|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Enabling participation – research with young people on ableism | | |
| Graphic | Wording | Image |
| 1 | From 2016 to 2018, researchers from Massey University’s SHORE & Whariki Research Centre worked with 35 young people with a range of disabilities and their whanau, and learnt first-hand about their everyday lives | A researcher and young woman are sitting talking. The young woman is sitting in a wheelchair. |
| 2 | And what they found was that the biggest barriers to living a good life were discrimination and ableist attitudes  Discrimination and prejudice come in many forms | The young woman is surrounded by thought bubbles that contain images of people scowling at her, holding a hand up indicating ‘no you can’t’ or showing pity. |
| 3 | Non-disabled people think they know what disability ‘looks like’, and often how to help. And that can be a problem. | The young woman is surrounded by people who are staring at her. Their faces convey various emotions: shock, pity, horror, awkwardness, curiosity. |
| Key findings1: Understanding | | |
| 4 | People stare. People judge. People offer unsolicited advice.  Many participants talked about being starred at and judged, and asked ‘what’s wrong with you’ by complete strangers.  Greer talked about uninvited strangers pushing her across the road in her wheelchair, and being asked out of the blue ‘can you have children’?  Tane talked about strangers grabbing his wrist and ‘guiding him’ down the street without asking – or knowing how to do it.. | A man has grabbed Tane’s arm and is pulling him across a pedestrian crossing. Tane is looking alarmed holding his cane out in front of him. Bystanders are starring. |
| 5 | Disability is too often misunderstood as a clear cut binary: Non-disabled or disabled. In fact, it’s a spectrum everyone negotiates across the life course in different ways | A group of objects: a crutch, hearing aid, glasses, cane, wheelchair, smartphone. |
| 6 | Ableist thinking about disability diminishes people, and suggests that living with a disability is some kind of personal tragedy | Two people are walking along arm in arm in a park. One has a cane. Two people emerge from the trees looking alarmed and ask ‘can we pray for you?’ |
| 7 | This constant public judgement meant that those with visible disabilities felt stereotyped and underestimated, while those with less visible disabilities had to explain and justify themselves. | A young woman getting on a bus is holding up her bus pass that says she is blind. The bus driver is looking at her sceptically. |
| 8 | Either way people perception of disability impinged on the everyday lives of these young people. | Tane being pulled across the pedestrian crossing looking very annoyed. |
| Key findings 2: Accessibility | | |
| 9 | We often assume accessibility is about physical spaces but again, participants said it’s about much more than the destination. | Saamir is seated at his desk in a wheelchair talking on his mobile phone.  “OK, Cool!” he says, in response to an invitation. |
| 10 | Travelling to an event can be complicated, unpredictable. Expensive and time-consuming. It takes planning and mental energy. | Saamir considers possible difficulties catching a bus or stowing his wheelchair in the back of a taxi. Will there be problems of stairs at the venue? Or doors which are difficult to navigate? |
| 11 |  | Says Saamir :“Like I’m thinking three steps ahead like oh, we’re going to the cinema…how am I going to get on and off the bus: If I’m taking an Uber there who’s going to put my wheelchair in the back? I I get there and there’s steps…? Like, I’m thinking the whole journey and that’s a big effort.” |
| 12 | Attitudes of people along the way play a huge part too: | Saamir is in his wheelchair at the bus stop waiting for some help to get onto the bus.  He says: “I’ve had bus drivers…see me and just sigh. It’s like, yeah, do it, please man, come on, do it, it’s your job…Or I’ve had someone open the door and say, ‘Should you even be out at this time of night?’” |
| 13 | Accessibility is also about everyone having an open mind and an inclusive attitude. This can change everything. | Saamir is on his adapted scooter/bike, enjoying a ride with friends alongside a park. They pass a young couple out for a stroll and another young couple sitting on the grass. Saamir and his friends are obviously enjoying their ride. |
| Key findings 3: Accessibility | | |
| 14 | Inclusion enriches lives. May, another participant, grew up in another country, where she took part in large scale deaf dance classes and competitions. | May is remembering dancing in one of these classes – and her own dancing feet. Says May: “It was probably 1000-2000 deaf people competing…there was a teacher who would stand there and sign 1-2-3-go because we couldn’t hear the songs, but they would also be there counting out the beats for us…it was really fierce competition.” |
| 15 | But when she moved to New Zealand she couldn’t find classes which would take her. | May is being turned away from a dance studio. “In Auckland all you hear is you can’t, you can’t and I don’t understand why people have that attitude, because we can,” she says. |
| 16 | Like accessibility, participation sometimes requires creativity and openness from teachers and decision-makers – and depends on people being respected as experts in their own lives and experiences. | May is joyously dancing in a dance studio. |
| 17 | Sometimes that means knowing when to pull back, Rebecca, for example, talked about being singled out in class unnecessarily. | Rebecca, embarrassed, sits in the front row of her class as her teacher holds up a special large print version of a class hand-out and several classmates snigger.  Says the teacher: “Here’s Rebecca’s special A3 handout.” |
| 18 | Economic privilege plays a part here too. For many the extra complexity involved in taking part requires extra time and extra money and that can put a strain on resources | A woman, looking anxious, searches in her wallet for the money to pay for the taxi which has transported her wheelchair-bound companion. |
| And in conclusion… | | |
| 19 | One in four New Zealanders is living with a disability. So that affects a lot of people. | The scene is a crowd of people, with one in four highlighted as having a disability. |
| 20 | What we need is a shift in attitude. Currently, our dominant, ableist way of thinking suggests that the *‘problem’* is the body of the disabled person.  But we have to shift our thinking. The problem is the people that say ”no”, “what’s wrong with you” and “you can’t”. | Again, a crowd of people are looking at three isolated disabled people in their midst. Speech bubbles capturing the thoughts of the crowd say: ‘Too hard’; ‘No way’; ‘What’s wrong with you’? |
| 21 | It’s time to put a spotlight on ableism – and for those outside of the disabled community to take an honest look at our own attitudes | The ‘Too hard’, ‘No way’, and ‘What’s wrong with you’? messages they are holding written on paper are being ripped apart. There is a sense of acceptance and inclusion of the disabled people – they are part of the gathering. |

Research funded by the Health Research Council. Illustrations by Toby Morris. For further information contact k.witten@massey.ac.nz