# Développement Humain, Handicap et Changement Social
# Human Development, Disability, and Social Change

# Editorial

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## Editorial

Much has been written since the 1980s on the portrayal, discussion, and conception of disability. In the considerable literature on the historical evolution of the representation of disability (Doriguzzi, 1994; Stiker, 1991) and its iconification (Fougeyrollas & Saillant, 2007), much reflection has been devoted to decrypting what is said about the differences of people with disabilities. Moreover, *Disability Studies* is emerging from a cleavage between the social and medical representations of disability. Disability Studies, is a field that will implement an analytical framework for disability representation and it will be highly critical of deficit-based or pathology-focused perspectives, which only further stigmatize people with disabilities.

According to Jodelet's description of disability representation as a "cognitive phenomena that engages the group membership of individuals through the internalization of practices, experiences, and models of conduct and thought" and that govern "our relationship to the world and to others, guide, and organize social behavior and communication" (1989: 36; translation), this critique draws on different approaches. Many authors have tried to demonstrate how any given type of physical, psychological, or cognitive difference is socially and culturally characterized by specific representations and, in turn, influences both subjective experiences, such as deafness (Gaucher, 2010; Lane, 1984) and global frameworks for disability treatment (Gardou, 2010, Ingstad & Whyte 1995). Other researchers have explored the convergence of disability with other areas of experience (e.g., sexuality, sports, or religion). For example, research has been conducted to understand the relationships between present or future employers and employees with disabilities (Beaton, Kabano, & Léger, 2014, Beaton & Kabano, 2011). These empirical approaches have also led to the development of theoretical questions on the overt or covert social relationships rooted in the social representations of disability (Fougeyrollas, 2010; Murphy, 1987). They have also led to questioning the socio-political origins of these representations (Barnes, 2012). Finally, it can be said that the key outcome of this work is the focus on a need and the possibility to transform representations of disability.

Dedicated to the exploration of the social representations of disability, this issue has attempted to update these questions by soliciting various empirical contributions. The studies in this issue shed light on how the environment—as the Disability Production Process so defines it—is a space for the production of images, perceptions, prejudice and stereotypes affecting the social participation of people with disabilities. Two themes emerge from the contributions gathered here: representations originating from the experience of actors, directly or indirectly affected by disability, and representations stemming from the media. In dialectical relationship, these two types of representations feed each other and sometimes overlap.

First, articles addressing how different actors understand disability, whether through the definition of identity by disabled people (Curtis et al.), by others directly or indirectly related to the disabled (Breau et al.; Hamm & Germundsson), or, more generally, by individuals who have been asked to share their views on disability (Beaton et al.; Kahina et al.), highlight the persistence of negative perceptions of the disabled. These are reductive views of difference. They include pessimistic representations of the potential of people with disabilities for social participation, especially their capacity to enter the labor market as autonomous individuals. Milot et al. highlight how this difficulty might be overcome (particularly in areas directly affected by disability) by building on the experiences of people with disabilities in training programs.

Second, articles on the image of disability in the media show just how the experience of disability is still very underrepresented (Goethals). Although the interactions between people and their environments are considered in certain contexts (McGrail), people with disabilities are used as models, sources of extraordinary inspiration (Joselin & Popes-cu) or even discussed as objects. As such, this produces an image

that eludes the individuals being depicted (Ilyes). Ubiquitously, the mediatized image of disability (as addressed in these recent studies) raises the issue of the reduction of different bodies and minds to social uses, thus confining disability to a restrictive framework that is hardly a driver of social participation.

Finally, our issue strives to be more than a negative image of disability. Our intention is to rekindle debate on the perception and representation that color the lives of people with disabilities and, more specifically, that have a direct impact on the social participation of these citizens. Behind the critical perspective from which this issue was drawn up lies the idea of raising the systemic obstacles generated by normative templates still strongly marked by images and reductionist stereotypes of disability. This issue was also driven by the desire to highlight the conditions of possibility that representations of disability can convey in developing the real social participation of people with disabilities.

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