

International Journal of Disability and Social Justice

Introduction and Aspiration

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I. Introduction

It is with excitement and hope that we put fingers to keyboards to write this editorial for the inaugural issue of the *International Journal of Disability and Social Justice* (IJDSJ). As with any new academic journal, the first editorial provides a valuable space in which to introduce the publication, its focus, ethics and aspirations. Before embarking on such explanations, however, we want to make clear that the IJDSJ has been brought to life by an international, interdisciplinary collective. Some sense of this is conveyed by the composition of our Editorial Board (see www.ijdsj.online/editors).

Helen Keller is reported to have once said: ‘Alone we can do so little; together we can do much’ (Bodden, 2016, p.80). This perfectly captures the motivation behind this Journal – an innovative project that seeks to unite and support an international community of researchers and research-users who seek to maximise the potential of research to enhance social justice for disabled people.

Our publisher, Pluto Journals, has been critical to this venture. We are grateful to the Pluto Journals team for the imagination and effort they have invested in the pursuit of a publishing model that allows readers to access IJDSJ articles without having to pay (open access) and without imposing burdensome fees on authors or their organisations. This positions this Journal as part of a wider Open Science movement. It reflects our commitment to addressing the unequal and uneven distribution of knowledge and ensuring that science is accessible to the public. The rationale behind Open Science is debated, but for us it rests upon an understanding that scientific knowledge is the product of social collaboration and, as such, it should be widely shared and used for public benefit.

We have approached the writing of this editorial in the spirit of the Journal – *collaboratively*. We refer to the Journal’s policies, which have been informed and shaped by valuable discussions with and contributions from the IJDSJ’s Executive

Editors and broader Editorial Board. From the moment the Journal first appeared on social media, our followers have been an important part of our Community. They have been our ‘critical friends’ – making suggestions, giving us feedback and letting us know where, when and how we could *do better*. They have offered advice and assistance. For example, the ‘early-stage feedback’ opportunity offered by the IJDSJ was suggested by a Twitter follower and we were pleased to implement this idea. On average, we now receive one request each month for feedback on initial ideas for articles and are happy to receive more.

Recently, as part of the preparation for this editorial, we invited our social media followers to let us know their thoughts on the concept of social justice and social justice for disabled people in particular. This was an invitation to feed into our thinking about this editorial. It was not rigorous research and we do not present it as such. Nevertheless, for interested readers, Appendix 1 provides further information regarding the questions we asked and respondent characteristics. The views expressed in this consultation are discussed in Section 2.3 below.

The remainder of this editorial is divided into four sections. In Section 2 we consider the focus and scope of the IJDSJ’s subject matter. In Section 3 we reflect upon the Journal’s target audience. In Section 4 we set out the key principles guiding the operation of the IJDSJ. In Section 5, we discuss the cover artwork for the Journal, explain the thinking behind it and introduce the illustrator. Finally, in Section 6 we introduce the pieces included in this first issue of the IJDSJ and explain how they are excellent examples of some of the types of article and book review that we want to encourage and to publish.

2. What the Journal Is About: The IJDSJ’s Subject Matter

At one level – the most obvious – the subject matter of this Journal is of course given in its title. Three particular elements of this title deserve attention – ‘disability’, ‘social justice’ and ‘international’ – and in sub-sections 2.2–2.4 we offer our opening thoughts on each, including drawing upon the findings from our social media consultation. In section 2.1, however, we locate this Journal in Disability Studies.

Before moving forward with this discussion, we want to note that we approach this articulation of the Journal’s subject matter with some trepidation. Whatever we write, we fear that it will be considered as defining the focus of this new publication. This is far from our intention. We are keen to avoid setting out the Journal’s subject matter in a way that may become restrictive or limiting. It is important that the IJDSJ has a sufficiently distinct focus. This will help ensure an appropriate degree of coherence and cohesion amongst articles. Yet we do not want the focus to be so distinct that it curtails the range of issues assumed to be relevant to this publication. We emphasise that the IJDSJ welcomes all perspectives/methodologies that advance our knowledge and understanding of relevant issues. We do not expect or demand that authors submitting to the Journal share our personal views on any issue or debate.

2.1 A Disability Studies Journal

Of course, when we employ the term ‘Disability Studies’, there will be readers who ask, ‘are you not already narrowing the subject matter of the Journal by identifying it with Disability Studies?’ In one sense, our answer has to be in the affirmative. The IJDSJ is, indeed, a Disability Studies journal. But what is Disability Studies? This is a thorny question that we cannot hope properly to address here. We recognise that there are differences of opinion on this matter. For example, the past ten years has seen a growth in ‘Critical Disability Studies’. The latter’s advocates often argue that this is something new, representing a break with/from Disability Studies. Whether we agree or disagree with this argument is irrelevant. The IJDSJ will adopt a determinately ecumenical approach – viewing Disability Studies as an ‘umbrella term’. This is not about sitting on the fence. It is about choosing to embrace diversity of opinion. It is also about recognising that, rather like couples who prefer to ‘live apart together’, it is often the case that these alternative fields or ‘sub-fields’ (depending on your view) retain intimate relations with each other whilst living at different addresses. To extend this metaphor, sometimes these fields would like to live together but have not yet worked out how to ‘make it work’; at other times and for various reasons, they prefer to live apart. We acknowledge and respect this.

At the IJDSJ we thus welcome authors from *any discipline* who identify with Disability Studies, Critical Disability Studies, Ability Studies and Studies in Ableism. We understand Disability Legal Studies, Literary and Cultural Disability Studies, Disability Studies in Education and Inclusive Design to be encompassed under the ‘umbrella’ of Disability Studies. We recognise the connections between Disability Studies and allied fields, including Deaf Studies, Mad Studies, Fat Studies and Critical Autism Studies and welcome work in/from these fields. We are interested in and supportive of work that seeks to reassess or work across traditional divides, for example between the Sociology of Health and Illness and Disability Studies; or between the Sociology of the Body and Disability Studies. We welcome articles that draw *into* Disability Studies perspectives from other fields and present readers with new ways of thinking about disability or doing critical research in this area. We hope to receive articles that take Disability Studies perspectives ‘out’ into other fields and demonstrate the relevance and positive, disruptive potential of Disability Studies knowledge, concepts and methodologies.

We recognise that disability exists at an intersection (a nexus) with ‘everything else’ – all other aspects of our lives and identities, including oppressions. As Lorde (2007, p.138) famously put it: ‘There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives’; and as Barnes (1996a, p.xii) once remarked:

The politics of disablement is about far more than disabled people; it is about challenging oppression in all its forms [...] Like racism, sexism, heterosexism and all other forms of oppression, it is a human creation. It is impossible, therefore, to confront one type of oppression without confronting them all and, of course, the cultural values that created and sustain them.

We want to celebrate the diversity of perspectives in our field whilst simultaneously recognising the issues around/upon which we agree and unite. What unites us, we suggest, is a:

- concern with understanding the ways in which disabled people are devalued and discriminated against, marginalised and oppressed;
- desire to move away from, or even, as Goodley (2014, p.6) puts it, to provide an ‘antidote’ to the medicalisation and individualisation of disability;
- recognition of the complex, intersectional nature of oppression;
- resolution to committing research as an act of resistance and solidarity, involving engagement in a form of critique that does not consist merely in saying that things are not good the way they are – though we do and will say this, often – but instead ‘consists in seeing on just what type of assumptions, of familiar notions, of established and unexamined ways of thinking the accepted practices are based... To do criticism is to make harder those acts which are now too easy’ (Foucault, 2000, p.456).

We suggest that contemporary Disability Studies has a dual focus. It is concerned with exposing, analysing and critiquing practices of *disablism* – the exclusion of and discrimination against people with physical, sensory and cognitive impairments, who are neurodivergent or have personal experience of mental distress. It also seeks to understand the underlying processes which result in disablism. Not everyone agrees about these processes – what they are or how they are best articulated. But for an increasing number of people in Disability Studies, getting to grips with them involves critical examination of processes of *ableism* (Campbell, 2009; Wolbring, 2008). To interrogate ableism involves an examination of a host of psychological, social, economic, political, cultural and technological conditions, policy and legal frameworks and professional practices that privilege normative ways of living and being; assume and promote an idealised notion of able-bodiedness; value certain forms of personhood and psychological health *more than others*; organise social environments around normative citizens; create institutional bias towards (mythical) autonomous and independent bodies; and feed into and from global(ising) capitalism. These processes not only rely upon and reinforce dis/ability and un/healthy divides, they also draw upon a host of discourses associated with whiteness, westernism, nationalism, consumerism, masculinity, heteronormativity, cisgenderism, ageism, adultism and idealised notions of independence, resilience, entrepreneurship, competitiveness, productivity and responsibility (to name but a few).*1

None of what we have written here is intended to *define or delineate* the subject matter of the IJDSJ now and for all time. Disability Studies has evolved, is evolving and will no doubt continue to evolve. On a personal note and as an example, we are keen to see more attention being given to work that explores resistance practices and enabling social innovation(s). Exposing critiquing injustice will continue to be vital; but so too is finding positive ways forward.

Since Disability Studies is an evolving field, we – as a community – would perhaps do well to keep in mind another of Foucault’s (2002, p.19) comments: ‘Do not ask

who I am and do not ask me to remain the same'. Determining that our 'papers are in order' is, he reminds us, the activity of bureaucrats and the police. We do not want to 'become' those bureaucrats and we do not want to start 'policing' Disability Studies. We encourage others to adopt a similar position.

The only thing that we do seek to avoid is publishing content that reviewers and Executive Editors consider fails to recognise or critique ableism, or that they believe, *in any other way*, perpetuates prejudice and discrimination against, or the marginalisation and exclusion of disabled people. The IJDSJ expects that authors will respect the inherent dignity and worth and the equal and inalienable rights of disabled people. We will strive to ensure that we adopt a highly reflective and reflexive approach, however, so that this desire to 'avoid' does not prevent people swimming against the tide of accepted opinion or asking challenging, even uncomfortable, questions that invite or provoke readers to think anew. Should authors be uncertain how to achieve the latter in a careful, ethically defensible manner, they are invited to contact the Editorial Executive, who will be happy to discuss. They, in turn, may invite members of the Editorial Board to join such discussions to help mitigate against group-think.

2.2 Disability

Some might say that a journal with 'disability' in the title ought to be able to define that term. We certainly could offer *a* definition, our personal favourite – but this would inevitably be shaped by myriad factors, including the national context in which we work, our political commitments and our experiences. There is no universally agreed definition – more accurately *ontology* – of disability. Flowing from this, there is no universally agreed 'language' of disability. Understandings and terminology vary according to philosophical or political perspectives, cultural contexts, geographies and linguistic possibilities. For this reason, we will not be imposing any particular definition, language or approach on authors submitting to IJDSJ.

We do, however, encourage authors to consider and be aware of the 'non-definition-definition' of disability provided within the Preamble (point 5) to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD 2007):

Recognizing that disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

We make this suggestion because, during the negotiations of the convention, disabled people's organisations from around the world were actively involved in providing comments and perspectives, in the spirit of 'nothing about us without us'. Further, because it:

- (a) reflects a widespread belief/agreement that disability is about more than individual pathology or 'deficit';
- (b) recognises the dual nature of disability – that disability is neither purely social, nor purely a matter of impairment;

- (c) *emphasises the role of attitudinal and environmental barriers in shaping the lives and experiences of disabled people;*
- (d) *indicates that disability is a 'relational' or 'interactional' concept;*
- (e) *recognises that disability is an 'evolving concept'.*

We know that not everyone in Disability Studies or in the wider disability 'sector' will agree with all these points. We draw the reader's attention, however, to point (e) in particular. Just as Disability Studies is constantly evolving, so is our understanding of disability. This means that there will be disagreements along the way. But, as Ghandi is said to have proclaimed (Johnson, 2003, p.117), we need to cultivate the art of disagreement: 'Honest disagreement is often a good sign of progress'.

We do, however, expect submissions to be thoughtful about their use of language, culturally sensitive and cognisant of current debates and preferences of relevant groups, for example in relation to person-first or social model of disability language. Whatever approach authors choose, we ask that they explain their decision. We have chosen to use the term 'disabled people' throughout this editorial. We do so aware that many readers will prefer 'people first' language (e.g. 'persons with disabilities') and conscious of the different histories and politics associated with each term. Our explanation for our use of 'disabled people' is as follows: we are UK-based academics and 'disabled people' is the preferred term of the UK disabled people's movement. Further, this language is aligned with the social model of disability, which we recognise for its political utility (Lawson and Beckett, 2021). We ask of authors no more than this – *that they include similar statements/explanations.*

2.3 Social Justice

It is clear that the concept of 'social justice' is woven into the fabric of Disability Studies. It is present in some of the earliest writings associated with this field. For example, in his preface to Paul Hunt's seminal text *Stigma: The Experience of Disability*, Townsend (1966) remarks that Hunt's work is a call for social justice. During the 1980s and into the early 1990s, as Disability Studies became established and recognised, the concept of social justice appeared regularly in articles about disability and independent living, educational inequalities and social work practice. A fascinating study by Carnes (1982) explored how social justice was being fought for by disabled people and their organisations in England and Sweden, highlighting the important role of 'handicapped power', or what we might now term disabled people's *agency* (an excellent example of how the language of disability is constantly evolving). From the 1990s onwards, social justice became one of the 'Key Terms' in Disability Studies. Even the most cursory search in leading journals in the field results in many articles referencing the term. (We looked at just four well-established journals in this field and found over 1,000 articles referring to and engaging with this concept.) Inclusive education, labour-market inclusion, welfare reform, social care, access to healthcare, assistive technology, inclusive design and disability-representation (to name but a few) have been positioned/presented as social justice issues. The subjectivities, experiences and struggles

of disabled people who are women and/or members of Black, indigenous or LGBTQ+ communities (and combinations of any/all) has and continues to be considered through the lens of social justice.

Why is the concept of social justice so appealing or useful? Those of a more cynical disposition than us might argue that 'social justice' is a good example of what the philosopher Cranston (1971, p.18) termed a 'hurrah word' – a virtuous phrase, a 'smiling word', that people 'like to like' and find difficult to oppose, since its opposite is something so repugnant ('injustice' is clearly a 'boo-word'). For sure, social justice is an example (like 'freedom') of an 'incompletely descriptive' term. To say that a situation or outcome is 'socially just' is incompletely intelligible unless further information is also provided, i.e., in what sense? But we suggest that rather than this being a problem with the concept of social justice, it is in fact what makes it so useful. First, as a 'smiling word', it confers value – it is aspirational. This is a point made by several of the respondents to our social media consultation. Social justice, they told us, is a goal – a 'call to action' and something to 'fight for'. Second, as an incompletely descriptive term, it is also a concept that can be reimagined and rearticulated: in other words, it is another *evolving concept*. This is important because as things evolve they usually come to be more complex, more advanced, better adapted to context and circumstance. Social justice will mean different things at different times and in different spaces and places. It is perhaps this malleability that explains the concept's popularity and why it so often comes to be harnessed as a tool in critical analysis and as an 'oppositional device' (Beckett and Campbell, 2015).

Of course, not every disabled person will articulate their 'struggles' in terms of social justice. This should not surprise us, for as Cranston (1971, p.19) observed: 'only the man who knows the feelings knows what is the right word to express those feelings'. Nevertheless, we suspect that many disabled people and indeed their allies, would recognise and consider certain 'components' of social justice, identified by our respondents, to be part of their struggle.

We noted that respondents to our consultation employed the following terms to describe social justice: 'social responsibility', 'fairness', 'equality' (including 'equality of opportunity'), 'equity', 'accessibility', 'inclusion', 'participation', 'redistribution', 'recognition', 'respect' and 'flourishing'. They indicated that discrimination is not compatible with social justice. Their concept of social justice was expansive – ensuring that everyone had access to 'high-quality healthcare', 'education', 'assistive technologies', 'financial means', 'a safe home', 'safe environment' and 'cultural opportunities'.

Among the responses were more social democratic (possibly Marxist) articulations of social justice as necessitating the elimination of 'socially created barriers', 'deconstruction of systems and institutions that oppress', 'identifying and challenging structural inequalities' and achievement of an 'equitable distribution of power and resources'. Other respondents offered more social liberal articulations (reminiscent of the perspectives of John Rawls or T.H. Marshall). They understood social justice to involve 'societal relations which effectively enable all individuals

and social groups to achieve their full potential and live dignified lives'. In keeping with such an approach, equality of opportunity was mentioned; as was the need to moderate inequalities of outcome.

Other respondents offered more obviously communitarian articulations – social justice is about and requires 'social responsibility', 'solidarity' and 'cooperation'. In a related vein, others expressed their concept of social justice in ways that reflected a capabilities approach, e.g., social justice is 'ensuring people have the minimum needed for a good life'.

The definitions of social justice provided by respondents often indicated how they believed it might be achieved. A frequent refrain was that social justice is a 'practice' – something that you have to 'do'. As one respondent put it, it is 'a movement' and a 'fight'. Others told us that it is vital to 'listen to those who have been denied social equity and equality and centre their experiences' and that a 'well-informed public' and 'inclusive laws and policies, properly implemented, monitored and enforced', were both vehicles for achieving and characteristics of a socially just society.

Equally fascinating were the favourite quotations about social justice that people shared with us, the following being a sample:

Charity is no substitute for justice withheld | **St Augustine**

Until the great mass of the people shall be filled with the sense of responsibility for each other's welfare, social justice can never be attained | **Hellen Keller**

Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope | **Robert Kennedy**

I am, because you are | **Ubuntu philosophy**

When a flower doesn't bloom, you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower | **Alexander Den Heijer**

The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice | **Martin Luther King**

Some were obviously 'about' social justice – what it is, why it matters, how it might be achieved. Others were not specifically 'about' social justice but were instead about fighting for what is 'right'. We suggest that this again underlines that, for many, the concept of social justice is viewed as something of value – a social good – and an ideal that we can aspire to. The most frequently selected quotation was by Martin Luther King (1963, p.1): 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere'. This powerful statement echoes down the years. Born of one social justice struggle; but relevant to all. Important, not least, because it points to the interconnectedness of social justice struggles.

We also invited people to tell us what they think are the main barriers, today, to achieving social justice for disabled people. The list was long and its items will come as little surprise, we suspect, to readers of this editorial:

- *ignorance/lack of awareness of disabled people's needs*
- *negative attitudes and prejudice*
- *stigma and 'othering'*
- *negative representation in the media*
- *poverty and socio-economic disparities*
- *discrimination in the labour market*
- *segregation*
- *loss of community/lack of empathy ('selfish societies')*
- *failures in design and enforcement of social policies*
- *underfunding of public services (including legal aid)*
- *refusal to ensure disabled people are in leadership positions*

Some people explained the barriers using the macro-concepts of neoliberalism and ableism. For example, one respondent stated that the problem lies with a society that values:

individualism and competitiveness...instead of interdependence, solidarity, acceptance... partnership and cooperation at all levels and between all social groups.

Another stated that the problem is:

the way that society decides how to value people based on its own definition of who is normal, good, smart, excellent or productive.

Interestingly, the latter respondent emphasised that these 'social ideas' are 'rooted in anti-Blackness and colonialism'. This respondent was not the only person to stress that it is impossible to understand the barriers to social justice for disabled people without understanding the entanglement of white supremacy and ableism.

In the final part of our consultation, we asked our social media followers what they imagined social justice would look or feel like for disabled people. Again, our respondents provided valuable insights. Many provided pithy responses: 'freedom' and/or 'social inclusion'. Others stated that social justice would be achieved when suitable housing is available and the labour market, transport, education and healthcare services are all accessible and inclusive (this included being *affordable*). Additionally, respondents said that we would know that social justice had been achieved for disabled people when they received 'respect', 'recognition' and 'representation' (a 'seat at the table'). Again, different political persuasions were evident. Some disabled people who responded to our consultation looked to the institutions of society to guarantee social justice via 'the enforcement of rights' (where currently they are not). Others wanted to see major changes in 'economic relations' (a more anti-capitalist position).

Responses from non-disabled allies were interesting and encouraging – one described 'a world where disabled people's perspectives are given primary importance and non-disabled people don't assume they know what it's like'. Another, a world where 'the support is in place for all disabled people to live an ordinary life in their local communities, just like everyone else'.

But there were three responses that we found particularly thought-provoking. These were made by three disabled people:

Elimination of all forms of ableism and recognition of value and contribution of disabled people in all spheres of society.

No more 'reasonable adjustments' because there won't be an excluding norm that needs adjusting.

Where the category of 'disabled people' ceases to have any meaning because we have so completely and comprehensively done away with barriers for all disabled people (original emphasis).

How to conclude this section? We conclude by inviting readers to reflect not only on the views of respondents to our consultation, reported here, but also on their own perceptions of social justice. What does it mean *to you*? What are the barriers to social justice for disabled people today, where you live? What can be done to challenge those barriers? What would it mean to achieve social justice for disabled people – indeed for *all people*? To authors thinking of submitting their work to the IJDSJ, we encourage you to consider these questions as you write your article and yes, that includes an invitation to interrogate these questions and propose *others*!

2.4 International

The growth of Disability Studies as a global field is something we celebrate. We sought to capture a sense of the global nature of our community via our Editorial Board, but we will be working to expand and further diversify the board over the next few years. The IJDSJ Editorial Board has members from over twenty countries – from the 'West' and the 'East', Global North and South. We are grateful to this community who helped bring the Journal to life. They have, and do, act as ambassadors for the Journal. We know, however, that they would agree that their involvement is not enough to make the Journal *truly* international.

The IJDSJ strives to be international in *at least* three ways. First, by welcoming submissions from authors around the world. Here we acknowledge that the requirement to write in English will be a barrier for some authors. We assure prospective authors that we will always ask reviewers to read for content and argument. English language can always be refined/polished and we are willing to facilitate assistance for authors in this regard.

Second, by encouraging authors to consider how their research might be of international relevance. To adapt a hackneyed phrase ('act local, think global'), we invite authors to 'research local, position global'. Many of us who conduct research do so at the national or regional level (e.g. Europe, South America). Few researchers conduct truly 'global' research. Yet we encourage authors to consider how their research relates to knowledge and ideas from 'elsewhere'. What transferable learning might there be from your research?

Which brings us to the third way in which we strive to be international. The IJDSJ invites authors to unsettle the traditional dominance of the Global North in the field. This dominance is, thankfully, diminishing due to the important

work being conducted by researchers in the Global South. But there is still a way to go. There is no doubt that the over-dominance of the Global North within Disability Studies has ‘led to universalising and totalising tendencies of writings about disability’ (Meekosha, 2011, p.667), ‘erasure of indigenous understandings of disability’ and imposition of particular ‘disability-related practices’ (Rao and Kalyanpur, 2020, p.1830) within countries in the Global South. Journals such as the *African Disability Rights Yearbook* and *Disability and the Global South* have been pioneers in this regard – creating a space to decolonise Disability Studies, recognise and learn from different ways of understanding and researching disability. Where they have led, we follow, in the hope that where *multiple* journals go, *many* will follow. This, we suggest, is how positive change in our field will become inevitable.

3. Who the Journal Is For: The IJDSJ’s Community

3.1 Researchers Working on Disability and Social Justice

As we have already stated, the IJDSJ welcomes research from many disciplines and around the world. It also welcomes work that is in itself interdisciplinary, even transdisciplinary. Critiquing, imagining and enhancing social justice for disabled people demands input from researchers with a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds and perspectives (Finkelstein, 1998). More than this, tackling problems relating to disablement – like other so-called ‘wicked’ problems (Pohl, Truffer and Hadorn, 2017) – requires collaborative working, exchange and dialogue between researchers working across conventional disciplinary divides, employing different theoretical and methodological approaches. It requires collaboration between experts by experience (disabled people) and other types of expert.

While Disability Studies is now a maturing field, with over thirty years behind it (Roulstone, Thomas and Watson, 2012; Grech and Soldatic, 2016), broadening and strengthening its multidisciplinary base is an ongoing venture which, as has been the case elsewhere, has its challenges (Martin and Pfirman, 2017). Numerous scholars have drawn attention to the need for and value of enhancing critical engagement with disability in an array of disciplines, highlighting the benefits to Disability Studies of fuller engagement with and from, e.g., Anthropology, Arts, Counselling, Cultural Studies, Education, Engineering and Design, English, Film Studies, Geography, Health Sciences and allied disciplines, Law, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, Science and Technology Studies, Social Work, Sociology, Sports Science, Urban Studies and Youth Studies.

One thing we have noted, however, is that whilst it is possible to find within most Disability Studies journals articles written by authors located in this array of disciplines, research in/from Disability Law or Disability Legal Studies is less ‘obvious’ within these publications. The advent of the UN CRPD has resulted in a considerable increase in scholarly writing and reflection on issues of social justice for disabled people by legal scholars (Lawson, 2020). While the research, values and debates associated with the broader field of Disability Studies is often acknowledged

in this legal literature (albeit often in a rather cursory manner), this has tended to be published *outside* Disability Studies journals. The reasons for this are no doubt multiple and varied. At a practical level, it may have something to do with preferred referencing styles. The difficulties which Harvard-style referencing systems can present for authors working with materials such as cases, legislation, treaties and concluding observations are considerable. This is why IJDSJ authors will be able to choose whether to use the Harvard or the OSCOLA referencing styles. We suggest, however, that there is more to it than this. We hope that the IJDSJ will help start a conversation in Disability Law about why it is largely proceeding alongside rather than *in dialogue with* Disability Studies; and *vice versa* within Disability Studies. We have learnt much by working together as a Legal Scholar (Anna) and Sociologist (Angharad). We believe that we grow via different knowledge encounters and through the exchange of ideas and perspectives. We hope the IJDSJ will be a space for such encounters and exchanges.

In addition to welcoming engagement by readers and authors from different disciplinary backgrounds, the IJDSJ is committed to providing publishing opportunities for researchers from outside the university sector. A significant proportion of disabled researchers working on issues of disability and social justice are outside the academy. For example, they might be researchers for other organisations, including research institutes, disabled people's organisations and national human rights institutions, or be independent researchers. Sometimes this is a matter of choice. All too often it is because ableist attitudes, systems and practices put university positions out of their reach (Soorenian, 2019; Brown and Leigh, 2020). We hope that such researchers will not only submit their work to the IJDSJ, but also become members of the IJDSJ's Community, using it as a platform for peer support. This Community will seek to raise awareness of the barriers disabled people face in (including 'getting into') academia and support initiatives for change.

The IJDSJ is also keen to support publishing by early career researchers and to create opportunities for these colleagues to gain experience in reviewing and editorial processes. Further, the IJDSJ Community will have mentoring at its heart – a point we elaborate within section 4.3 below.

3.2 Research-Users Working to Achieve and Enhance Social Justice for Disabled People

There is of course no bright-line distinction between the categories of researcher and research-user – the vast majority of researchers are also research-users (we all 'stand on the shoulders of giants'). What we wish to highlight here is the importance to the IJDSJ of making the research it publishes available and accessible to readers, including those outside academia, who use research to inform or generate initiatives that enhance social justice for disabled people.

We hope that foremost amongst research-users of the IJDSJ will be disabled people's organisations and disability activists. We will judge the IJDSJ to have been a success if it is useful to and useable by them for organising, protesting and lobbying

for change. For this to happen, it is important that such organisations and individuals are not simply passive users of research but also shapers and instigators of it, and active partners and participants within it. The IJDSJ thus recognises the particular value and power of emancipatory and action, inclusive and co-produced research, which embeds social change as a key aim (Strnadová & Walmsley, 2018; Fudge Schormans et al., 2020).

Besides disabled people's organisations and disability activists, there are other important research-users relevant to the IJDSJ and who we hope to engage. For example, allies of the disabled people's movement, policy-makers, members of the helping professions (e.g. social workers, teachers, health and social care professionals) and lawyers who will, we hope, look to the research published in this Journal to prompt reflection, deepen their understanding of the injustices faced by disabled people, consider practical challenges, recognise opportunities for change and learn from examples of good practice.

4. How the Journal will Operate: The IJDSJ's Working Principles

4.1 Respect for Difference and Valuing Marginalised Communities

The IJDSJ embraces difference and diversity, recognising their importance both to the generation of new ideas and approaches and to the building of communities and societies that are inclusive and socially just. Types of difference to which this respect extends includes differences in opinion and perspective, as well as differences in personal and group identity and characteristic. The Journal therefore welcomes debate and supports academic freedom. As the following passage from the Journal's Ethics Statement (available on our website) makes clear, however, this does not extend to respect for arguments or viewpoints that undermine the value or integrity of marginalised groups:

We welcome debate, but not about the inherent worth of, for example, disabled people, people from ethnic groups facing racism and oppression, the trans community and people from across the spectrum of sexual and gender identities. We strive to make this journal an inclusive, open and a safe place for contributors and readers.

We thank David Abbott, Editorial Executive member for leading the team that drafted this statement.

4.2 Accessibility

The IJDSJ is committed to making its content and working systems as accessible as possible to people interested in disability and social justice. For these purposes, there are three overlapping dimensions of accessibility, as follows.

4.2.1 Formats and Working Practices

The first dimension of accessibility is the one which will almost certainly be most familiar to disabled people and their allies. It entails making the Journal available in

formats which are accessible, or readable, by disabled people, including those with visual impairments, who use screen-readers and those with intellectual impairments, for whom standard academic text may be too complex. It also entails ensuring that the Journal's working practices are as accessible as possible for all disabled people with whom it interacts – including authors, reviewers and Board members.

As far as the content of the Journal is concerned, while we acknowledge the disproportionate impact of the digital divide on disabled people, for many screen-reader users (including one of us – Anna), significant accessibility advantages flow from the fact that this is an online publication rather than one published in hard copy only. We recognise that pdf files, even those classed as technically accessible, can be problematic for screen-reader users and for this reason we have opted to also make the Journal available in html. We are also trialling an accompanying online Digest, to be published alongside each issue of the Journal, consisting of a plain English summary of each article. In some instances, easy read versions will also be made available, particularly for articles written by, with or 'about' people with intellectual impairments. In addition, we will be trialling a series of recorded interviews with authors and reader discussions of articles (video-recordings) – to be freely available via our website. We will be inviting members of the IJDSJ Community to let us know which approach they find most interesting, accessible and useful. Finally, our Book Reviews Editor, Simon Ng, is innovating in this sphere. He is finding ways to enable people with intellectual impairments to review books for the IJDSJ, especially (but not only) those which focus on issues relating to the lives of people with intellectual disabilities.

Every effort will be made to ensure that all other aspects of the Journal's workings are accessible to and inclusive of disabled people. This includes the reviewing process. In this respect, we have already been impressed by the willingness and ability of Editorial Board colleagues to write reviews of articles co-authored by people with intellectual impairments in language that is clear and accessible. There are certain aspects of the publishing process (e.g. reviewing and correcting proofs), however, which are likely to continue to present accessibility challenges – particularly for screen-reader users and people with intellectual impairments – for the foreseeable future. In these instances, we encourage authors who would otherwise struggle to obtain the necessary support for interacting with these inaccessible systems and processes to contact the Journal so that we can make arrangements for assistance to be put in place.

4.2.2 Language and Meaning

The second dimension of accessibility concerns language and meaning. Academic writing will sometimes present challenges, not just for people with intellectual impairments but for others – including research-users from outside academia and scholars from a different discipline from that of the author.

Disability Studies scholars (e.g. Barnes, 1996b) have long stressed the importance of writing clearly and accessibly to enable disability activists outside academia

to access, inform and participate in relevant debates. Nevertheless, as Shakespeare (1996, p.117) observes:

Theories and concepts, and social reality itself, will often be complex, nuanced and difficult. If Disability Studies is to capture this richness, it will have to be able to use ideas and develop analyses which may not be transparent and simple.

The result, inevitably, is that the ideas and arguments presented in academic writing are not easily accessible to many people in disabled people's movements (Germon, 1998, p.250), nor to other potential users of research on disability and social justice.

The IJDSJ is keen to respond to this challenge. Accordingly, as explained in the previous section, the Journal will attempt to make the content of its articles more accessible by publishing plain English summaries of them together with online author interviews and reader discussions. This will not reduce the need for authors to attempt to write as clearly as possible – particularly given the interdisciplinary and international nature of its readership. We thus encourage potential authors to consider this issue prior to submission.

4.2.3 Cost

The third dimension of accessibility concerns the cost of reading and writing journal articles. Traditionally, this cost has fallen on readers in the form of subscription fees. For readers working in universities or large organisations, such fees are often paid by the employer. For other readers, however, the cost of subscriptions is often prohibitive, making articles published in academic journals inaccessible. No such barriers will apply to the IJDSJ. All of its content will be published on an open access basis, free to read.

While the move towards open access publishing has the potential to unlock cost barriers for readers, in many instances this is achieved by placing the burden instead on authors. This is because publishers generally demand a price (often in the region of between £2–3k/\$3–4k) for making an article open access – a cost which, unless covered by a research grant or an employer, falls on the individual author. Clearly, in the latter situation, open access publishing will not be an option for many authors (particularly for independent or early career researchers and authors from lower income countries).

In collaboration with Pluto Journals, the IJDSJ is pioneering a different approach to the cost problem, which avoids placing burdensome costs on either reader or author. This is based on two methods for raising money to cover the costs of publishing. First, it entails requesting financial contributions from libraries which, if the IJDSJ were not open access, would have been willing to pay its subscription fees. Second, it entails fundraising. Critical to the latter approach is the fact that Pluto Educational Trust (of which Pluto Journals is a part) and the IJDSJ are not-for-profit ventures. Pluto Educational Trust describes itself as:

A collaborative association of people and organisations who aim to create a more just, more sustainable world, through the power of ideas.

(Pluto Educational Trust, n.d.)

4.3 Community-Building

Alongside the Journal itself, we are launching a not-for-profit Community of people and organisations interested in research on disability and social justice – whether as researchers, activists, allies, journalists, policy-makers or in any other capacity. This Community, which will operate largely online but with some face-to-face opportunities, will provide an organisational framework for peer support and mentoring, study groups and knowledge exchange. It will also provide a space in which academics and activists can come together to debate ideas and approaches, analyse current trends, discuss research findings and identify research priorities. This is important because, in the words of Penny Germon (1998, p.254):

All of us working in the struggle for disabled people's liberation ultimately have a very high investment in the relationship between academics and activists working effectively towards our common goal.

Key to this Community will be the valuing of the particular experience and expertise of each member. By 'expertise' we do not only mean academic or professional, but also expertise born of lived experience as a disabled person or of activism.

4.4 A Reflexive and Experimental Approach to Learning and Problem-Solving

We recognise that despite all that we have said in this editorial so far, and our genuine commitment to community-building, accessibility, inclusion and respect for marginalised groups, our systems and practices will sometimes fall short of our ideals. The IJDSJ and its Community will therefore actively encourage feedback, suggestions and offers of help. Input from members of our Community has already helped us to reflect on our current approaches, introduce amendments, experiment, innovate and continuously learn – and it will continue to do so.

5. Introducing the IJDSJ's Cover Artwork

We are almost at the end of this editorial. It has covered a lot of ground. But there is one more aspect of the IJDSJ that we would like to introduce: its cover artwork.

We imagine that many people who read this editorial will share our belief that injustice is an outrage, deserving of our rage. Yet, to paraphrase Foucault (2004, p.xv) again, we propose that we do not always have to be sad in order to be militant – even when the thing we are fighting is abominable. As Barton (2003) reminded us, we can – indeed, we *must* – remain hopeful. Hope must be at the centre of our struggles to challenge the injustices faced by disabled people and build more inclusive societies. He warned us, however, that this must be a 'complex' rather than a 'simple hope'. Drawing upon other fierce advocates for social justice – Paulo Freire and bell

hooks – he argued that our hope must involve deep convictions and passions. Rage, yes, but also love and a belief that change and redemption is possible:

Hope involves an informed recognition of the offensive nature of current conditions and relations and a belief that the possibilities of change are not foreclosed.

(Barton, 2003)

When Pluto Journals asked us to select an image for the cover of the IJDSJ, we wanted to capture this concept of hope – a *politics of hope* – that involves both rage and a belief in the possibility of positive transformation. We know that inside the covers of this Journal will be content that is, at times, distressing. Evidence of pain (physical and psycho-emotional) caused by prejudice, exclusion, discrimination, violence and abuse experienced by disabled people will be presented and discussed, the causes critiqued. Yet we also know that acts of resistance will be discussed and social innovations ('solutions') will be presented that seek to ensure disabled people's rights and inherent dignity are recognised and respected, that they are included and able to participate in all aspects of life and their wellbeing assured. Injustice is a terrible tragedy. But disabled people's lives are *not inherently tragic*. To assume the latter is to ignore the 'social' in the process of disablement; fail to recognise disability as a social justice issue; and foreclose the possibility of disabled people's inclusion, wellbeing and flourishing.

The artist who accepted our brief to design a cover that recognised the 'rage' of disabled people's marginalisation and oppression, yet also expressed something positive about change being possible, was Hatiye Garip. We are grateful to Hatiye for applying her imagination to this task and working with us so generously and patiently. She asked us whether the image could be 'fun'? We said yes. Since the concept of 'social justice' seems to be a 'smiling word', why not have a cover that makes people smile?

Hatiye describes herself as 'a colourful pencil that loves to draw and design'. A young disabled woman from Turkey, she was a European Solidarity Corps volunteer with the European Network for Independent Living in 2020. She has provided illustrations for the Washington Post, Giphy, Starbucks, Open Style Lab and has recently published her first picture book for children entitled '*Kendi Yolumu Çiziyorum*' (*Making My Own Way*, published by Hippo). You can find out more about her work at her website: <https://hatiyegarip.com/>.

Her illustration for the Journal's cover shows two people zooming around on a pencil-shaped rocket. The idea is to remind us all that there is 'power in our pens' – in our words – as writers. The person at the front is someone who is blind (they are holding the harness of their guide dog who is also sitting on the pencil); the person at the back has no 'obvious' impairment. Do they have a hidden impairment? Are they a non-disabled ally? This is left for us to imagine. Hatiye also explained to us that in her imagining one of the characters is a woman, the other is non-binary.

The inspiration for the space theme lies with a protest slogan employed by the US disability rights movement during its campaign for the American's with Disabilities Act: 'To boldly go where everyone else has gone before'. This, of course, is an adaptation of the famous 'to boldly go' quote from the TV series *Star Trek*, which is set in space.

On the front cover is the Earth, our beautiful planet. This is included to signal that this is an international journal. Hatiye has imagined that the characters on the pencil have wrapped an enormous banner around the globe on which is written another well-known protest slogan used by disability activists around the world: 'Nothing About Us Without Us!'

We hope that you will agree that there is humour and positivity in this cover. That said, the inclusion of the two important quotations acts as a reminder of the 'rage' that we believe should not be overlooked and which we must continue to harness as we strive to be and become change-makers.

6. Introducing the Current Issue: Issue 1 of the IJDSJ

We have selected the pieces for this inaugural issue because reviewers (like us) consider them to be thought-provoking, internationally relevant and timely. Whilst these were our primary reasons for selection, it is also noteworthy that this issue includes the work of disabled and non-disabled researchers; early career researchers and self-declared 'old hands'; university-based researchers and an independent scholar who works at an international non-governmental organisation (NGO). The authors have disciplinary backgrounds in education, law, psychology and sociology and the articles include an academic think-piece, two empirical research articles and a human rights analysis.

It will be obvious to the reader that the authors are from the Global North. This we acknowledge. We have received submissions from authors from the Global South and are confident that later issues will be more globally diverse. We are also working with authors who have intellectual impairments and look forward to publishing articles and book reviews written by these authors in the future. The IJDSJ aspires to achieve greater representation within a portfolio of content, across multiple issues.

Our final words now introduce the first four articles. This we do with great pleasure. This is not a special issue so there was no imposed theme. Having read the articles again, however, a theme presented itself to us – a theme of 'alliances'. For us, this idea provides a certain rhythm – a leitmotif – that binds the articles together.

The first article by Dan Goodley, Rebecca Lawthom, Kirsty Liddiard and Katherine Runswick-Cole is a think-piece. They invite us to contemplate contemporary Disability Studies, the flourishing of post-conventional theoretical approaches in the field and rise of 'Critical Disability Studies'. We journey with them on an exhilarating exploration of a host of concepts and themes including desire, entanglement(s), alliances and posthumanism. They invite us to consider the inter/relationships between social justice theories, issues and movements – the possibilities for 'alliances' across dis/ability, trans+, anti-racist and decolonial movements. They ask us whether it is time to develop

a more relational concept of social justice, which recognises and promotes a positive understanding of the interconnectedness and interdependence between humans (all identities/subjectivities/positionalities), machines/technologies, animals and the wider natural environment.

In the second article, Jen Slater and Charlotte Jones explore how signage mediates access to toilets for disabled people and reinforces a particular public perception or imaginary of disability. Whilst disability is the primary focus of this article, the authors draw upon the 'Around the Toilet' research project, in which they considered the toilet as a place of exclusion and belonging, not only for disabled people but also other marginalised communities. In this article, they highlight the importance of intersectionality and are sensitive to points of commonality (as well as divergence) between disabled, trans+ and queer people's experiences, with implications for potential alliances around toilet politics.

The third article, by Leah Burch, continues this focus on the quotidian aspects of life and politics of everyday life. Drawing upon findings from her qualitative research, Leah considers the diverse ways in which experiences of hate crime impact upon disabled people. She explores how the 'affects of hate' shape the way disabled people navigate their social environments and worlds, emphasising that whilst hate causes harm and must be condemned, disabled people are not passive in the face of it – they find ways to negotiate and resist hate in order to go about their daily lives. Social justice researchers, she suggests, have much to learn from the resistance practices of disabled people. By recognising the unique ways that disabled people both encounter and challenge hate, celebrate and share practices amongst peers, we learn more about how we can all become better allies, supporting one another.

Whilst the first three articles are sociological, the final article adopts a more legal approach. The author, Eric Rosenthal, is an American lawyer and activist, founder and Executive Director of the NGO Disability Rights International (DRI). In his article he provides a detailed account of a contemporary international controversy about the legitimacy of placing disabled children within group homes (a form of 'alternative care' for children living away from their birth families). He 'presents his case' that group homes are institutional and not in the best interests of children. He argues for family-based care to be prioritised – to include the provision of better support for families of disabled children. There is useful analysis here of the points of convergence (and sometimes need for enhanced alignment) between the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. His article will also alert scholars in the broader field of Disability Studies to an important debate that has profound implications for the wellbeing of disabled children around the world. This debate is, in some ways, perplexing, in that it is between people who are all concerned about the wellbeing of children. On one side are many of the major international children's care organisations; on the other, a coalition of leading international disability rights organisations. Eric wants to see 'alliances' form. He believes this is the only way we will make progress and improve the lives of disabled children in alternative care.

In addition to these articles, this first issue of the *IJDSJ* also includes a book review. Katherine Runswick-Cole reflects on Priya Lalvani's edited collection, entitled '*Constructing the (M)other: Narratives of Disability, Motherhood and the Politics of Normal*'. This is a piece which foregrounds the overlaps and connections between disability and other political movements and orientations – in this case, feminism. Katherine urges us to read this 'timely and much needed' book and accept its 'invitation to join an emerging "maternal commons" to resist the demands put upon mothers of disabled children in 21st century neoliberal ableist contexts'. Again, the 'alliance' theme is strong.

'Dear Reader', we hope you enjoy this first issue of the *IJDSJ* as much as we have enjoyed the process of bringing it to you.

Appendix I: Consulting with the *IJDSJ* Community

We asked our Community the following questions and 43 people submitted responses, anonymously, via an online form:

Q1: *How do you define social justice? What are its main characteristics?*

Q2: *Do you have a favourite quotation or saying about social justice? If yes, we'd love it if you shared it here.*

Q3: *What would you say are the main barriers to social justice for disabled people?*

Q4: *What do you believe social justice for disabled people would look or feel like?*

We also asked respondents a question that allowed us to learn a little about them. This is what they told us (NB people were able to select 'all relevant' for these categories):

- 23 people identified as disabled people, of whom 19 said they are involved in disability activism;
- 11 people who did not identify as disabled people identified as allies of the disabled people's movement;
- 23 people said they are a researcher in the field of disability and social justice;
- 7 people said they work in disabled people's organisations;
- 9 people said they work in another disability-related profession.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank the respondents to our online consultation for their thoughtful input, which enriched this editorial.

NOTE

*1. In writing this paragraph we drew upon a definition of 'Studies in Ableism' developed by Dan Goodley, Angharad Beckett and Parvanah Rabiee when articulating the objectives of the White Rose Studies in Ableism Collaboration: <https://whiterose.ac.uk/collaborationfunds/white-rose-studies-of-ableism-proposal-for-a-new-inter-disciplinary-research-collaboration/> (Accessed 1 September 2021).

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