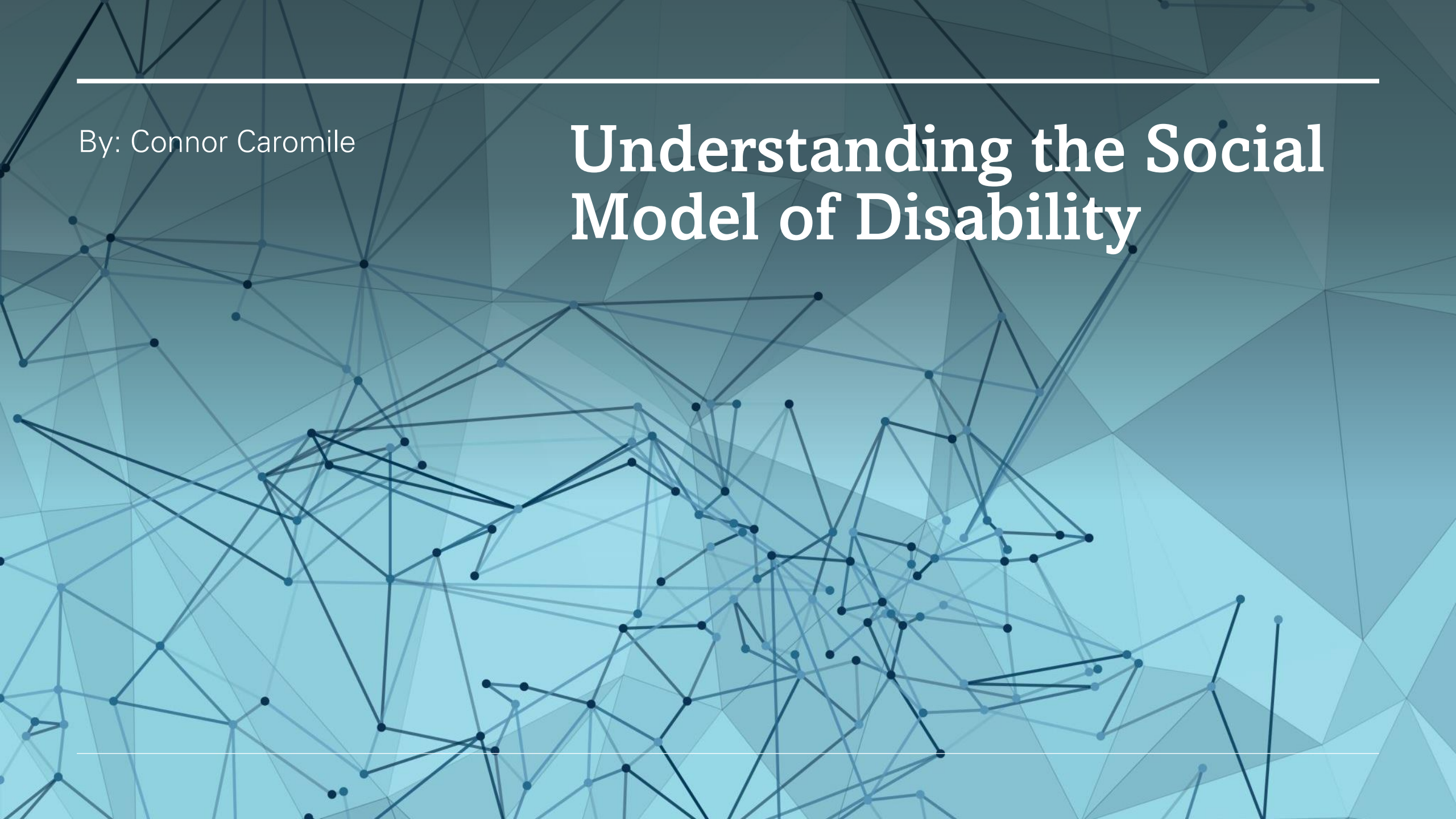


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By: Connor Caromile

# Understanding the Social Model of Disability



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# What is the Social Model?

- Mike Oliver - 1983
- Was created in response to the “traditional” medical model of disability.
- Relies on a distinction between Impairment and Disability.
- *“The idea behind the social model of disability stemmed from the Fundamental Principles of Disability document first published in the mid-1970s (UPIAS 1976), which argued that **we were not disabled by our impairments but by the disabling barriers we faced in society.**” (Oliver 2013).*



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# The problem with the Medical Model

- The medical model is diagnosis-focused and forces diagnostic labels onto a person.
  - This leads to disability being seen as an individualized problem.
  - *“The medical model with its focus on diagnostic labels presents a number of educational and political problems. From a practical point of view, it falsely implies that students with the same impairment have the same learning needs”* (Matthews 2009).
  - *“One result of the common medical understanding of disability is that people with disabilities often report feeling excluded, undervalued, pressured to fit a questionable norm, and/or treated as if they were globally incapacitated. People with disabilities often express frustration when they are met with pitying attitudes or incredulity if they speak about anything positive related to living with their conditions.”* (Goering 2015).
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# Impairment vs. Disability

## IMPAIRMENT

- *“Within the social model, impairment is understood as a state of the body that is nonstandard, defined as Blacking part of or all of a limb, or having a defective limb, organ or mechanism of the body. As such, impairment may or may not be met with a negative evaluation by its possessor”* (Goering 2015).

## DISABILITY

- *“Disability, by contrast, is the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organization which takes no or little account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities”* (Goering 2015).

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# Disabling Individuals with Impairments

- The **Social Model of Disability** makes the distinction between **impairment** and **disability** to show that a lot of the time what is disabling them is their environment and not them personally.
  - The environment can be physical and/or social, and institutional norms that could be alterable.
  - *“stairs vs. ramps; presentation of data using only auditory means vs. universal design for communication, restrictive definitions of job requirements vs. expansive accommodations for different modes of performing work, etc.”* (Goering 2015).
  - First look to the environment rather than the person. Many people with disabilities say the disadvantages they face comes from their environment and reception in the world rather than their bodies.
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# Barriers

- Everyone has barriers in some shape or form.
  - For people with impairments & disabilities those barriers often do not stem from their own bodies but the world around them, that being unwelcomed reception, physical structures, social attitudes, and institutional norms.
  - Barriers can be; Buildings not having accessible toilets, poor lighting, varying noise levels, bad layouts for wheelchairs, poorly designed seating
  - *“Lois Keith remarks, Doing disability all day long can be an exhausting process. I don’t mean having an impairment, in my own case not being able to walk. Like most disabled people I can deal with this. I mean having to spend a significant part of each day dealing with a physical world which is historically designed to exclude me” (Goering 2015).*
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## Medical Model Understanding of Disability



The problem is  
the disabled person

So you see  
it's the barriers  
within society that  
disables you



## Social Model Understanding of Disability



The problem is the barriers within society

PHYSICAL AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
BARRIERS

INSTITUTIONAL &  
ORGANISATIONAL  
BARRIERS

INFORMATION &  
COMMUNICATION  
BARRIERS

ATTITUDINAL  
BARRIERS

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