

Section 1: Where it all began: the disability movement

Disability and society, 2016

Anne Revillard

Learning objectives/key points

- *Connections between the disability movement and the development of disability studies as a field of theory and inquiry*
 - Theoretical link between the 2 (paradigm shift, strategic role of the production of knowledge)
 - Examples of how academic settings concretely served as breeding ground for protest
- *Main common features of the disability movement in the UK and the US, and main differences in the way they address disability (social oppression, civil rights)*
 - Key actors and issues
 - Repertoire of collective action: legal mobilization, street protest and direct action, service provision

Outline (1/2)

Disability studies in the context of the disability movement

A paradigm shift promoted by a new social movement

The connection to activism and the emergence of social science research on inequalities

The main organizations of the disability movement in the UK and the US

The disability movement in the UK

The disability movement in the US

The disability movement internationally

The emergence of disability protest

Obstacles to mobilizing

The height of disability activism, at a time of “abeyance” for other social movements

Opposition to institutionalization as a leverage for protest

Academic settings as breeding grounds for protest

Outline (2/2)

Issues and Rights claims

A diverse repertoire of collective action

Street protest and strategic litigation

Service provision

The conflict with older disability organizations

A conflict over the representation of disability

A conflict about disability policy and life options for people with disabilities

A conflict about power and leadership within the movement

Competing for funding

Disability studies in the context of the disability movement

- A paradigm shift promoted by a new social movement
- The connection to activism, a broader feature of the emergence of social science research on inequalities

Main organizations of the disability movement in the UK

- Disablement income group (1965)
- Union of the physically impaired against segregation (UPIAS, 1972) (Paul Hunt, Vic Finkelstein)
- British council of organisations of disabled people (BCODP, 1982) → UK Disabled people's council (UKDPC)
- Liberation network of disabled people (created by Micheline Mason in 1979)
- Single-impairment groups
- Local centres for independent living

Main organizations of the disability movement in the US

- Centers for independent living (CIL): first one created by Ed Roberts in Berkeley in 1972
- Disabled in Action (DIA, created by Judith Heumann in 1970)
- Disability rights education and defense fund 1979
- ADAPT 1983 (American disabled for accessible public transit)
→ ADAPT 1990 (American disabled attendant programs today)
- Justice for all (JFA) 1995

The disability movement internationally

- 1981 Rehabilitation international (RI) conference in Winnipeg → 200 disabled delegates formed Disabled people's International (DPI)
- International level activism notably led to adoption of the UN CRPD in 2006 (next section)
- Important transnational activism (Heyer, 2015)

The emergence of disability protest

Obstacles to mobilizing

- Medical model: disability as a functional limitation to be overcome individually → lack of identification, negative identity
- Historical social status of DP as passive victims
- Logistical obstacles: access to transportation and communication
- Isolation
- Diversity of the group (types of impairment, intersection with other social inequalities)

The emergence of disability protest

Structural factors

- DP felt left behind the rest of the « affluent society » of the 1960s (Oliver & Campbell 1996)
- Context of other new social movements, and notably influence of civil rights movement in the US (Heyer, 2015)

The emergence of disability protest

Opposition to institutionalization as a leverage for protest

- UK: Paul Hunt's letter to *The Guardian* in 1972

Severely physically handicapped people find themselves in isolated, unsuitable institutions, where their views are ignored and they are subject to authoritarian and often cruel regimes.

I am proposing the formulation of a consumer group to put forward nationally the views of actual and potential residents of these successors to the workhouse.

(Guardian, 20 September 1972)

→ Creation of UPIAS 1972

- US: Wade Blank and the creation of ADAPT in 1983

The emergence of disability protest

Academic settings as breeding grounds for protest

- General influence of student activism
- Experience of campus life by disabled students
 - Ed Roberts, the Disabled students program, the Rolling Quads and the creation of the first center for independent living in Berkeley
 - James Cherry, the fight for campus accessibility and accommodation, and the enforcement of section 504

Issues and rights claims

Main areas of mobilization

- De-institutionalization and access to independent living
- Access to education
- Access to employment and non-discrimination
- Accessibility of transportation and public spaces
- Living income/social rights

An extension of the agenda of previous disability organizations (rehabilitation, special education, institutionalization)

Rights framing

A diverse repertoire of collective action

- Street protest and strategic litigation: the example of the implementation of section 504

Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund, “The power of 504”

<https://youtu.be/52XqupjXHIM>

- Service provision: the Centers for Independent Living

Conflict with older disability organizations

- Representation of disability
- Disability policy and life options for PWDs
- Power and leadership within the movement
- Competing for funding

References

- Barnes, C. (2002). Introduction: Disability, policy and politics. *Policy and Politics*, 30(3), 311–318.
- Barnes, C. (2007). Disability, Higher Education and the Inclusive Society. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 28(1), 135–145.
- Barnes, C., & Mercer, G. (2005). Disability, work, and welfare: challenging the social exclusion of disabled people. *Work, Employment & Society*, 19(3), 527–545.
- Campbell, J., & Oliver, M. (1996). *Disability politics: Understanding our past, changing our future*. London: Routledge.
- DeJong, G. (1979). Independent Living: from social movement to analytic paradigm. *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*, (60), 435–446.
- Fleischer, D. Z., & Zames, F. (2011). *The disability rights movement: From charity to confrontation*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Heyer, K. (2007). A disability lens on sociolegal research: reading “Rights of inclusion” from a disability studies perspective. *Law & Social Inquiry*, 32(1), 261–293.
- Heyer, K. (2015). *Rights enabled: the disability revolution, from the US, to Germany and Japan, to the United Nations*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Kimberlin, S. E. (2009). Political Science Theory and Disability. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 19(1), 26–43.
- Oliver, M., & Barnes, C. (2012). *The new politics of disablement*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Scotch, R. K. (2001). *From Good Will to Civil Rights: Transforming Federal Disability Policy*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Shapiro, J. (1993). *No Pity: People with Disabilities Forging a New Civil Rights Movement*. New York: Times Books.
- Taylor, V. (1989). Social movement continuity : the women’s movement in abeyance. *American Sociological Review*, 54, 761–775.
- Vanhala, L. (2011). *Making Rights a Reality? Disability Rights Activists and Legal Mobilization*. New York: Cambridge University Press.