.

Overall, however, the United States is represented more intensively than any other single country, which is reasonable given that the authors' own research is more U.S.-focused and the data are richest. Within this pool of data and research, their discussion surfaces health care and incarceration as exceptional and interconnected challenges that impact people with disabilities in the United States more so than in other highly industrialized countries. Schur, Kruse, and Blanck should be commended for bringing incarceration into their conversation, which can be a sensitive topic. But, the fact that “as many as one in five or 300,000 of Americans in jail and prison are seriously mentally ill, far outnumbering the number of mentally ill people living in psychiatric hospitals” (p. 126), means it would be a gross omission not to raise it. The authors, linking the incarceration problem to the larger health care and support network of the United States, quote from a Human Rights Watch report stating “jails and prisons are now the country's ‘default mental health system’ as more state hospitals have closed and the country's prison system quadrupled over the past 30 years” (pp. 126–27).

The section on race and ethnicity is most heavily U.S.-focused, necessitated by data availability. In the United States, while the many aspects of economic inclusion fall more favorably for the majority white non-Hispanic population of people with disabilities, the picture of political and social inclusivity revealed in the book is more mixed. Interestingly, black non-Hispanics with disabilities recorded higher voter turnout in 2008 than did their white counterparts (62% and 58%, respectively) and almost identical nonvoting political participation rates, 23% versus 24% (p. 185). Furthermore, the social disparity for black non-Hispanics with disabilities and Hispanics with disabilities compared with their nondisabled peers does

not appear as great as for white non-Hispanics with disabilities, as measured by group or organization participation (p. 187).

In the concluding chapter, the authors state the need to approach inclusion for people with disabilities holistically, but by this point, the reader is already convinced. The feedback effects between economic, political, and social inclusion, and how they play out through and for employment opportunities, have been convincingly presented, both subtly and explicitly. The insights of interviewees presented in conclusion amplify this view.

The demographic focus of college courses on economic/workplace inclusion or inequality is most often race, ethnicity, gender, and class, and increasingly LGBT. I would encourage adding this book to those curricula. It is written clearly, broad in scope, and objective in its presentation of the issues, making it a successful candidate for adoption onto course reading lists from the student-learning perspective and because of the ease with which I expect it will blend into existing course structures. Academic readers of *People with Disabilities* will find it hard to not be more sensitized to the many opportunities where experiences of people with disabilities should and can be included easily into college curriculum, be it in economics, history, business, or engineering.

In their succinct pages of text, Schur, Kruse, and Blanck have achieved their goal to “provide an overview of the economic, political, and social conditions of people with disabilities around the world and to discuss the barriers to and opportunities for greater inclusion” (p. 4). In prompting readers who are not necessarily scholars of disabilities to be more inclusive of disability perspectives within their own research agendas and teaching, they will have achieved even more.

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