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Introduction

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Over recent years there has been an unprecedented upsurge of interest in the general area of disability amongst social scientists in universities and colleges across the world. There are now 'disability studies' courses and specialist journals in the United States and Canada (Albrecht et al., 2001), Britain (Barton and Oliver 1997), and Australia and New Zealand (Sullivan and Muntford 1998). There are also networks of scholars studying disability in the Nordic countries (Tideman 1999) and throughout Europe (van Oorschot and Hvinden 2001). This has been accompanied by an increasingly expansive literature from a variety of perspectives. Recent examples include cultural studies (Mitchell and Snyder 2001), development studies (Stone 1999), geography (Gleeson 1999), history (Longmore and Umansky 2001), philosophy (Wendell 1996), social policy (Drake 1999), social psychology (Marks 1999) and sociology (Barnes et al., 1999). Perhaps inevitably, with this heightened interest a number of important challenges and debates have emerged which raise a number of important questions for all those interested in this newly emergent and increasingly important field of enquiry.

This Reader aims to provide an introduction to, and an overview of, these concerns and controversies. Although the field is increasingly interdisciplinary in nature, the emphasis is predominantly a sociological one, as it is our contention that sociological theories and insights, whether intentionally or otherwise, have and can continue to play a crucial role in the development of disability studies. Although the focus is primarily on theoretical innovation and advancement, the arguments presented here

have important political and policy implications for both disabled and non-disabled people.

Disability studies, like ethnic, women's, and gay and lesbian studies, has developed from a position of engagement and activism rather than one of detachment. Thus, as editors, we have sought contributors who could write from such a position. This is because it is our firm conviction that this enhances, rather than detracts from, the quality of their contributions, and that the dialogue within these chapters will provide yet further stimulus for the future development of disability studies.

Background

The increased interest in disability in the academy should not be surprising, given that there is now a growing recognition that it raises a number of important theoretical and empirical questions at both the individual and the structural level that are not easily answered with reference to established wisdom. Disability is both a common personal experience and a global phenomenon, with widespread economic, cultural and political implications for society as a whole. People with accredited impairments have existed since the dawn of time, and have had a presence in all societies.

Recent estimates suggest that there are around 8.2 million disabled people in Britain, 50 million in the European Union and 500 million worldwide. Moreover, these figures are set to rise dramatically over the coming decades, both in the rich, 'developed' nations of the minority world and in the poorer, 'developing' countries of the majority world (IDF 1998). In rich and poor countries alike, disabled people are amongst the poorest of the poor (Coleridge 1993: Stone 1999: WHO 2001), which raises a number of issues for politicians and policy makers at all levels and in all states.

Since its politicization in the 1960s by disability activists and disability organizations across the world, disability has become an increasingly important issue for politicians and policy makers at both the national and the international levels. Many national governments now have some form of anti-discrimination law or policy to secure the equal rights of disabled people. Early examples include Britain's 1970 Chronically Sick and Disabled Person's Act and the American 1973 Rehabilitation Act. Although relatively ineffective, both promoted improved environmental access and the development of more comprehensive services for disabled people. The latter included the historic Section 504 which prohibited discrimination against disabled people in federally funded programmes.

Government responsibility for securing equal rights for disabled people was formally recognized at the international level by the United Nations in 1981, the UN's International Year of Disabled People. The following year the UN General Assembly adopted by consensus a 'World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons', outlining a global strategy on the prevention of disability and the realization of the full potential of disabled people. The next ten years were designated 'The UN Decade of Disabled Persons'. Between 1990 and 1993 member states in close collaboration with international disabled peoples' organizations developed 'The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities'. There are twenty-two Standard Rules covering medical and community-based services and facilities. The Rules were formally adopted by the UN in 1993 (WHO, 2001).

The coming of disability studies

Prior to the 1980s, one or two notable exceptions aside, academic interest in disability was confined almost exclusively to conventional, individualistic medical explanations, and even where others had become involved, they tended to reproduce disability uncritically within these frameworks. A classic exemplar is found in the work of the influential American functionalist sociologist Talcott Parsons (1951), which centred on medicine as a mechanism of social integration and control. Since then various 'illness' perspectives have predominated in American sociology in particular. Initially, Parsons's (1951) interpretation of sickness as a social status and the rights and responsibilities associated with the 'sick role' exerted a considerable influence within sociology throughout the world. Subsequently, this work was supplemented by various interactionist and interpretive perspectives.

For Parsons sickness, whether short or long term, is a deviation from the norm. Consequently the sociological analysis of the social responses to disability became largely the preserve of sociologists interested in the reaction to and management of ascribed social deviance. One notable example is Erving Goffman's (1968) account of the interactions between the 'normal' and 'abnormal' entitled *Stigma*. During the following decade particular attention was paid to the social construction of 'mental illness'. Examples include Thomas Scheff (1966) and D. L. Rosenhan (1975). Around the same time a psychoanalyst, Thomas Szasz (1961), had denied the very existence of mental illness, the validity of psychiatry as a legitimate medical discipline, and the rehabilitation potential of psychiatric hospitals. For Szasz, the term 'mental illness' was a substitute

for a multitude of problems of living. The idea that mental illness and other forms of ascribed social deviance are little more than social constructs generated by an increasingly dominant, moralistic social order was given a further boost by the writings of the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1975, 1979). Foucault's work was particularly influential on the development of postmodern thinking in a variety of fields, including disability studies, during the 1990s, as we shall see in several of the contributions to this book.

However, within sociology interest in the general area of 'disability' increased during the late 1960s and 1970s with the publication in the United States of Robert Scott's *The Making of Blind Men* (1969) and Gary Albrecht's edited collection *The Sociology of Physical Disability and Rehabilitation* (1976) and in Britain of Mildred Blaxter's *The Meaning of Disability* (1976) and Peter Townsend's *Poverty in the United Kingdom* (1979). But whilst each of these studies drew attention to the various economic and social consequences of the ascription of a conventional 'disabled' identity, none made any serious attempt to question its ideological underpinnings: what has variously been called the 'individual', 'medical' or 'personal tragedy' model of disability. In sum, while this work recognized the significance of economic, social and cultural factors in the production of disability, the causes of the widespread economic and social deprivation encountered by disabled people were located within the individual and their impairment. The theoretical insights that had been applied to the concept of mental illness were never extended to address other impairments, particularly 'physical disability'.

The challenge to orthodox views came not from within the academy but from disabled people themselves. Although the origins of political activism amongst people with accredited impairments can be traced back to the nineteenth century (Campbell and Oliver 1996; Longmore and Umansky 2001), it escalated significantly during the 1960s and 1970s. Inspired by the political and social upheavals of the period, disabled people began to organize collectively in increasingly large numbers to protest against their incarceration in residential institutions, their poverty and the discrimination they encountered. The pattern is demonstrated across the United States, Canada and various countries throughout Europe. Notable early examples include the American Independent Living Movement and the Swedish Self Advocacy Movement, as well as the formation of The Disablement Income Group (DIG) and the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) in Britain (Campbell and Oliver 1996).

But the British experience is especially important, since it generated a radical and controversial new approach to theory and practice now

generally referred to as 'the social model of disability'. Here the activities of grass roots organizations controlled and run by disabled people, such as the UPIAS and the Liberation Network of People with Disabilities, are especially important. These and similar organizations provided the fertile ground in which disabled activists could explore and reconfigure the whole notion of disability. These 'organic intellectuals' (Gramsci 1971) produced an impressive body of work, the impact of which is only now being fully appreciated. Key texts include Paul Hunt's edited collection of disabled people's narratives entitled *Stigma: The Experience of Disability* (1966), UPIAS's *Fundamental Principles of Disability* (1976), Vic Finkelstein's *Attitudes and Disabled People* (1980), Alan Sutherland's *Disabled We Stand* (1981), Mike Oliver's *Social Work with Disabled People* (1983) and *The Politics of Disablement* (1990).

Drawing implicitly, if not explicitly, on both personal experience and sociological insights, this literature constitutes a direct challenge to conventional thinking and practice on disability. For example, although not a sociologist, Paul Hunt, a resident in a residential home for 'physically disabled people' during the 1950s and 1960s, 'read a lot to supplement his curtailed education' and was 'especially interested in the social and psychological aspects of disablement' (Hunt 1966: 144). Moreover, Finkelstein's early work is heavily influenced by the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (see Feuer 1969). As noted earlier, traditional approaches centred almost exclusively on individual limitations, whether real or imagined, as the principal cause of the multiple deprivations encountered by disabled people. By contrast, the social interpretation of disability argues that people with accredited or perceived impairments, regardless of cause, are disabled by society's failure to accommodate their needs.

This approach does not deny the significance of impairment in disabled people's lives, but concentrates instead on the various barriers, economic, political and social, constructed on top of impairment. Thus 'disability' is not a product of individual failings, but is socially created; explanations of its changing character are found in the organization and structures of society. Rather than identifying disability as an individual limitation, the social model identifies society as the problem, and looks to fundamental political and cultural changes to generate solutions.

Disability studies and the academy

None the less, although the emergence of the social model of disability provided the 'big idea' (Hasler 1993) for the mobilization of disabled

people across the UK during the 1980s and 1990s, it was slow to find acceptance in sociology departments in British universities. This is especially surprising given sociology's traditional focus on social inequality and divisions associated with social class, gender and race. Studies of disability have been typically situated within the context of medical sociology and the sociology of health and illness courses where interactionist and phenomenological perspectives have prevailed. These have documented the impact and meaning of the onset of specific acute and chronic illness. This has been accompanied by a largely atheoretical tradition of socio-medical research driven by practical medical and health service concerns. The outcome is an extensive literature that chronicles the extent and nature of chronic illness, its consequences for daily living, and its impact on social relationships, the sense of self and identity (Williams 1997).

Consequently, despite the sociological insights of social model thinking, Britain's first disability studies course was not developed within a sociology department or even within a conventional university setting. It was conceived and produced by an interdisciplinary team at the Open University (OU) in 1975. A key figure in the development of this course was a disabled South African clinical psychologist, Vic Finkelstein; he was also an anti-apartheid and disability activist, and a founder member of the UPIAS. The OU provided an appropriate setting for this new course, as its emergence signalled a radical new approach to university education. It began operations in 1971, and had no formal entry qualifications apart from being over 18, resident in the UK, and competent in English. Pioneering a variety of multi-media teaching strategies and distance learning techniques, the OU provided unprecedented opportunities for all those disadvantaged by Britain's education system, including disabled people.

The course attracted more than 1,200 students in its first year. These included professionals, voluntary workers and disabled people from all over the country. Entitled 'The Handicapped Person in the Community', its stated aim was to help students improve their 'professional and social skills in order to assist handicapped people to achieve *maximum autonomy*' (Finkelstein 1997: 41; emphasis added). From the outset the course was criticized for its 'sociological bias' (Finkelstein 1997: 46). It was updated twice before its abolition in 1994, and each time more and more disabled people were involved in the production of course materials. The final version of the programme was re-titled 'The Disabling Society', to reflect its wider content. Over the years the OU team generated a wealth of material, which provided the basis for the development of a whole host of disability studies courses and professional training schemes at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels in mainstream colleges

and universities across the UK. Notable examples include *Handicap in a Social World* edited by Anne Brechin and Penny Liddiard (1981) and *Disabling Barriers – Enabling Environments* edited by John Swain, Vic Finkelstein, Sally French and Mike Oliver (1993).

By way of contrast, disability was introduced on to the mainstream academic agenda in the United States and Canada in the 1970s. Again the link between disability activism and the academy was instrumental in this process. Disability rights advocates and academics concerned with disability issues came together at numerous conferences and discovered that they shared similar concerns. Several were both advocates and academics, 'much like the participants in numerous civil rights movements'. A major catalyst in bringing these two groups together was the 1977 'White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals', which attracted over 3,000 delegates. In the same year the first disability studies course was offered. It was in the area of medical sociology, and focused on the experience of living with a 'disability, a critical life experience which many persons avoid recognising' (Pfeiffer and Yoshida 1995: 476). The main tutor was a disabled person. In 1981 a disabled sociologist and the chairperson of the Medical Sociology Section of the American Sociology Association, Irving K. Zola, founded the *Disability Studies Quarterly* and co-founded the American-based Society for Disability Studies. In the same year twelve disability studies courses were being taught in American institutions. By 1986 the number had risen to 23 (Pfeiffer and Yoshida 1995).

As in the UK, these early activities generated a small but significant body of work. Examples include Frank Bowe's *Handicapping America* (1978) and Zola's *Missing Pieces: A Chronicle of Living with a Disability* (1982). These and other studies drew attention to the disabling tendencies of American rehabilitation programmes as well as in American society. However, this literature, along with American approaches generally, failed to recognize the significance of the distinction between impairment and disability that characterized the British social model approach. In keeping with the traditions of American pragmatism, the arguments for civil rights for disabled people were linked with a minority group approach, rather than providing a comprehensive theoretical explanation for disability and the exclusion of disabled people from the mainstream of everyday life. Moreover, it has recently been suggested that socio-political interpretations of disability have hitherto had relatively little impact on American sociology (Gordon and Rosenblum 2001).

However, over the last few years, a contrary and more radical perspective has emerged, championed by a small but vocal band of predominantly disabled scholars, many of whom are based in the humanities and

cultural studies fields, in universities in North America and Australasia. This has led to a growing demand for the development of a more critical, interdisciplinary field of enquiry more in keeping with the socio-political position associated with the social model approach (Rioux and Bach 1994; Davis 1995; Meekoshe and Dowse 1997; Linton 1998; Albrecht et al. 2001). These initiatives provide increasingly common ground between academics and researchers in the disability studies field, and signify a growing interest in the social-political approach pioneered by British writers. All of which has stimulated lively debates about the best ways forward for the future development of the social model of disability and the relations between disability activists and academics. It is these debates which form the starting point for the collection of papers that follow.

What is disability studies, and how is it reflected in this book?

In many ways this collection charts the changing nature of disability studies: that is the transition from a relatively straightforward demand by disabled people for a shift in emphasis away from the individual and on to the structural and cultural forces that shape their lives into an increasingly complex body of knowledge. For the originators of the OU course, disability studies concerned the 'study of disabled people's lifestyles and aspirations' (Finkelstein 1997: 37). As a consequence, the content of the OU course, and the few others that were developed from it in Britain during the 1980s, was concerned primarily with social policy concerns and the practicalities of coming to terms with a disabled lifestyle in a world designed almost exclusively for non-disabled living. The establishment in 1986 of the first international journal devoted exclusively to disability issues, *Disability, Handicap and Society*, renamed *Disability and Society* in 1993, by two of the co-editors of this book, Len Barton and Mike Oliver, provided an appropriate forum for the further development of a truly comprehensive 'disability theory'.

This was forthcoming in 1990 with the publication of Oliver's *The Politics of Disablement*. Drawing on a variety of influences including personal experience, the writings of disabled people such as Finkelstein and Hunt, and the sociological insights of Marx, Auguste Comte (Lenzer 1975) and Antonio Gramsci (1971) amongst others, the book provides a theoretical explanation of the materialist and ideological foundations upon which contemporary responses to disability are based. Generally associated with the social model of disability, this book has had a

considerable influence both within and without universities and colleges across the world.

As well as providing a much-needed theoretical dimension to the disability studies agenda, the book generated considerable debate amongst both activists and academics alike, not least concerning the role of non-disabled academics and previous studies of the experience of impairment. Other concerns have been expressed regarding the social model's apparent neglect of the experience of impairment, the body, and questions of difference in relation to gender, ethnicity, sexuality and social class. Equally important is the contention that the largely materialist interpretation of history generally associated with social model writings is overly simplistic. This is said to undermine the importance of cultural factors in the oppression of disabled people and to over-emphasize the roles of paid work and the disabled people's movement in the struggle for equality. More recently, questions have been raised regarding the social model's Anglo-American leanings and its potential inapplicability within a majority world context in terms of both policy and politics. All of which raises further issues regarding the social model's use value as a meaningful theoretical base upon which to conduct socio-logical research. It is these issues and concerns that underlie the chapters for this book.

In chapter 2 Gary Albrecht argues that the development of disability studies should be examined and understood in context. He discusses how American pragmatism and sociology influenced its development in the United States and directly or indirectly addresses a number of important questions. These include the contention that those involved in disability studies share a common discourse, that leaders and spokespeople in the field represent all disabled people, and that only disabled people can effectively understand disability and contribute to the development of the discipline. Other concerns include whether disability studies share a common history and intellectual tradition across countries and through-out history, and whether a disability studies perspective can generate an agreed agenda for health and welfare policy.

In response Albrecht argues that pragmatism had a profound influence on American thinking, social policy and world-view. When combined with the early development of American sociology – notably including survey research and the interactionism of the Chicago school – it pro-vided a broad framework and methodology for addressing disability issues. He also shows how the American Independent Living Movement exerted political pressure in the American context, and shaped disability studies as a field. He concludes by suggesting that disability studies in the

United States have been characterized by a historical insensibility and a disconcerting insularity. He maintains that a respectful dialogue between scholars, policy makers and activists might address these concerns.

A similar theme emerges in the third chapter, by Carol Thomas. She focuses on the reconceptualization of disability by mainly British writers. In her review of the emergence of disability studies as an academic discipline, she centres on various developments surrounding the social model. She maintains that in the early stages the flesh that was added to the bones of the model had a materialist cast. Here the roots of the socially engendered restrictions on activity experienced by people with impairments are sought in the social relations of the capitalist system of commodity production. Contemporary exclusion is located in the operation of socially created 'social barriers'. More recently, she argues, and as disability studies has gathered strength, other theoretical perspectives, much influenced by social constructionist thought, have also made their presence felt in disability studies.

The social model itself has been criticized and vigorously defended. Ensuing debates about disability have demanded an engagement with the significance of culture in the creation of disability and with the matter of impairment itself. The intersection of disability with other forms of oppression – gender, race, sexual orientation and to a lesser extent social class and age – has been placed on the agenda by disabled feminists and those who are of a more postmodernist persuasion. This has demanded that the lived experiences of categories of disabled people (men, women, straight, gay, and impairment-specific groups such as people with 'learning difficulties' or 'mental health' system users and survivors) be better understood, and, in a postmodernist sense, that these categories are themselves deconstructed because they are essentialist and discursively constructed.

She argues that debates within disability studies and between disability studies writers and those in other disciplines, and especially medical sociologists, are engines for the formulation of an even more sophisticated materialist sociology of disability. For Thomas this must encompass the further recognition and theorization of the psycho-emotional dimensions of disability: namely, those disablist practices that undermine the psychological and emotional well-being of people with impairments – what disabled activists have referred to as 'internalised oppression' (Rieser 1990).

Bill Hughes takes up the question of impairment in the fourth chapter. He argues that the sociology of the body offers an opportunity for drawing disability studies into mainstream sociology, but suggests that it has so far failed to do so. He maintains that the problem for the latter is

that the accusations of disablism are warranted, since it has ignored the question of disability. Conversely, the problem for disability studies is that it has all but cut itself off from the possibility of developing a meaningful sociology of impairment. In tracing the development of orthodox, 'medical' sociological approaches to the study of the body, he maintains that, despite the partial advances offered by labelling theory and Goffman's study *Stigma* (1968), sociology has reinforced the physician's view that disability is a sickness. It is the antithesis of the conception of disability as a corporeal essence provided by disability studies, as it emerged from the social model of disability, that makes sociology a truly valuable frame of reference for reflections on disability. However, the social model pushed the study of impairment to the fringes of disability studies, and it is only recently that it and the sociology of the body have combined to try to map out the case for a sociology of impairment.

Drawing on research that examines the multiple oppression encountered by disabled women from minority ethnic communities, Ayesha Vernon and John Swain remind us in chapter 5 that disabled people will not judge disability theory by its contribution to academic or research discourses, but ultimately by its role in initiating social change. It is in these terms that they argue that a consideration of social divisions needs to inform the development of disability theory. Again feminist and postmodern insights are pertinent: in particular, the recognition of the contradiction that women are simultaneously united through the imbalance of power relations between women and men in the economic and social structures of society, but divided through multiple social divisions. They argue that similar contradictions are relevant to an understanding of the oppression experienced by disabled people. They maintain that the challenges of addressing the contradictions between commonality and diversity are critical to the future development of disability theory. In order to theorize and promote the development of a meaningful inclusive society, the relationships between disability, ethnicity, sexuality, age and gender must be critically examined.

In the following chapter Anne Borsay draws our attention to the point that history is a missing piece of the jigsaw in disability studies. She argues that whilst the field has expanded from its origins in social theory and social policy to include politics, culture, leisure and the media, historical perspectives across the entire range of disabled people's experiences are virtually non-existent. This, she contends, is due to the incompatibilities between sociology and history. Hence, an evaluation of the historical models developed by social scientists is used to launch a social history of disability in which materialism and culturalism are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. A comprehensive historical

survey is not attempted. Instead, attention is centred on the interface between physical impairment, charity and medicine in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Demonstrating the usefulness of historical sources, moral and medical surveillance procedures and the ensuing resistance strategies are examined. The chapter concludes by exploring the place of the past in shaping present responses to, and the identities of, disabled people.

In chapter 7 Paul Abberley argues that if we are to explain disability as a form of social oppression, then we must develop an understanding of what society might look like if people with impairments are not to be disabled. This is necessary if we are to develop effective policies to combat social exclusion. To achieve this, he considers how two forms of classical social theory, one conservative and the other radical, address the relationship between work and social inclusion. He maintains that, despite their differences, they are similar in the sense that both imply the inevitability of social exclusion of some people with impairments in any possible society. He draws upon feminist approaches to provide a vision of a more inclusive society in which work is not regarded as the defining characteristic of full social inclusion. The practical application of such a view is the advocacy of a dual strategy that takes account of those who can work and valorizes the non-working lives for those who are unable to. This he relates to the economic and social upheavals of contemporary European society.

The next chapter by Phil Lee charts the development of political activity around the issue of disability, primarily, but not exclusively, within the United Kingdom over the last two decades. He shows that whilst the disabled people's movement has made considerable progress, not least in advancing the social model of disability and placing civil rights for disabled people firmly on the political agenda, real political gains have been quite limited. Furthermore, translating the social model into practical administrative procedures is likely to remain problematic. This is largely because the social fabric of the last third of the twentieth century has been transformed with the coming of postmodernity and the ensuing lurch to the right of Britain's political institutions. Lee suggests that rather than intensify the shift toward inclusivity, this has resulted in heightened social divisions. He continues with an assessment of whether there are grounds for optimism in four key areas: the environment, the world of work, anti-discrimination legislation and wider social policy developments. The chapter concludes with the contention that there are a number of political paradoxes that envelop the future politics of disability and the disabled people's movement that are likely to inhibit, rather than enhance, the prospect of further substantial political gains.

We stay in the realm of politics in chapter 9, by the American writer and disability activist Harlan Hahn. His analysis examines several different concepts that have previously been adopted as a basis for improving the status of disabled people, and explores innovative ideas and proposals that might achieve this objective in coming years. Although an effort is made to include comparative data, this investigation focuses primarily on a case study of changes in disability laws and programmes in the United States. The first section contains a brief history of disability policy, including the problems created by judicial resistance to anti-discrimination statutes such as the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act. An attempt is made to assess the strengths and weaknesses of proposals that stem from the emerging social model for research and advocacy on behalf of disabled people. The second section assesses the threats to the lives of disabled citizens posed by plans such as rationing health care, assisted suicide and other medical interventions founded, in part, on quasi-utilitarian constructs and on cost–value analysis. The final part investigates several possible innovations implied by the principle of empowerment. In particular, emphasis is given to the possibility of enhancing the strength of disabled citizens through permanent, systemic and institutional change in the policy-making process.

The tenth chapter, by Chris Holden and Peter Beresford, addresses the issues raised by a globalized political economy and ensuing debates within the discipline of social policy concerning the impact of changes in the world market on the welfare state. They take up the claim that there has been little attempt to relate the emergent discourses on globalization and post-industrial capitalism to those of the disabled peoples' movement and disability theorists. They contend that globalization impacts powerfully on the lives of disabled people, with reference to various globalized responses to disability and disabled people and their organizations. They postulate that, in turn, this holds out the potential for the generation of a meaningful challenge to the narrowly conceived economistic way in which globalization has often been presented and understood.

The chapter begins with a brief summary of some of the economic changes which have been associated with globalization and the different positions which have been taken on the significance of these within the political economy literature. These are juxtaposed with earlier economic developments and their implications for disability policy globally. The discussion then addresses the impact of globalization upon welfare policy, and considers the significance of these debates for disabled people and the welfare state. The authors argue that just as the last century witnessed the generation of a meaningful political analysis of the role

of industrial capitalism in the creation of disability, so this must now be extended to take account of the impact of globalization and post-industrial capitalism. It must address both national and international inequalities, as well as notions of welfare and welfare policy development.

The theme of globalization continues in the next chapter in which Marcia Rioux discusses the relationship between disability and the concept of human rights within an international context. She argues that the way governments allocate their resources reflects their interpretation of citizenship, the notion of rights and the role of the state. She suggests that the protection of social rights must be considered as a minimum standard of life and an entitlement that is fundamental to contemporary notions of social justice. She draws an important distinction between social and economic globalization. She draws our attention to the fact that the former is not so much a new idea but one that needs to be pursued with renewed vigour and clarity in the face of the latter. She argues that disabled people have never been included in the mainstream of social rights. Traditionally their issues have been relegated to social development, to charity, to dispensation, or to the determination of their assumed best interests. But economic liberalization and globalization have highlighted the extent to which some people are excluded. The denial of liberties and the restriction of participation in society, those fundamental freedoms that governments promise their citizens in democracies, must also be protected for those with inpairments.

Chapter 12 by Geof Mercer considers the reformulation of disability-related research since the coming of the social model of disability. He provides a broad overview of the growing critique of established ways of researching disability in the latter half of the twentieth century from disabled people and their organizations. The starting point is the re-focusing of studies of disability away from the ways in which individual limitations contribute to the exclusion of disabled people from everyday social activities, and towards the ways in which environmental and cultural barriers effectively disable people with impairments. He shows how the coming of the social model stimulated the nurturing of a new research paradigm that is informed by similar emancipatory intentions. A review of key issues pertaining to its development is provided with particular reference to the British literature.

The discussion is located within competing paradigms of social inquiry. Drawing on the work of critical theorists, Mercer explores the emancipatory claims of this new approach to researching disability issues. In contrast to the more recent, overly pessimistic suggestion that emancipatory disability research might prove to be nothing more or less

than an 'impossible dream' (Oliver 1999) he argues that disability researchers are engaged in the advancement of both theory and practice. He concludes by suggesting that in order to sustain this momentum, disability researchers must devote far more attention to established methodological considerations and concerns.

In the concluding chapter we begin by arguing that, given the increasing interest in disability studies within the academy, it is essential that academics maintain strong links with disabled people and their organizations. We examine the ways in which these interactions are currently being developed. We argue that further interaction is essential if we are to cultivate a more comprehensive understanding of the process and experience of disability and the ongoing exclusion of disabled people from the mainstream of everyday life. Finally, we examine some of the encroaching economic and political forces that are likely to influence the shaping of this hitherto mutually beneficial interface.

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