

Disability seminar MECS1000

We will begin the seminar by asking each other questions about disability. Once you have noted a few ideas down in your current group, 2 people will be asked to move to the next table in a clockwise direction to share the ideas that different groups came up with –until those two people are back with their original group.

What comes to mind when you think of disability?	What kind of media representations can you think of in relation to disability?

Extract: Reading from Ellis, K. & Goggin, G. (2015) *Disability and the Media*. London, Palgrave.

‘Disability on television allows us to reflect on the ways a particular era or culture value their disabled members’ (Ellis and Goggin, 2015: p.86). What kind of things tended to be highlighted in the discussions you have just had regarding representations of disabilities in the media? Were there stereotypes present at all (if so, give details)

Do you think that the shorthand of disability for evil ((Ellis and Goggin, 2015: p.86) is still present in contemporary films and television programmes?

Ellis and Goggin, (2015: p.90) note that ‘a common vision of disability – that it is tragic, inspirational, or an overcoming story – dominates television and our social understandings of what disability is.’ See if you can find a representation to fit each of these categories – which could be from news, film, television, documentary etc.

Some examples: <https://youtu.be/gT9-VNOTJa4> (2.18 mins) and clips from <https://youtu.be/RuS-e-5oOiU> (3.39 mins) <https://youtu.be/B03jduD9N5o> (Will show a section of this short video) I am sure you can think of other examples.

A tragic story	An inspirational Story	An overcoming story

What are the implications of the things we have been discussing in relation to disabilities?

Implication 1: _____

Implication 2: _____

Implication 3: _____

Martin, D. (2016) Britain’s bill for disability benefits has soared from £2billion in today’s money after WW2 to £37 billion a year now. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4066706/Britain-s-bill-disability-benefits-soared-2billion-today-s-money-WW2-37billion-year-now.html> [Accessed 7th November 2017].

Britain's disability benefits bill has soared 18-fold in real terms since the War, a study has revealed.

Research by the Institute for Economic Affairs think tank found that the amount the UK spends on handouts for the disabled has ballooned from £2billion in 1948 to £37million now, in today's prices.

This is despite the fact that the nation's health has improved dramatically since the Welfare State was established, with life expectancy rising from 68 to 81.

They said the huge sum - claimed by 5million people - could be brought down if more disabled people were helped to get into work. At present, only half have a job.

It said that anti-discrimination legislation and job protection for the disabled benefit those already in work more and therefore make it harder for unemployed disabled people to get a job - meaning their health deteriorates.

The IEA argued that one way to bring down the bill would be to allow people to 'opt out' of contributions to the main disability benefit and use the money to pay for private disability insurance instead.

Allowing opt-outs from the contributory Employment and Support Allowance would create a system of private insurers funding services to help individuals rehabilitate and reintegrate into the labour market where possible, and income replacement where not.

The think tank also called for the decentralisation of the disability benefit system, with programmes delegated to the local level and funded through a mixture of local taxation and central government grants.

This would allow local areas to decide whether and how to outsource programmes to support disabled people in finding employment, creating a wider variety of approaches, the report said.

The IEA blamed 'extremely low' rates of employment among the disabled, more than half of whom are not in work. Its report said that the current disability support system is too complex, particularly when assessing disability status and an individual's capacity for work.

Individuals can find it difficult to work out how their disability will affect their ability to do a particular job, and may be reluctant to take up employment because of the lengthy process of reapplying for benefits, it said.

The IEA described anti-discrimination legislation and job protection for the disabled as a 'double-edged sword' as it 'benefits those inside the labour market at the expense of those outside'.

Decentralising the system would allow experimentation with a wider range of different schemes for helping the disabled into work, with solutions emerging from the process of trial and error, said the think tank.

The IEA's head of health and welfare Kristian Niemietz said: 'Despite huge improvements in health, more and more people qualify for disability-related benefits.

'And with less than half of disabled people in work, this is a worrying state of affairs given that employment can hugely benefit them both in terms of their health and income.

'While it is still unclear what kind of policy will best achieve this, decentralisation and involving independent insurers would facilitate more policy experimentation to identify the best way of getting the disabled back into work, while freeing up resources to provide intensive support for those most in need.'

Questions:

1. This article is from the Daily Mail online. Look up statistics to find out how popular this website is (if you are not sure what to type into a search engine then use 'statistics for readers of daily mail online.').
2. What kind of discourses are present in the article? What discourses dominate?
3. What are the implications of these discourses (particularly in relation to the online readership)?

Watch the documentary <https://youtu.be/xqeKiUJavTg> (start at 1 minute 30 seconds: 10 mins full video)

1. What different responses does Cerri get in the clip? Why do you think these arise?

2. Are there differences in how people respond to hidden disabilities?

3. Are some disabilities treated less seriously than others?
