The capability approach and disability: constraints on disabled people’s participation

Tania Burchardt
Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion
London School of Economics

City University London Disability and Social Inclusion seminar
Wednesday 25th February 2015
Melanie

- 18-year old, volunteers at youth centre – under threat of closure
- Would like to ‘go to places’
- Not in formal education, employment or training (left school at 16 with few qualifications)
- Was bullied as a child and suffers from low self esteem
- Wheelchair user and needs some personal assistance
- Lives with her mother who has been her carer but who is now herself unwell
Overview

• Key features of the social model of disability
• Synergies with the capability approach
• Life Opportunities Survey: social model design
• Restrictions on participation in leisure and cultural activities
• [Types of restriction for disabled and non-disabled people]
• Characteristics associated with greater restriction for disabled and non-disabled people
• How the capability approach can help the social model and vice versa
Social model (contrast individual or medical model)

- Impairment: condition of body or mind
- Disability: restricted participation
  - ‘...the outcome of an oppressive relationship between people with impairments and the rest of society’ (Finkelstein, 1980)
  - arises from interaction between an individual’s impairment and the social, economic and physical environment
- Change society to meet the individual’s needs
- A matter of social justice not charity
- Disabled people as the experts
- Importance of ‘choice and control’
Capability approach (contrast utilitarianism and resource-based conceptions of social justice)

• ...to evaluate equality, well-being or social justice
• Subjective well-being can be misleading
  • conditioned expectations
• Income is a means not an end
  • differing rates of converting income into well-being
  • some valuable ‘ends’ not well captured by income
• Instead: capability set
  ➢ your “real” or “substantive” freedom
  ➢ all the things you are able to be and do
  ➢ depends on your social, economic and physical environment as well as on your own characteristics
Equality Measurement Framework: building blocks

**Inequality of substantive freedom** (inequality in the central and valuable things in life that people can do and be)

3 aspects

(i) outcomes (participation)

(ii) process (dignity and respect; discrimination)

(iii) autonomy (choice and control)

**10 domains**

D1  Life
D2  Physical security
D3  Health
D4  Education
D5  Standard of living
D6  Productive and valued activities
D7  Participation, influence and voice
D8  Individual, family and social life
D9  Identity, expression and self-respect
D10 Legal security

**Inequality by 6 characteristics** (gender including transgender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion/belief ...)


Synergies

• Disadvantage is produced by an interaction between an individual and his/her environment
• Autonomy (choice and control) is crucial
• Discrimination (how you are treated by others) matters in its own right
• Defining priorities should be a participatory process
Life Opportunities Survey

- Nationally representative, longitudinal survey of disabled and non-disabled people in GB
- Run by ONS for Office for Disability Issues in Department for Work and Pensions
- Full Wave 1 data (2009 and 2010); wave 2 data now available
- Face-to-face interviews with 36,160 respondents aged 16+
- Innovations:
  - reference group of 60 disabled people involved at all stages of design
  - social model definition of disability (impairment; barriers to participation)
  - maximised accessibility of survey itself
Leisure and cultural activities

• Going on holiday
• Visiting friends
• Spending time with family
• Playing sport
• Charitable or voluntary work
• Going to a museum or place of historic interest (country home, castle etc)
• Going to the theatre, cinema or other arts activity
• Going to the library or archive
People with impairments are less likely to want to participate in leisure activities than people without impairments (except youngest and oldest).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Number of Activities (No impairments)</th>
<th>Number of Activities (Has impairment(s))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 16-24</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 25-34</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 35-44</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 45-54</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 55-64</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 65-74</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 75-84</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 85 plus</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pale bars: no sig diff at 95% level
People with impairments are less likely to be interested in all these activities (controlling for age)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>% of whole sample who want to do this</th>
<th>Percentage point difference for people with impairments, controlling for age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Going on holiday</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>- 2.3 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spending time with family</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>- 4.0 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting friends</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>- 5.3 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre, cinema or arts</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>- 4.4 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museum or place of historic interest</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>- 3.4 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing sport</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>- 6.8 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary work</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>- 2.5 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>- 1.9 ***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** statistically significant at 99% level
...but impairment no longer significant after controlling for education, social class and household income

**Association between number of activities respondent would like to do and his/her characteristics**

Number of activities for reference group: 4.5

Change in # activities

Impairment | Sex | Ethnic group | Age group | Partner | Social class | Highest qualification | Income
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---
No impairment | Women | Men | White | Mixed | Asian or Asian British | Black or Black British | Chinese or Other group
Has impairment(s) | | | | | | | |
Age 16-24 | Age 25-34 | Age 35-44 | Age 45-54 | Age 55-64 | Age 65-74 | Age 75-84 | Age 85+
No partner | Has partner | Professional or managerial | Intermediate | Routine or manual | Never worked | Foreign or Other quals | Lower or none | A-level or equivalent | Degree or higher | Hh gross income pw (log)
Restrictions

(1) Too busy/not enough time  
(14) Caring responsibilities
(2) Too expensive  
(6) Lack of availability
(3) No-one to go with  
(4) Fear of crime  
(5) Fear of crowds
(7) Lack of help or assistance  
(8) A health condition, illness or impairment  
(9) A disability
(11) Difficulty with transport  
(12) Difficulty getting into buildings  
(13) Difficulty using facilities
(10) Attitudes of other people  
(15) Feel that I am not welcome
(17) Other

Other commitments
- Cost / availability
- Loneliness / fear
- Impairment / access-related
- Other people’s attitudes
Percent restricted, by type of activity and impairment status

Ordered from largest to smallest percentage difference in restriction between impaired and non-impaired groups.
Restriction in leisure activities: change in probability of 'being restricted' associated with each characteristic, holding other characteristics constant

Average predicted probability 0.81
Types of restriction, by impairment status

% of those restricted who report this restriction

- Cost / availability
- Impairment / access-related
- Other commitments
- Loneliness / fear
- Other people's attitudes
- Other

No impairment
Has impairment

No impairment

Has impairment
Back to Melanie

• She can’t ‘go to places’ because:
  o she can’t afford it
  o the places and transport aren’t wheelchair accessible
  o she has to look after her mum
  o no-one is available to go with her
  o she fears she will be laughed at
  o the youth centre that organises trips is being shut down

➤ Limited “real freedom” (capability set)

➤ Impairment-related restrictions are a special case of a wider set of problems
Complementary frameworks

• Capability approach enables us to conceptualise social model in a more comprehensive framework
• Makes sense of shared and distinctive aspects of disability as a form of disadvantage

• Social model is grounded in lived experience
• Reflects struggles of disabled people for recognition of their entitlements over several decades