

2020-08

“I was planning on going to an actual real school rather than a program like this”; Students with intellectual disabilities informing adult special education

Swan, Teresa Louise

---

Swan, T. L. (2020). “I was planning on going to an actual real school rather than a program like this”; Students with intellectual disabilities informing adult special education (Doctoral thesis, University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada). Retrieved from <https://prism.ucalgary.ca>.

<http://hdl.handle.net/1880/112434>

*Downloaded from PRISM Repository, University of Calgary*

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

“I was planning on going to an actual real school rather than a program like this”;

Students with intellectual disabilities informing adult special education

by

Teresa Louise Swan

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN COMMUNITY HEALTH SCIENCES

CALGARY, ALBERTA

AUGUST, 2020

© Teresa Louise Swan 2020

## Abstract

This study is a critical ethnography exploring the experiences of four students with an intellectual disability (ID) label enrolled in an adult special education program in British Columbia, Canada. The study focused on the following broad questions: 1) How is adult special education programming at a post-secondary institution socially organized? and 2) How is knowledge and power reflected in the academic and social activities of students with ID through text? Data were collected through in-depth interviews, a focus group, observations, review of documents, and self-reflexive journaling. It was interpreted thematically, and three prominent themes were uncovered: *Bureaucratic Structure: Text and Disability*, *Control and Compliance and Normality: "Don't Act Like A Kid"*, and *Social Relations: Who Belongs Where?* A main finding was that ID students are reliable and capable research participants. Another finding was that specialized programs fail to deliver an education that recognizes student's identity, competence, learning, human rights, or sense of belonging. A further finding was that post-secondary structures subjectivized ID students as child-like, dependent, and incapable. The results of this study begin to add a critical perspective to the scholarship and practice related to intellectual disability and post-secondary education.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge my family and friends for their support and enthusiasm throughout my studies. Special gratitude to Darren whose unconditional love gave me resilience, my father Tom whose pride kept me motivated, and my son Cole who helped me find balance throughout this arduous journey.

I extend my deepest appreciation to my supervisor Dr. Anne Hughson. Your mentorship was unsurpassed. To Dr. Bonnie Lashewicz and Dr. Katrina Milaney, I am grateful for the support and guidance you both provided as supervisory committee members.

The students who shared their experiences—my endless gratitude. Thank-you.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to my mom, Darlene.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Dedication.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Chapter 1: My Starting Point: The Tensions between Intellectual Disability and Post-Secondary Education .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Special Education .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Adult Education .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Critical Disability Studies.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Adult Special Education.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Situating my Study .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>Researcher Stance and Self-Reflexivity .....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Purpose and Significance .....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Research Questions .....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Use of Language and Discourse.....</i>	<i>20</i>
<b>How This Thesis is Organized .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Framework .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Theoretical Framework.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<i>Critical Ethnography.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<b>Assumptions of the Researcher .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<i>Limitations/Delimitations .....</i>	<i>30</i>
<b>Conceptual Framework.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<i>Social Organization With Smith .....</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>Discipline Theory With Foucault.....</i>	<i>34</i>
<b>Chapter 3: Critical Review of Disability Models and Adult Learning.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Disability Models: The Social Construction of the “Problem” of Disability .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<i>Medical Model.....</i>	<i>39</i>

<i>Social Model</i> .....	49
<i>Critical Disability Theory</i> .....	55
<b>Critical Disability Studies and Institutional Responses</b> .....	<b>59</b>
<i>Higher Education</i> .....	59
<i>Mental Health Institutions to Segregated Education</i> .....	60
<i>Inclusive Post-Secondary Education</i> .....	65
<b>Summary of the Literature</b> .....	<b>69</b>
<b>Chapter 4: Research Design</b> .....	<b>71</b>
<i>Research Site</i> .....	71
<i>Sampling and Recruitment</i> .....	71
<i>Data Collection Methods</i> .....	72
<i>Recoding, Managing, and Interpretation of Findings</i> .....	73
<b>Study Rigor</b> .....	<b>74</b>
<i>Credibility</i> .....	75
<i>Transferability</i> .....	76
<i>Confirmability</i> .....	76
<b>Reciprocity</b> .....	<b>76</b>
<b>Ethical Considerations</b> .....	<b>77</b>
<b>Knowledge Translation</b> .....	<b>78</b>
<b>Chapter 5: Findings and Interpretations</b> .....	<b>79</b>
Bureaucratic Structure: Text and Disability.....	79
<i>Pedagogy</i> .....	79
<i>Interactions of Resistance: The Muffin Story</i> .....	83
<b>Control and Compliance and Normality: “Don’t Act Like A Kid”</b> .....	<b>85</b>
<i>Notions of Independence</i> .....	86
<i>Adult Special Education Syllabus, 2017</i> .....	90
<i>Fear of Punishment</i> .....	91
<b>Social Relations: Who Belongs Where?</b> .....	<b>95</b>
<i>Social Life</i> .....	95
<i>Social space</i> .....	97

Insights into My Contradictions.....	99
<b>Chapter 6: A Discussion on Making Obvious What Was Hidden .....</b>	<b>100</b>
Situating Myself: How I Got Here.....	100
I Wanted A To Be A “Real Student” and This Is What They Told Me .....	101
“Us” and “Them”: Adult Special Education.....	107
“Kwinten” The Mascot: Rhetoric, Claims, and Tokenism.....	109
The Exclude-able Student .....	111
Teaching “In”dependence? .....	113
A Summary - The Academy Divides .....	115
<b>Chapter 7: Study Limitations, Future Research, Conclusion, and Postscript .....</b>	<b>116</b>
Study Limitations.....	116
Future Research .....	117
Concluding Thoughts: What Would I Say Now? Go Ahead & Eat The Dam Muffin! ..	118
PostScript .....	122
<b>References.....</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>143</b>
Appendix A: Recruitment Script .....	143
Appendix B: Recruitment Script- Consent .....	145
Appendix C: Informed Consent - Focus Group .....	146
Appendix D: Informed Consent - Interview.....	150
Appendix E: Informed Consent – Participant Observation for Students .....	154
Appendix F: Informed Consent – Participant Observation for Instructors .....	158
Appendix G: Focus Group Guide .....	161
Appendix H: Interview Guide .....	162



**Appendix I - Documents Reviewed ..... 164**

**Appendix I: Template used for Data Analysis ..... 165**

## **Chapter 1: My Starting Point: The Tensions between Intellectual Disability and Post-Secondary Education**

Since the early 1980s, post-secondary institutions in British Columbia, Canada have offered specialized education for students with an intellectual disability (ID) label. It was during this time that disabled people and their allies fought to close state-run mental health institutions and replace them with community-based services such as day programs, sheltered workshops, and special education (Dolmage, 2017; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). Community-based services, it was believed, would enable disabled people to move away from institutionalized care toward community care. Colleges and universities across the province responded by developing specialized programs for students with ID aimed to increase independence, daily living skills, and employability skills using segregated practices (Ministry of Education, 1980). Specialized programs remain the dominant way to educate ID students, yet little is known about ways in which the lives of ID students are socially organized.

A post-secondary education is one of society's most valued and privileged pursuits. Regardless of human difference—class, sex, gender, race, ability—it is presumed that by attending a college or university one's position in life will be improved. The benefits of a post-secondary are widely recognized; for example, attending a college or university promotes an increased sense of belonging, improved community engagement, expanded career options, and increased options for lifelong learning (Baum & Payea, 2004; Evans et al., 2017). Scholars writing about higher education argue that what today's adult learners want from their education is ample opportunities to engage in an academic study that is meaningful and relevant to them, and which allows them to advance personal and career opportunities (Armstead et al., 2010).

However, for students with ID the benefits of attending a post-secondary education may not be fully realized. Specialized programs, while making claims of access, inclusion, and lifelong learning, may actually reproduce disability oppression (Charlton, 2010; Ferri, 2008). As Dolmage (2017) and others have shown, post-secondary institutions are bureaucratic structures embedded in the belief that some students are superior to others and that those seen to be inferior need to be sorted, categorized, and pathologized. Bureaucratic structures use written language, organizational talk, and practices (known as text) as forms of knowledge and power to make it seem natural to marginalize, and even exclude, students based solely on human difference (Ferri, 2008; Titchkosky, 2011). As renowned scholar Dorothy Smith (1999) conceives it, the world is social and everyday life is governed by textually mediated ruling relations that have the ability to coordinate and concert people.

While the numbers of specialized programs across North America have increased (Grigal et al., 2013) it is unclear what role scholarly thought and action has in informing the educational practice. A critical review of the literature on educating ID students, and more specifically specialized programs, reveals that the field is largely ignored by academic communities concerned with the theoretical knowledge on adult teaching and learning practice. It seems reasonable to expect that specialized programs would align with the established fields of special education and adult education because of the characteristics of learners: adults with a disability. However, there is very little or no evidence that either field is contributing to an area of study that shapes the contexts and practices of specialized programs. This is concerning because as Peña (2014) tells us, scholarship is an important way that instructors and administrators in post-secondary education learn pedagogical approaches and critical issues within an academic field.

## **Special Education**

Although a link between specialized programs and special education is not clearly defined in the literature, it can be argued that both fields share commonly accepted knowledge used to teach disabled students. A perusal of any special education journal suggests the best way for children with disabilities to learn is by using remedial education. Remedial education (also known as developmental education) stems from the idea that some students need and benefit from behaviour modification and functional skill development. The argument rests on the notion that disabled students fall short of culturally determined expectations of development and achievement standards (Baglieri et al., 2011; Crawford & Bartolomé, 2010). Curricula, for example, used in public-school special education models is often designed to teach children life skills such as how to take public transit, organize their belongings, and other simplistic functional concepts.

Typically, remedial education approaches emphasize linear, low-level skill development rather than rigours and robust knowledge acquisition, such as critical thinking and advanced problem-solving skills, that provide a well-rounded learning experience (Dudley-Marling & Gurn, 2010; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). Because of the history of disability and education, remedial education can seem logical and rational; however, further investigation exposes that it is deeply entrenched in eugenic thinking and practices (Crawford & Bartolomé, 2010; Davis, 2006; Ferri, 2008). The role that eugenics plays in the education of disabled students is explained by Snyder and Mitchell (2006) when they describe special education as an “elaborate bureaucratic surveillance operation” (p. 91). In this statement the authors were referring to how eugenics pioneered diagnostic practices in public education to “weed out” disabled students from the general student population because they were seen to be defective and deviant.

Strict adherents of special education assume that disabled students benefit from being separated out from their peers because it allows them to receive greater individualized (direct, one-to-one) instruction and reductionist learning approaches (knowledge passed from teacher to student) (Kauffman et al., 2017). Underlying these presumptions is the thinking that disabled students are not able to learn in similar ways as their non-disabled peers (Ferri, 2008; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). When a student is labelled as having a disability and placed in special education they are assumed to need specialized classrooms, curricula, and teachers because they are “*fundamentally different*” (Brantlinger, 2004, p. 20, italics in original) and as a result need services that help them to cope with or overcome their personal limitation (also known as disability) (Collins et al., 2016; Erevelles, 2016; Goodley, 2007).

However, Brantlinger (2004) and others argue that special education draws from deficit models of medicine and science that do little more than justify social *othering* through the power of exclusion and sorting processes. Ferri (2008) describes special education as “a tool to shore up the exclusivity of general education—allowing it to maintain a false sense of homogeneity and a rigid set of normative practices that disempower an ever-increasing number of students” (Ferri, p. 417, 2008). Similarly, Goodley (2007) wrote:

Educational environments, curricula content, teacher identities are all normatively associated with environments, standards and achievements that are at odds with the quirkiness of disabled learners. Schools continue to exclude children by virtue of their inaccessibility...And at the most ordinary level, disabled students continue to be singled out for specialised attention, are segregated from non-disabled peers through the presence of non-disabled adult supporters and remain unrepresented in images of schooling and educational attainment. (p. 5)

Since its inception, instructional models of special education have worked from a deficit knowledge base that reduces disability to an individual functional limitation, a personal tragedy (Ferri, 2008; Titchkosky, 2007). Disability is seen as an abnormal or unnatural problem or condition that falls outside of what is considered to be a normative existence (Baglieri et al., 2011; Dolmage, 2017; Ferri, 2008). Working from deficit models means that the overall purpose of special education is to use behavioral strategies and functional skill development as a way to make disabled students as *normal* as possible (Davis, 2006; Erevelles, 2016; Ferri, 2006; Titchkosky & Michalko, 2009). With a dominant educational schema of segregation and remedial education, it can be argued that special education programs, including specialized programs, use knowledge that is informed by curative interventions, rather than innovative pedagogy.

### **Adult Education**

The field of adult education also uses pedagogical schemes that places disability within a deficit mode. This is evident by the dominant scholarship that view disability as personal problem; rather than a social construction (Rocco & Delgado, 2011). Recently, some adult education scholars have written about the interconnection between social markers such as race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and class, however, disability is too often omitted (Clark, 2006; Rocco & Delgado, 2011). Rocco and Delgado (2011) explain,

Adult educators rarely see or acknowledge the fluid boundaries of disability and how they intersect with our identities. Rather, they discuss disability as an organizing variable, rarely troubling the concept of disability as an identity marker by examining its social construction. (p. 4)

The rise of adult education as an academic field can be traced to the 1920s during a professionalism movement that included the practice of teaching adults (Knowles, 1977). The field sought to advocate for adult education as a far-reaching, liberal, distinct educational enterprise (Knowles, 1977). The activity of adult learning is described by Merriam and Bierema (2013) when they write: “Human beings would not have survived without learning and even today there is a recognition that learning is a basic human endeavor, one that is truly lifelong” (p. 24).

Malcolm Knowles, a leader in adult education, popularized the term “andragogy” in the 1970s with the belief that adults learn differently than children. While the concept of andragogy is under ongoing debate, Knowles suggested that the goal of adult educators was to help learners grow and develop their full potential in their careers and personal lives. The original work of Knowles emphasized self-directed, experiential, and problem-solving approaches to learning for adults. As the theory evolved, Knowles added the assumption that adults needed to be motivated and ready to learn. These five principles are informed by the premise that adult education should focus on what, how, and why students want to learn instead of the instructor controlling what and how students should be taught (Merriam & Bierema, 2013).

Merriam and Bierema (2013) clarified that andragogy emerged from humanistic and behavior psychology, which also resulted in a deficit approach toward the learner. A deficit approach is dominant in the scholarship related to disability and adult education. Illustrating this point, Dolmage (2017) and Rocco and Delgado (2011) used a critical lens to look at the scholarship of disability and post-secondary education. The authors pointed out that most of the publications explores specific disabilities (e.g. learning disabilities) and specific teaching strategies rather than employing a critical disability studies perspective. Critical disability

studies, as an emerging theoretical lens, builds on disability studies theories which are used to analyze disability as a social construction. Over the last two decades or so, critical disability studies as an academic field has expanded lines of inquiry with academic and activist aims that make us rethink how disability is conceptualized and how disabled people are treated (Titchkosky & Michalko, 2009).

### **Critical Disability Studies**

Titchkosky (2010), a Canadian critical disability studies scholar, discussed the meaning of disability in post-secondary education and examined how knowledge and power come together to control what happens to disabled students. She said, “knowledge, like disability itself, is socially organized. Disabled people are socially organized under the rubric of ‘knowledge bases’” (p. 69). Dominant knowledge bases used in post-secondary institutions conceptualize disability as *something* that should be prevented, cured, contained, and managed (Dolmage, 2017; Titchkosky, 2008). In other work, Titchkosky (2010) says, disability is “occupied and controlled by bureaucratic practice” (para. 2). Titchkosky used Max Weber’s (1947) understanding of bureaucracy to describe how institutions systematically control and organize disabled students. Bureaucracy thus shapes the experiences of students in specialized programs in their participation and activities, such as when they are admitted into a program, engage in learning, access campus resources, and receive student evaluations.

Scholars in the area of critical disability studies have been critical of ways that knowledge and power come together to inform the practice of educating disabled children; however, ID students attending specialized programs have been overlooked. This is alarming because as Danforth and Gabel (2006) write in their book on disability studies in education, “there is a constant need for critical analyses [and self-reflexivity] that doubt the sincere



company line, critique the mundane play of power, and press the professionals and the community to experiment with new forms of participation, solidarity, and equality” (p. 1). If there is a clear dearth of critical analysis related to specialized programs, one must wonder what is actually happening in these programs and how the lives of students are impacted.

Recent scholarship has begun to analyze the approach of post-secondary institutions to disabled students (e.g. students with learning disabilities, mobility impairments or sensory impairments) taking general academic courses with or without the support of academic accommodations. Jay Dolmage’s 2017 book *Academic Ableism: Disability in Higher Education* shows how post-secondary institutions use the label of disability to marginalize and exclude certain groups of students through *disablism* and *ableism*. Dolmage borrowed from Campbell (2008) to define disablism as “a set of assumptions (conscious or unconscious) and practices that promote the differential or unequal treatment of people because of actual or presumed disabilities” (p. 6). Ableism, on the other hand, can be described as “situating disability as bad and focusing on that stigma, [which] positively values able-bodiedness... Ableism renders disability as abject, invisible, disposable and less than human” (Dolmage, 2017, p. 7).

Dolmage (2017) pointed out that ableism is the system that comes from disablism and post-secondary institutions use both ideas. In other words, ableism as a concept is defined against a perceived lack of ability. However, the logic of ableism is more prevalent at the post-secondary level because of ideals and values of excellence, ability, and perfection that institutions embody that work to stigmatize and mark as deviant anything or anybody seen as having intellectual, physical, or mental weaknesses (Dolmage, 2017). Ableism is deeply ingrained in post-secondary institutions and easily identified by bureaucratic protocols and practices that act as gatekeepers; for example, using a diagnostic label as a reason to keep certain groups of students out of the

classroom, or blaming the failure of students on their perceived lack of intelligence rather than unfounded or irrelevant models of instruction. A further discussion about ableism will be provided in the following chapters.

Dolmage (2017) also introduced the idea of *lower education* as a way to explain how disability is created and contained by post-secondary institutions. Lower education is the “inverse or opposite of higher education” (p. 3) and refers to a series of academic fields that post-secondary institutions use to justify the need for expertise and knowledge of higher education. Put another way, in part, colleges and universities have built their exceptionalism through so-called helping professional fields, including special education, that are committed to defining disability as a negative *thing*, to be avoided or fixed by so-called professionals (Dolmage, 2017; Ferri, 2008). As Dolmage wrote, “disability is actively submerged and controlled within academia, [and] there is no more ableist location than the university” (p. 7). Dolmage goes on to say that post-secondary institutions work to sort the student population and keep disabled students limited in their choices, away from knowledge, and embedded in systems of power.

As Nirmala Erevelles (2016) and other disability studies scholars have argued, power disparity in post-secondary contexts creates a binary system of *us* (able-bodied) and *them* (disabled). This binary system invents and enforces “dividing lines of discrimination” (Dolmage, 2017, p. 6) that marginalize and oppress students that don’t reflect the norms of the dominant population. To contrast this narrative, the voices of students were used in this study to make visible how knowledge and power is used to socially organize the academic and social activities in adult special education.

### **Adult Special Education**

Today, in the province of British Columbia, most ID students attending post-secondary

education enroll in adult special education programming. Adult special education, the term used by the BC Ministry of Advanced Education (AVED), refers to specialized programs designed for students with the label of an ID or other related developmental disabilities (British Columbia Statistics, 2006). The last comprehensive study published on specialized programs was the Adult Special Education 2006 Cohort Study that found that 15 colleges and universities across the province provided programs that emphasized employment preparation, vocational skills, and life skill development (British Columbia Statistics, 2006). The initial framework of adult special education programs is outlined in a policy statement dated March 1982 put forward by the Ministry of Education. It states that designated post-secondary institutions were to meet the educational needs of disabled adults by integrating them into existing programs or developing specialized (separate) programs, only if necessary, aimed at providing disabled adults with reasonable access and appropriate learning opportunities with the goal of achieving independent living. The adult special education statement explains:

adult special education functions as a set of enabling services and programs to assist the disabled in integrating into existing institutional programming and to assist existing programmes and services in adapting to the needs of the disabled. When participation in regular programmes does not meet the learning needs of a disabled adult, specifically designed programmes may be developed. (Ministry of Education, 1980, p. 2)

In 1983, Frank Cassidy wrote one of the only published articles on adult special education in a short-lived journal titled *B.C. Journal of Special Education*. Cassidy provides a brief history of specialized programs and emphasizes that they were designed for specific disabled students: only those that can meet the explicit aims of a post-secondary institution. He

goes on to suggest that the then vocational mandate and segregated approach of adult special education programs was too narrow and should be broadened to achieve opportunities for life-long learning. Ironically, Cassidy's recommendation has not yet come to fruition. The debate surrounding the restrictive nature of remedial instruction and the segregation of disabled students continues today by those who challenge traditional social-historical beliefs of special education and are committed to beliefs and principles of inclusion.

An inclusive approach to post-secondary education embodies an authentic student experience that follows the normative pathway of any student attending a college, university or technical institution (Uditsky & Hughson, 2012). Pedagogy and practices informing inclusive post-secondary education move away from a deficit model and instead emphasize a constructivist approach to education that assumes learning happens when students construct their own knowledge and understanding of the world (Driscoll, 2005). Driscoll (2005) notes that constructivist learning theory understands knowledge as "constructed by learners as they attempt to make sense of their experiences. Learners, therefore, are not empty vessels waiting to be filled, but rather active organisms seeking meaning" (p. 387). In contrast to behaviorism theory, which is used in adult special education, that holds learning as "a product of antecedents and consequences, and nothing more" (Gallagher, 2009, p. 142), constructivist learning theory views knowledge as co-constructed and learning as a contextual meaning-making process (Belenky et al., 1986).

A review of what literature is available on adult special education reveals that most, if not all, programs in B.C. work from out-dated approaches to disability and education. This is evident in the findings by the Adult Special Education 2006 Cohort Study that used diagnostic labels to categorize the student population: 79% of students had an intellectual/developmental disability,

followed by 75% with a learning disability, and 63% with fetal alcohol syndrome. A further example is that 73% of programs used a diagnostic label as an admission requirement. This is followed by 63% of programs using grooming and personal hygiene skills to determine program eligibility. In this way, disability is conceptualized and defined using text for (and by) bureaucratic processes that allow students to be measured, categorized, congregated, and labelled. The problem with this line of thinking is that it is grounded in ableist thinking that allows for ID students to be perceived and treated differently.

Students attending adult special education programs have little or no choice in the type of education they want or need. Despite minor changes (e.g. name changes, program additions and deletions), adult special education programming has remained static since its inception decades ago, with students being limited in their opportunities to contribute, learn, and participate as adult learners (Banack & Morishita, 2012). In my role as an adult special education instructor, I often think about how tedious and dull the prescribed curriculum is that I teach. Who wants to practice shaking hands or give eye contact in a mock job interview repeatedly in a university course? Heshusius (1984) captured my thinking about teaching in adult special education when she wrote:

One reason for [special education students] not learning stands out from all the possibilities that I have been able to think of: what we ask them to do is often boring! The programmed and sequenced materials, the worksheets, the remedial training models and approaches, so often used as ends in themselves, have no real sense, they make no sense—they are nonsensical. (pp. 364–365)

Adult special education seemingly develops curricula on the prejudicial assumption that students with ID must develop their skill development prior to being included or

belonging in the broader community. In contrast, disability advocate Norm Kunc (2013, 3:45) asserted that “we have it backwards” by stressing the need for disabled students to improve their skills prior to participating in community. Instead, he argued, the best way for students to be included in community is by providing opportunities for learning, personal growth, and employment regardless of skill development. The value, he stressed, is providing opportunities for everyone to learn from each other regardless of perceived readiness and allowing disabled people to become who they want to be and achieve the life they want and desire (Kunc, 2013). In a post-secondary context, this means having disabled students in classrooms of their choice and on campus actively involved with their non-disabled peers.

## **Situating my Study**

### ***Researcher Stance and Self-Reflexivity***

When I started working in adult special education in the early 2000s, I was completing my undergraduate degree in adult education. At that time, I worked to embrace the pedagogy of both special education and adult education, but eventually started to question how they intersected, contradicted, and opposed each other. Adult special education best practices are outlined in a document titled *Best Practices Guidelines* (BPG), which is a self-monitoring tool used by instructors to guide programming throughout British Columbia (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2017). The BPG was developed in 1991 and underwent a review in 2017 by the provincial articulation committee. However, only a few small formatting changes were made because it was believed by the committee members that the delivery and curricular content were current and remained “virtually unchanged” (Best Practices Guidelines, 2017, p. 4).

The BPG is filled with terminology used in special education that reflects deficit-based text. This is troubling because the document continues to inform teaching and learning today, 30 years later. The BPG represents the collective knowledge of instructors in the province; however, the hegemony is rejected by many critical disability scholars and leaves little room to generate new understandings of disability and education (Brantlinger, 2004; Connor et al., 2008; Ferri, 2008; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006; Tomlinson, 2014). It was a sense of disenchantment with the rigid set of beliefs, assumptions, and practices informing adult special education that provoked my interest and desire in this research topic.

More specifically, this study grew out of my two distinct but related personal experiences. First, examining my assumptions about disability and education, and second, conversations with students, and their families, in adult special education who critiqued their educational experience. Through these experiences, I became interested in students with ID as adult learners and became more aware of the falseness of the claims made by adult special education. While most students attending a post-secondary institution are taught using pedagogy that is informed by academic disciplines, students in adult special education are seemingly being educated using what Knitzer et al. (1990) describe as a *curriculum of control*. The concept of a curriculum of control stems from behaviourism theory whereby educators exercise authority and seek obedience (Merriam & Bierema, 2013). Under the guise of a humanitarian ethos, adult special education states that it is designed to help students learn skills so they can become independent and get employment; however, I began to see the curriculum as a disciplinary mechanism designed to keep students segregated and congregated and get them to submit to control and authority.

Embedded in a curriculum of control is the notion of *independence*. What does independence mean for disabled students? Independence in relation to disability is often connected to the physical and cognitive ability to execute daily living skills such as personal hygiene, moving around the community, and managing money. The notion of independence carries a negative connotation because the disabled person is often seen as overly dependent on others to meet their basic needs (Asch, 2001). Curriculum aimed primarily at developing a person's independence reinforces the need for professionals to control the lives of disabled people because of the myths that they are unproductive or under-productive as well as highly dependent. Under a capitalist system, a person's individual worth is often linked to how productive they appear to be and how much money they generate (Erevelles, 2009; Evans et al., 2017).

Carey (2003), in her article "Beyond the Medical Model: A reconsideration of 'feble-mindedness', citizenship, and eugenic restrictions," wrote about how American law worked to deny the civil rights of those deemed disabled based on their perceived dependence on others. If a person with ID was seen as relying excessively on family, the community, or the state they were denied their right to vote, to get married, to have children, or to live in community in exchange for the support and care they received (Okin, 1992). The sentiment of dependency is rationalized today by specialized services that are seen as helping people become more independent and achieve what might be considered good things in life: education, employment, leisure, and social relationships (O'Brien et al., 2009).

Many instructors working with ID students make certain assumptions about what a good life is for the students they work with, drawing from historical logic. In contrast, it is my experience that disabled people are capable (some with support and some without) of defining



and living a good life by making decisions, developing friendships, and having a job. An example of how I learned this was by participating in a mediated program known as Best Buddies. Best Buddies is a program aimed at facilitating artificially constructed relationships between students with a disability label and their non-disabled peers. I came to understand that facilitating a relationship where disabled students are seen as needing specialized services does little more than reinforce dependency and place them in socially devalued role (Wolfensberger, 1983) where they are seen as incapable of such activities as making friends or accessing campus resources on their own. This type of dependency and socially devalued role reinforced and reproduced a diminished status for the ID student within the post-secondary institution.

Another example of how I shifted toward understanding disability differently happened during the final years of my studies in adult education where I had to unlearn many of my long-held assumptions of reductionist learning or what Freire (1970) refers to as the “banking” concept of education. This disruption led me to question how post-secondary education was being used to deposit and fill ID students with authoritative knowledge that the educator believed to be important rather than to embrace education as a responsive, self-directed activity as advocated by adult education theory and practice (Knowles, 1977). Through engaging with pedagogy and practice that emphasized autonomy and experiential and problem-solving approaches to education, I validated my shifting ideas of knowledge production. This led to self-reflexivity toward my experiences as a white, able-bodied, middle-class, heterosexual, privileged cis-female, and I came to recognize ways that knowledge and power are related to social markers.

Eventually I became curious as to why students in adult special education experienced professional rituals that served to force them into segregation, congregation, and exclusion (e.g.

medical-based eligibility, remedial curriculum, and behavioural teaching and learning strategies). I was and continue to be troubled that grooming and hygiene skills are primary admission requirements to an academic program for a university, although this is not clearly articulated in the promotional material or application forms. In my daily work, I constantly asked the following questions: Why are learners in adult special education educated and treated differently than their peers? How likely are students with ID to be self-directed as adult learners when their choice and autonomy are so restricted? Why are many of the post-secondary options for students with ID segregated and focused solely on entry-level employment skills rather than career-specific skills or academic disciplines? These questions resulted in a persistent curiosity that led me to pursue graduate studies in Community Rehabilitation and Disability Studies.

My graduate studies gave me a growing consciousness of how the practice of educating ID students was steeped in outdated disability models and theories. I experienced the disjuncture between my ideals of adult education and the practice adult special education grounded in rigid ableist beliefs that students with ID were not capable of learning in the same ways as other students. It was not until the introduction of what I thought at the time was a radical new approach to understanding disability—the social model—that I began to make sense of my discomfort. By understanding disability as a social construct instead of a personal limitation, I began to resist the medicalized knowledge base used to educate disabled people. The voices of ID students and their families that spoke back against the accepted practices, beliefs, and assumptions of adult special education provided the evidence I needed to begin to think differently about disability and education.

In developing the theoretical and conceptual frameworks for this study, I needed to see myself as a knower searching for meaning in the everyday world rather than relying on

established best practices or traditional positivist research informing the practice. It required not only a shift in thinking about knowledge and who can create it, but also acknowledgement of what knowledge is and who has the privilege, status, and power to govern it. My interest and passion for this work is embedded in the desire to adhere to antioppressive, emancipatory research that contributes to scholarship and practice by destabilizing standard ways of thinking about the practice of educating ID students. I wish to gain a greater understanding of the lives of ID students and their experiences attending adult special education programming within a post-secondary context.

My researcher positioning for this study is that of an insider because of my connection to the research site. This positionality is an advantage because it opens the possibility to explore and disclose how adult special education programming happens the way it does from an emic or insider's perspective—a perspective that is too often absent from the literature. I am employed at one of the institutions in the metropolitan area of British Columbia as a faculty member in adult special education programming. This institution is the site for this study and from here forward is referred to as *the University*.

### ***Purpose and Significance***

This study used a critical disability studies lens and critical ethnography methodology with some propositions of institutional ethnography to gain a deeper understanding of the daily experience of ID students from their perspective. The purpose of this study was to contribute to existing scholarship and practice related to the education of ID students attending a specialized program. It was my aim to critique, unpack, and rethink ways that adult special education is socially organized and how ID students experience ruling relations. As there is little research on adult special education, it is my hope that such attention will lead administrators, scholars,

educators, families, and students thinking about disability and education differently, and promote more equitable and inclusive opportunities for ID students.

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it is conducted from the voice of ID students in specialized programming. This voice of the ID student is important because disability-related research can be alienating and be oppressive and have little impact on the lives of disabled people (Oliver, 1992). Locating knowledge in the lived experience of ID students offers new ways to deconstruct able-bodied privilege. Second, this study contrasts positivist research approaches that objectify disability as a deviation from normative existence. Instead, in this study, ID students are seen as constructors of meaning, meaning that is constructed when they interact with their world (Crotty, 1998). Finally, the interpretive process of this study aims to disrupt both the neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions of research, theory, policy, and practice related to the education of students with ID, revealing and critiquing ways that knowledge and power are exercised.

### ***Research Questions***

The research questions guiding this inquiry include the following: 1) How is adult special education programming at a post-secondary institution socially organized? and 2) How is knowledge and power reflected in the academic and social activities of students with ID through text? To explore these broad questions, I will ask the following sub-questions:

- A. What are the written materials and organizational talk and practices that describe adult special education programming at a post-secondary institution?
- B. How do students with ID experience ruling relations in adult special education programming in a post-secondary institution?

- C. How are in-class and campus activities of students in adult special education programming managed, regulated, and controlled by written material and organizational talk and practices at a post-secondary institution?

### *Use of Language and Discourse*

The use of language—written and verbal—shapes how people think, talk, and write about disability (Gabel, 2001). My understanding of language follows Smith’s approach to the term discourse, which she originally adopted from Michel Foucault (Griffith & Smith, 1987).

Foucault used the term discourse to describe systems of knowledge that are united by a common way of communicating, which is independent of the individual (Foucault, 1982). Smith (1999) expanded the concept to describe discourse as a text-based form of ruling relations. So while Foucault (1972) defined discourse as a “group of statements that belong to a single system of formation” (p. 121), Griffith & Smith (1987) followed Smith and referred to discourse as a “textually-mediated form of social organization embedded in and facilitating the work of managing, administering and ordering the everyday social world” (p.103). For Smith, (1987) discourse was:

a conversation mediated by texts that is not a matter of statements alone but of actual ongoing practices and sites of practices, the material forms of texts (journals, reviews, books, conferences, classrooms, laboratories, etc.), the methods of producing texts, the reputational and status structures, the organisation of powers intersecting with other relations of ruling in state agencies, universities, professional organizations, and the like. (p. 214)

In other work, Smith (2006) reminds us, the exercise of power operates through discourse and language is “a key constituent of institutional relations: in contemporary society, large-scale

coordination is effected primarily through text-based forms” (p. 118). The power of language is exemplified in how AVED outlines the purpose of adult special education: “to provide programs and services to BC learners who face barriers in post-secondary education because of a disability or a combination of learning difficulties that prevent scholastic success” (British Columbia Statistics, 2006, p. 2). The language used by AVED suggests that disability is a *thing*. The language used identifies disability as a bodily, sensory, emotional, or intellectual limitation or condition that some people *have* that acts as a barrier to their success (Titchkosky, 2001). Titchkosky (2001) argues that disability-related language is used to organize disability as “something that comes along which results in disability being seen as a “remedial or managerial issue” (p. 126).

A highly debated point in the use of disability-related language is what terms to use when naming disability and disabled people (Gabel, 2001; Titchkosky, 2001). The discussion is most often between the use of person-first language (e.g. student with a disability) and disability-first language (e.g. disabled student). Gabel (2001) explained how person-first language grew out of the disability rights movement and remains the dominant way that policy makers and helping professionals refer to people with disabilities. The intent of person-first language is to separate the person from the disability with the purpose of avoiding the objectification of the person (Titchkosky, 2001) and instead privileging full humanity (Gabel, 2001). Rationales against person-first language made by Titchkosky (2017) and others include the medicalization and individualization of disability (Evans et al., 2017; Gabel 2001). Person-first language holds a historical legacy that identifies disability as a medically derived term that is understood as a human difference viewed as abnormal. If disability is understood as a medical condition intrinsic

to the person, it forces social ideals and bureaucratic structures to control them in an effort to make them fall within a normal range (Linton, 1998; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006).

Identity-related language has recently re-emerged as a countermovement to person-first language (Gabel, 2001). Prior to person-first language prevailing as the dominant way to name disability, terms such as *handicapped person* and *retarded person* were commonly used. Language, as anyone who has been called terms such as *retarded* can attest, holds power (Smith, 1990). Much of the language used over the years and across cultures to represent disability and disabled people has been employed to stigmatize, alienate, and disrespect people (Linton, 1998). More recently, some scholars and activists have taken greater control of how terms are defined and use identity-related language such as *disabled student* to signify disability pride (Gabel, 2001) and to acknowledge disability oppression (Linton, 1998). The primary critiques of identity-related language are: 1) it places disability as the most important quality of the person, and 2) it is a return to traditional language that may also seem offensive or outdated in many contexts (Gabel, 2001; Linton, 1998).

In this study I use both people-first and identity-first language because it reflects my dual role as an adult special education educator and critical disability studies scholar. I also use person-first language because it is consistent with the research site of this study as well as with the scholarship related to disability and education. My usage of identity-related language is meant to signify my belief that disability is a social construction and those with differences in their bodies, minds or senses are disabled by oppressive social ideas and bureaucratic institutions (Gabel, 2001; Titchkosky, 2007).

Other terms used throughout this study are from scholars with diverse academic backgrounds, including education, sociology, psychology, and critical disability studies. These

authors apply a range of terms that reflect dominant professional hegemony. While this hegemony can shift over time and hold different meanings depending on context, for the purpose of this study the following terms are used:

1. *Intellectual disability (ID)*: refers to a construct used to denote those with perceived limitations in individual functioning. The construct of ID has been labeled in many different ways, including as developmental disability, learning disability, mentally retarded, handicapped, intellectually impaired, and intellectual impairment (Wehmeyer, 2013).
2. *Adult special education (ASE)*: used by the Ministry of Advanced Education to refer to programs offered at British Columbia public post-secondary institutions that are available to students with “permanent disabilities or a combination of learning difficulties that hinder scholastic success” (British Columbia Statistics, 2006, p. 2).
3. *Special education*: refers to a set of services designed for a student in the public-school system who has "a disability of an intellectual, physical, sensory, emotional or behavioural nature, has a learning disability or has special gifts or talents” (Ministry of Advanced Education, 2016a).
4. *Specialized education*: refers to a practice whereby students with disabilities are segregated or partially segregated from fellow students and taught in separate classrooms.
5. *Students with intellectual disabilities or ID students*: refers to students attending adult special education programs at a post-secondary institution.
6. *Peers*: refers to students without a disability label attending a post-secondary institution in typical ways (Uditsky & Hughson, 2012).



7. *Inclusive post-secondary education*: refers to a student experience where students with disabilities are included in regular courses and educational activities, which follow a similar pathway of their peers (Uditsky & Hughson, 2012).
8. *Socially organization*: refers to how knowledge and power come together to systematically control and concert a person's everyday world for purposes not necessarily their own (Smith, 2006). Texts are likely to hold power to socially organize the lives of people in bureaucratic structures.

### **How This Thesis is Organized**

This thesis is organized in the following format. Chapter Two describes the theoretical orientation and conceptual frameworks I used to guide the study's questions, literature review, findings, and interpretation. It also includes a short discussion on my assumptions as the researcher followed by a description of how the work of Smith and Foucault influenced the study frameworks. Chapter Three explores relevant literature, from a critical perspective, related to models of disability and adult learning. Chapter Four describes my understanding of qualitative methodology and a description of the research design including data collection methods, interpretation of findings, and ethical considerations. Chapter Five discusses how I made sense of the findings and data interpretation. Following this, Chapter Six discusses how deficit-based text is used in adult special education to *other* and exclude ID students. Finally, chapter Seven outlines study limitations, future research, conclusion, and includes a postscript.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Framework

### Theoretical Framework

This study used the following theoretical framework. First, ontologically I hold a critical realism perspective. Critical realists assert that, although it is difficult to prove or refute, much of reality exists independently of human consciousness and experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Sayer 1992). As Andrew Sayer (1992) suggested in his book *Method in Social Science*, “The world exists independently of our knowledge of it...[and the] production of any kind of knowledge is a social practice” (p. 4). Critical realists assert that things happen in the world that are unobservable structures (e.g. ableism) that cause the observable events (e.g. disability) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Because of this, critical realists’ ontology views disability as a relationship between factors such the body, society, and identity.

Second, my epistemological stance is social constructionism as I believe truth and meaning are constructed between human beings and their world (Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Social constructionism is embodied in many theoretical perspectives, including critical theory, and posits that knowledge is negotiated and social (Smith, 1990). The emphasis of social constructionism is on the way that culture shapes society. Similarly, but differently, the term constructivism shares the social dimension of truth and meaning as socially constructed but differs in that it focuses on individualistic understandings rather than a “collective generation [and] transmission of meaning” (Crotty, 1998, p. 58). Social constructionists, therefore, emphasize jointly constructed understandings, while constructivists primarily emphasize the worth and value of individualistic understandings (Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Keeping with these positions permits this study to focus on understanding how ID students

construct the meaning of their experiences, while at the same time conceptualizing and theorizing disability using critical theory.

Third, critical theoretical perspectives were used to explore how knowledge and power shape the experiences of ID students. These approaches are associated with a critical mandate yet share similar assumptions of the underlying influences of ableism in the domination and subordination of disabled people. Working from a critical mandate calls for a continued focus on hegemony and injustice, with overall goals that contribute to empowerment and social justice (Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Kincheloe and McLaren (2005), in relation to research and methodology, write “critical researchers often regard their work as a first step towards forms of political action that can redress the injustices found in the field site or constructed in the very act of research itself” (p. 305).

Finally, critical ethnography in the spirit of hermeneutics was used to understand and make meaning of interpretations. These interpretations can be constrained historically and by text (Carspecken, 1996; Crotty, 1998). Hermeneutic theory, or the critical theory of interpretation, works towards “gaining an understanding of the text that is deeper or goes further than the author’s own understanding... [and attempts] to reconstruct the world in which the text came to be and to situate the text within it—and back again” (Crotty, 1998, p. 95). Critical ethnographers assert that text is a constituent of power; therefore, a hermeneutic approach closely aligns with critical theoretical perspectives and social constructivism.

### ***Critical Ethnography***

Critical ethnography is a methodology that emerged from conventional ethnography and as a result shares several fundamental characteristics (Carspecken, 1996; Thomas, 1983).

Thomas (1983) explained that because conventional ethnography originated from a critical

framework, the boundaries between the methodologies are often blurry. Conventional ethnography is the description and interpretation of people interacting together—a culture. Critical ethnography is also concerned with the description and interpretation of culture, but with an added commitment to critiquing it and changing it (Carspecken, 1996; Madison, 2005; Thomas, 1983). Another important aspect of critical ethnography is an increased understanding and appreciation of the research context; cultural organization, physical spaces, policies, regulations, and practices (Madison, 2005).

It is generally understood that the field of critical ethnography is closely connected with that of critical inquiry. Crotty (1998) explained that researchers working with a critical inquiry perspective “find themselves interrogating commonly held values and assumptions, challenging conventional social structures, and engaging in social action” (p. 157). Madison (2005) explained that critical ethnography “takes us beneath surface appearances, disrupts the status quo, and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions” (p. 5). The work of critical ethnographers is to challenge inequalities and injustices within bodies of knowledge, institutions, and social practices while working towards social change that brings equity, social justice, and full participation in society (Carspecken, 1996; Madison, 2005). This is a key difference between critical ethnography and conventional ethnography. As Thomas (1993) explained: “Conventional ethnography describes what is; critical ethnography asks what could be” (p. 4).

A critical ethnographer approaches a research problem as a “window” to a larger context by offering insights to new topics or topics about which little is known (Madison, 2005; Thomas, 1993). A typical research question in critical ethnography would seek to understand *how* a cultural group is privileged over other cultural groups with the aim of using the findings to advocate for social change. In conventional ethnography, a typical research question would focus

on *how* members of a cultural group interact with each other over a period of time. The most common types of data sources for conventional and critical ethnography include observations and interviews with key students (Madison, 2005; Patton, 2002). Key students are those considered to be most knowledgeable about the culture under study. However, observations and interviews are rarely sufficient for critical ethnography (Thomas, 1998). As Thomas explained, “answers are pre-patterned rhetoric that reflect learned accounts rather than actual reasons” (p. 38). Put another way, often those living in a culture are unaware of how power and control impact their lives, and this requires researchers to consider additional data sources such as artifacts or documents.

Thomas (1998) suggests that critical ethnographers start the data collection with activities that the researchers can return to if more information is needed and may help to define the research direction. This type of flexibility is needed to clarify research topics as they emerge and provide direction for the study to follow. Critical ethnographers need to look beyond the mundane events of social life and seek to expose inconsistencies or gaps where issues of power and control exist (Madison, 2005; Thomas, 1998). Thomas suggests a critical ethnographer’s greatest skill is to identify and pursue questions that may lead to disrupting surface appearances.

The interpretation stage is where distinctions between conventional and critical ethnography are most pronounced (Thomas, 1998). Conventional ethnography seeks to describe how a culture works and lives through theme analysis, with an emphasis on overall interpretation (Patton, 2002). Thomas (1998) describes interpretation for critical ethnography as a defamiliarization process. Defamiliarization refers to “a way of distancing ourselves from the taken-for-granted aspect of what we see and allowing us to view what we have seen more critically” (p. 43). Critical ethnographers take the data that focuses on ways that some people

continue to be disadvantaged and consider alternative ways that power relations can be understood.

Another unique perspective of critical ethnography compared to conventional ethnography is in how the research findings are presented. In conventional ethnography the researcher often speaks for their students while critical ethnographers speak on behalf of them with the intent of giving authority to their voice and empowering them (Thomas, 1993). Thomas explained that critical ethnographers “use their work to aid emancipatory goals or to negate the repressive influences that lead to unnecessary social domination of all groups” (p. 4).

### **Assumptions of the Researcher**

Given the above theoretical framework the following assumptions guided all aspects of this research process and informed my interactions with the study participants:

1. The phenomenon of disability is constructed through social and cultural interpretation and changes over time (the experience of disability is based on individual subjectivities—personal experiences—and has an infinite number of understandings and manifestations).
2. Disabled people live with ableism embedded in personal beliefs, society, institutions. Ableism is often a result of a traditional medical view of disability which reduces social disadvantages to individual problems in need of medical scrutiny and professional expertise rather than as factors addressed through social interactions.
3. Disabled people are knowledge producers and experts in how they experience and live their own lives (Campbell et al., 1998).
4. Contemporary organizational knowledge is organized and coordinated through the use of text across multiple settings (Smith, 2005) by structures that maintain and

perpetuate power inequalities driven by historical and current structures of political, economic and social hierarchies. These structures shape how people live and experience life, often without their awareness (Crotty, 1998; Smith 2005).

5. There are differences in the academic and social experiences of students in adult special education and other university students at a post-secondary institution.

### ***Limitations/Delimitations***

The following limitations and delimitations have been derived from the theoretical and conceptual frameworks and related literature and may affect or impact this inquiry:

#### ***Limitations.***

The following limitations may restrict the scope of this inquiry:

1. The ID students may be affected (e.g., behaviour, engagement in activities) by being observed by the researcher. The researcher shares a similar professional identity and authority as adult special education staff and faculty members that work on the research site.
2. The historical information written about the ASE program may be incomplete or inaccurate and limited in availability.

#### ***Delimitations.***

I have imposed the following delimitations to narrow the scope of this inquiry:

1. The potential students will be recruited from a specific campus and interviews will be limited to a sample size of 4-6 due to the time constraints involved in interviewing and subsequent interpretation of data.

2. Although *the University* has five campuses, students will be recruited from the main campus where I do not have direct contact with potential ID students.
3. The keywords to search scholarship on the education of students with ID in a program at the post-secondary institution will be limited to significant disabilities, mental retardation, intellectual disability and developmental disability, and focused on literature from Canada and United States. The term *program* is restricted to opportunities in a segregated educational model, as opposed to integrated activities within a post-secondary context or a work experience (e.g. non-paid work setting).

### **Conceptual Framework**

In the early stages of the study, I drew heavily from Smith's writings on social organization. During the research process, I returned to the scholarship to explore additional theorists to expand my knowledge. Michele Foucault's work on theories of discipline and knowledge-power relations was fundamental in developing my understanding of the bureaucratic structure of *the University*. The following is a discussion of how the work of both Smith and Foucault were used in an interwoven manner to consider critical questions that emphasized ruling relations; oppression of certain students; and intersections of knowledge and power.

### ***Social Organization With Smith***

Coming out of Smith's work, Campbell and Gregor (2002) discuss how social organization is the "interplay of social relations, of people's ordinary activities being concerted and coordinated purposefully" (p. 27). In other words, people's everyday activities are socially organized by knowledge and power. Here knowledge is understood as specialized institutional forms of text (e.g. admission forms and evaluation forms) and knowledge and power are directly



related as power is exercised through knowledge to concert and coordinate the activities of students (Smith 1990). Smith (1990) explained, “Power and knowledge are not linked in some mystical conjunction such as that enunciated by Michel Foucault. What we call ‘power’ is always a mobilization of people’s concerted activities” (p. 80). For Smith, the relationship between power and knowledge is embedded in ruling relations. Ruling relations can be seen as bureaucratic activities that shape people’s lives such as written language, organizational talk, and practices. For example, every day, students in adult special education wait outside specifically designated classrooms labeled with “Access Programs for People with Disabilities” above the door. Once the door is opened at 8:50 a.m., students enter the room and find a seat beside other ID students where they learn about finding and keeping a job. At break times the students leave the class and return at designated times. The same routine happens repeatedly during the 10 months they are students, except when they participate in a non-paid work experience in the community.

These ID students are socially organized to know their *place* within the post-secondary setting. The injustices are many. First, the label of disability above the classrooms reinforces the need for separating and congregating students from the rest of the student population. Second, only offering remedial curriculum with a focus on employment preparation, vocational skills, and life skill suggests that ID students have limited capabilities and must only be taught job-related behaviours. The students are then asked to apply these skills in an entry-level job placement rather than engaging with academic curricula that promotes intellectual capacity. Finally, ID students are expected to follow an admission process that puts expectations and demands on them not asked of any other students such as providing evidence of travel independently and safely in the community and appropriate grooming and personal hygiene

skills.

A post-secondary setting allows these unjust practices because the institutions are power structures. These power structures are reinforced by legislative frameworks, including the *British Columbia Human Rights Code*. The Code guarantees the right to equal treatment in education for disabled students. However, students with ID attending specialized programs may not be protected under this legislation because adult special education holds special admission criteria that is different than the standardized admission criteria outlined by post-secondary institutions (e.g. a letter grade of C in English 12). Consequently, post-secondary institutions do not appear to have the same legal duty to accommodate students with ID as they do other students. The line between legalistic frameworks and specialized programming is rarely discussed in the scholarship and appears to be an under-theorized phenomenon that needs further consideration and interpretation.

Smith, and her followers, also informed my understanding of how the students' theorized about their experience. Titchkosky (2011) drew from Smith's theories to apply her own knowledge and ways of knowing as a methodological approach to the idea of access in a post-secondary context. By asking how "we might come to know disability differently" (p. 16), Titchkosky used interpretations of access as a way to talk about how it seems natural to include and exclude some people because of embodied differences. Her discussion of *who* belongs and *how* they belong in terms of social relations and social spaces aligned with my understanding of how ID students participate in in-class and campus activities. Titchkosky said,

the lack of access for disabled people (and thus our absence) is naturalized to such an extent that even when barriers and processes of exclusion are noticed they are still conceived as somehow natural, reasonable, sensible, and even seemingly

justifiable. Further, it seems that some bureaucratic mechanism of inclusion might actually serve to normalize the ongoing exclusion of disabled people. (p. xi)

### ***Discipline Theory With Foucault***

I found the work of Foucault to offer a “box of tools” (Foucault, 1977, p. 208) that proved useful. It was during the start of the data collection stage of this study that I was drawn to the idea that power is not fundamentally repressive, but rather productive (Foucault 1976). Power, for Foucault, operates within bureaucratic structures, and produces “a whole domain of knowledge and a whole type of power” (Foucault, 1977a, p. 185). Applying Foucault’s concept of power to adult special education provided insight into ways that students with ID experience the normalizing demand for them to cope with or overcome their disability and be made as normal as possible.

A key concept of Foucault’s work was *biopower*. Biopower, Foucault claimed, operates on the body; it is “an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations” (Foucault, 1998, p. 140). Foucault argued that at the end of the eighteenth-century Western society moved away from juridical types of power towards a form of power that exists “to discipline the body, optimize its capabilities, extort its forces, increase its usefulness and docility, integrate it into systems of efficient and economic control” (Foucault, 1980a, p. 139). Sullivan (2018) describes biopower as being dispersed in a network of social relations between and among people that is rooted in bureaucratic techniques of discipline including surveillance, and punishment. In short, biopower operates on the body and exists in action by constraining subjects to act in productive ways, thereby subjugating them (Pylypa, 1998; Sullivan, 2018). Unlike Smith, who considered power

as a form of ruling relations, Foucault viewed power as a form of government—any activity aimed at governing one’s conduct (Foucault, 1977).

Foucault (1982) asserted that disciplinary techniques are a form of government to regulate the ordering of oneself, or others, ordering around social norms. The primary function of disciplinary techniques is to observe people, classify them, and judge them based on human difference (Sullivan, 2018). Foucault’s described the function of this type of government as “correct training” (Foucault, 1977, p. 170). The concept of correct training could be applied to adult special education because students are molded and guided in accordance with bureaucratic rules and social ideals of the post-secondary institution. When power relations are understood as government then the primary goal becomes making the student body— or the subject— both useful and productive.

In her article about techniques of discipline, Pylypa (1998) explained that Foucault believed that knowledge is enhanced and produced by power and power continually induces knowledge. Foucault was particularly interested in knowledge concerned with normative science or what is known as modern day disciplines of human sciences such as psychology, medicine, psychiatry. Foucault’s work on normative science shows how power is productive by producing discipline-specific knowledge. Discipline-specific knowledge that “produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth” (Foucault, 1977, p.194) that defines what is normal, deviant, and appropriate. Pylypa (1998) explains that government operates by constructing a subject, a subject that asks the question “what they ‘should’ do” and ‘should not’ do and to ‘confess’ any deviation” (Pylypa, 1998, p. 24).

Foucault’s account of a subject is inseparable from an understanding of power’s ability to objectivize people (Tremain, 2018). To be *objectivized*, for Foucault, refers to the ways some

people are divided by others and made into subjects such as disabled (Pylypa, 1998). Using Foucault's theory, if a person is objectivized, for example as disabled, they are subjectivized as having a disability. To be subjectivized as having a disability means that the disabled body becomes, or is part of, of the medicalized and scientific way that disability is primarily understood. The subject, according to Foucault, has double meaning: 1) subject to self, and 2) subject to someone else. Both meanings refer to the capacity of power to turn people (subjects) into things (objects).

In addition to the notion of power, Foucault argues, comes the concept of resistance. Resistance is central to the notion of power because Foucault suggests power relations "are possible only insofar as the subjects are free" (Foucault, 1977a, p. 202) and there is always the possibility of resistance when power is exercised. Resistance is as much about opposing inherent authority of discipline-specific knowledge as it is about challenging one's own identity (Tremain, 2018). Discipline-specific knowledge is used in adult special education to control behaviour or teach subjects to act in certain ways by regulating their space (e.g. design), time (e.g. calendar), activities (e.g. movement).

Foucault proposes the concept of a *docile body* to illustrate ways that disciplinary techniques exercise control so they can be "subjected, used, transformed and improved" (Foucault, 1977, p. 136). A docile body is a target of power that is under a constant 'gaze'. The gaze is an operation of power because before a person can be controlled or managed the body must be under surveillance so it can be "described, judged, and measured, [and] compared to others" (Foucault, 1977a, p.191). For example, students in adult special education are usually under some kind of surveillance that allows instructors to construct a certain type of student—namely an intellectually disabled student.

The power of the gaze, according to Foucault, does not need to be constant because often just the possibility of being observed is often sufficient for people to maintain social order. Technique of surveillance and punishment are exercised to create bodies that are “trained or corrected, classified, normalized, excluded, etc.” (Foucault, 1977a, p. 191) in the hope that the subject would be reformed and corrected and revealed as a new subject.

Foucault maintained:

In organizing “cells,” “places,” and “ranks,” the disciplines create complex spaces that are at once architectural, functional and hierarchical. It is spaces that provide fixed positions and permit circulation; they carve out individual segments and establish operational links; they mark places and indicate values; they guarantee the obedience of individuals, but also a better economy of time and gesture. They are mixed spaces: real because they govern the disposition of buildings, rooms, furniture, but also ideal, because they are projected over this arrangement of characterizations, assessments, hierarchies. (p. 148)

Foucault’s critique of the prison helped to build my understanding of how bureaucratic structures in adult special education act on the body to objectivize students as intellectually disabled and subjectivized them as having an intellectual disability. I came to think about ways that ID students are under a deficit gaze that operated from an ableist knowledge-power regime using the means of surveillance and punishment. These practices are enacted by both the student and the bureaucratic structure using deficit texts in the written materials and organizational talk and practices.

Smith and Foucault were instrumental in developing my theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Both theorists provided insights that led me to reflect on how I governed myself as

an educator working in a post-secondary setting. I recognized that my obligation had been to that of the bureaucratic structure of *the University* rather than to ID students. It was my perceived duty and favoured actions to *the University* that helped to maintain the production and maintenance of practices that socially devalued ID students. I eventually came to the realization that this was the site of ambivalences and tensions in my changing epistemology that I discuss in chapter One that lead me to conducting this study.

## Chapter 3: Critical Review of Disability Models and Adult Learning

### Disability Models: The Social Construction of the “Problem” of Disability

Disability models (or disability theory) present certain ways of conceptualizing disability that reflect historical time periods and cultures (Evans et al., 2017; Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009; Olkin, 1999). While there are a number of different disability models in the scholarship, this paper discusses three dominant ways disability is viewed: the medical model, the social model, and critical disability theory. Olkin (1999) explained that the basic premise of all disability models is the same: to understand the *problem* of disability, identify who is responsible for the problem, and ways the problem should be addressed.

It is necessary to understand the principles of disability models because they underpin bureaucratic structures and social ideals that are placed on disabled people as well as beliefs disabled people often hold themselves (Annamma., 2018; Evans et al., 2017; Titchkosky, 2011). Disability models continue to evolve and co-exist (Titchkosky & Michalko, 2009) and because newer ways of thinking and talking emerge it does not mean that previous models fade away. How disability models are used to contrast conceptualizations of disability is clearly illustrated by the medical model.

#### ***Medical Model***

The medical model emerged during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and remains one of the most prevalent ways that disability is understood in society today. It is synonymous with terms like deficit-based approach or functional-limitation model (Evans et al., 2017). Adherents to the medical model operate on the assumption that disability is “within the individual as an intrinsic state of being, something missing that is in need of a fix” (Connor et al., 2008, p. 497). As Slee



(2004) wrote, the medical model is “rooted in deficit-bound psycho-medical paradigms of individual pathological defects” (p. 47). In other words, the medical model locates disability as a medical problem or condition with the cause stemming from functional limitations in physical, intellectual, emotional, or sensory abilities. A number of variations of the medical model exist; however, they share a similar underpinning: disability is an unfortunate problem, a problem intrinsic to the person that requires being fixed, changed, or treated by specialized services (Erevelles, 2016; Titchkosky & Michalko, 2009).

Borrowing from Evans et al. (2017), the following list outlines key elements of the medical model. First, it is rooted in efforts to categorize and pathologize human difference through issues of prevention, cure, treatment, and rehabilitation. Second, disability is considered abnormal or unnatural, *something* that happens to a few unfortunate people. Third, studying disability is dominated by a positivist standard that sees it as something that can be objectively defined, measured, categorized, and labelled. Finally, from a medical model perspective, disabled people are compared to the notion of what it means to be *normal*. How disability is viewed from a medical model is clearly summarized by Johnstone (2012) when he says, “The medical model of interpretation of disability projects a dualism which tends to categorise the able-bodied as somehow ‘better’ or superior to people with disabilities” (p. 16).

Historically, there were many factors that contributed to the emergence of the medical model. Evans et al. (2017) explained that, initially, it was the advancement of the medical and scientific fields, and second, it was the notion of *normal*. The construction of the normal body came out of research and practices traced to the Enlightenment of the 1770s, when the claim of medical and scientific objectivity gained a strong foothold (Davis, 2010; Dudley-Marling & Gurn, 2010). Specifically, in relation to illness and disease, objectivity was used to emphasize

the need to uncover true facts, promote unbiased laws, and quantify observation (Davis, 2010; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). With evolving medical and scientific discoveries came the construct of normalcy (Davis, 2010; Dudley-Marling & Gurn, 2010).

Davis (2010) explained the construct of normalcy came from the concept of the average man. The average man was constructed by Adolphe Quetelet, a statistician in the mid-1780s. A famous quote by Quetelet explained the formulation of the concept by suggesting “The average man. The emergence of the concept.” Quetelet applied principles of law of error from the field of astronomy to plot the mean value of the human body. He was the first person to use abstract characteristics such as weight, height, and perceived intelligence to create a normal distribution on a bell curve (Davis, 2010; Dudley-Marling & Gurn, 2010; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). The bell curve was and continues to be used to statistically analyze human appearances and capabilities to determine what was expected to be the average body (Dudley-Marling & Gurn, 2010; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). In 1849, Quetelet cautioned against the dangers of relying solely on statistics with another famous phrase when he said, “Statistics are of value only according to their exactness. Without this essential quality they become useless, and even dangerous, since they conduce to error” (Quetelet, p. 198). However, the perceived average body became a sort of ideal or desired state (Davis, 2010). In Davis’ words, “the average then [became] paradoxically a kind of ideal, a position devoutly to be wished” (p. 5). With such thinking came the rarely questioned ideas of what is expected of the human body.

The concept of the norm is rooted in the belief that all members of society should endeavor to be normal, or as normal as possible (Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). The notion of the norm is interchangeable with terms like normal, normalcy, and normality, which, as Davis (2010) explained, hold the general meaning of “constituting, conforming to, not deviating or

different from, the common type or standard, regular [or] usual” (p. 4). Titchkosky and Michalko (2009) discussed how the concept of the norm is important because to be normal is considered to be the “best way of being-in-the-world” (p. 7). The authors go on to explain how all human life is measured against an eugenic ideal of a normal range. The normal range of human variation says that it is acceptable to fall slightly outside of the bell, but a statistical deviation that is considered as unacceptable becomes a problem or condition that requires specialized intervention and treatment (Dudley-Marling & Gurn, 2010; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006).

For instance, the concept of intelligence provides an illustration of how disabled people are measured against a normal range. Early in the 1900s, intelligence testing—intelligence quotient (IQ) was created to fuel the concept of intelligence. Alfred Binet, along with Theodore Simon, created IQ testing as a tool to differentiate those who were considered to be of normal intelligence from those who were considered to have abnormal intellectual functioning (Blatt, 1987). The history of IQ testing shows how it played a central role in discriminatory eugenic laws such as involuntary sterilization, marriage restrictions, educational restrictions, and immigration controls. Not only did eugenic laws work to control and confine those thought of as menaces to society, but it also increased negative attitudes towards disability and was used to inform things like who could and should receive an education and the type of education they received (Ball & Harry, 2010; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). In an educational context, if normalcy was not achieved by a student, it was the student who was flawed, thus making them a liability or burden to the education system (Connor & Gabel, 2013).

As Dolmage (2017) and Snyder and Mitchell (2006) have argued, higher education is profoundly implicated in eugenic ways of thinking through categorizing and sorting students through use of space, pedagogical schemes, and classrooms. Post-secondary institutions show a

devastating history of testing, research, and the invention of disability (Dolmage, 2017), or what Bernadette Baker (2002) calls the “hunt for disability.” As Dolmage (2017) has pointed out in his writing about lower education, post-secondary institutions have used disabled people as research experiments to establish the line between the able-bodied and the disabled. Dolmage goes on to say, “eugenic practices, and in fact eugenics itself, can be seen as the invention of the North American university, which in turn was also built upon the exploitation of people with disabilities” (p. 14). The hunt for disability remains within the contemporary post-secondary system and is demonstrated by institutions rationalizing the use of knowledge and power.

For example, *the University*, similar to many post-secondary institutions, has established protocols and procedures that give the appearance that all students are welcomed. However, a closer look at public documents promoting the purpose of *the University* contradicts how the institution actually functions. Consider, for instance, *the University’s* strategic plan. The plan guides the planning and decision making of the institution for five-year periods. It states that the institution will provide “access to lifelong, meaningful education for all” (Anonymous, 2017). If this is true, where are the students with ID? Only 19% of working-aged Canadians with a label of an ID have completed some type of post-secondary schooling, compared to 61% of those without a disability label (Statistics Canada, 2012).

If *the University* authentically wants to be an inclusive university, where access “means everyone, learners of all type[s]” (Academic Plan, 2017), why do so few students with ID attend post-secondary education? The paradox of *the University’s* claim of welcoming all students can be linked to disablism and ableism as well as to the power of eugenics. This is highlighted in Hull’s (2007) article “Equal Access to Post-Secondary Education,” where he explained standardized admission criteria used by post-secondary systems are embedded in IQ testing. In

short, admission criteria function to attract only the best and the brightest students, the normal, while eliminating those considered unworthy or inferior.

Davis (2010) argues that to understand disability, one must also understand the construction of normalcy because the problem of disability is “not the person with disabilities; the problem is the way that normalcy is constructed to create the ‘problem’ of the disabled person” (p. 3). Davis explained further,

any bell curve will always have at its extremities those characteristics that deviate from the norm. So, with the concept of the norm comes the concept of deviations or extremes. When we think of bodies, in a society where the concept of the norm is operative, then people with disabilities will be thought of as deviants. (p. 7)

The eugenics movement strove to improve the human race by controlling those conceived as abnormal or unnatural and deemed *unfit*. The term unfit was used to describe certain members of society that were deemed feeble-minded. Feeble-mindedness was portrayed by eugenicists as a disease that was responsible for society’s social problems (Kliwer & Drake, 1998; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). Snyder and Mitchell (2006) explained that to be feeble-minded was seen as being fundamentally inferior and included characteristics of those considered to be deviant, such as criminals, tramps, alcoholics, the unemployed, the mentally defective, and the diseased from birth.

The construct of being deviant can be traced to sociological theories of *deviance* and *stigma*. Becker (1963) wrote about the labelling theory of deviance that was concerned with *outsiders* (Becker, 1963). An outsider is a person who breaks societal rules and as a result is considered deviant. Labelling theory holds that deviance is not inherent to people or their acts,

but instead a consequence of a reaction or response to cultural roles not being upheld. According to Becker's (1963) seminal work:

social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is *not* a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an "offender." The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behaviour that people so label. (p. 9)

Stigma theory dates back to the Greeks, who used bodily signs to signify tainted or immoral people. Goffman's classic publication *Stigma* (1963) explores how some people are stigmatized and denied full acceptance due to their inability to meet the social standards expected of them. He explained, "possessing an attribute that makes him different from others in the category of persons available for him to be, and of a less desirable kind—in the extreme, a person who is quite thoroughly bad, or dangerous, or weak" (p. 12). The attitudes of society towards those deemed unfit had far-reaching implications. These implications were guided by assumptions that disabled people could not take care of themselves (overly dependent) and that societies needed to be protected from such people (Rioux & Bach, 1994). These beliefs were also internalized by disabled people who were subjected to prevailing devaluing assumptions and attitudes.

Eugenicists' thinking portrayed deviance as biological defect, which led to what Snyder and Mitchell (2006) refer to as *diagnostic regimes*. Diagnostic regimes, according to the authors, included medical and rehabilitative interventions designed to control a person once they were defined as feeble-minded. These interventions shifted over time, moving from the promise of *care*

to an increasing focus on *cure*. This shift in attitudes is evident when considering how state-run mental health institutions and later community-based structures, including as day programs, sheltered workshops, and special education programs, were used as mechanisms of control.

The first mental health institutions were intended to be used for incarceration, but they expanded their mission to providing training in life skills and vocational skills; however, they quickly became places where people were subjected to daily schemes of normalization. The normalization schemes that arose in these institutions included stigmatizing and diagnostic practices that focused on personal upkeep and orderly participation (Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). These institutions, perhaps, can best be described by borrowing Erving Goffman's term *total institutions*. A total institution is a place where like-situated people were subjected to rule-guided authority which aimed to impose some type of social order for those considered deviant (Goffman, 1961).

The institutionalization of disabled people coincided closely with the development of the helping professions such as counselling, rehabilitation, and special education (Snyder & Mitchell, 2006; Titchkosky & Michalko, 2009). Helping professions are often under the ethos of charity, goodwill, and benevolence; however, the purpose of such work is used to coercively control disabled people through medical and scientific measures such as sterilization, exclusion, congregation, and segregation (Johnstone, 2012; Titchkosky & Michalko, 2009). Why this is so concerning is because the relationship between institutions and vulnerability to abuse is consistently and clearly demonstrated in the literature (Rioux & Bach, 1994; Stanley et al., 1999). This is true for survivors of one of British Columbia's mental health institution; in 2010, former residents won a class-action lawsuit for the extreme physical, sexual, and psychological neglect they experienced while living there (Inclusion BC, n.d.).

Carey (2003) discusses ways that the eugenics movement intertwines with the medicalization of disability. The disease thought of as socially deviant was portrayed as a hereditary and a biological condition that justified the need for disabled people to be contained and managed. The feebleminded were associated with negative stereotypes, and cast as irrational, immoral, and sinful. The stereotypes justified labelling and medical treatment by professionals, which was seen as scientifically objective and in the best interests of the disabled person and the greater society (Carey, 2003). These examples help to clarify how a medical model has produced and reproduces the idea that disability is a *thing* that requires the development of expertise of professions committed to solving the problem of being disabled (Titchkosky & Michalko, 2009). Post-secondary institutions have played a significant role in understanding disability as something to be studied and disabled people as objects of that study, because as Dolmage (2017) suggests the status and elitism of post-secondary education is grounded in such research.

Research from a medical model is dominated by positivism that situates disability as an isolated thing that can be measured against normalcy (Titchkosky & Michalko, 2009). Positivism adheres to the notion that knowledge production is neutral and value-free and research is apolitical (Rioux & Bach, 1994). Thus, studying disability using positivist approaches is based on the idea that quantifiable observations and statistical measurements are the only way to learn about the truth and meaning of disability. Positivism depends on producing professional knowledge—expertise—that can then be used to alleviate the problems and conditions of disability, a method which most often excludes the voices and experiences of disabled people themselves (Oliver, 1992; Titchkosky & Michalko, 2009). The medical model positions disabled people as



research objects that can be dominated, subordinated, and perceived as inferior by oppressive research, practices, and structures (Charlton, 2010).

Many disabled people and their allies have resisted the medical model over the past several decades. The assumption that studying disability as an individual pathology rather than as a social construction is highly criticized (Oliver, 1992; Rioux & Bach, 1994; Titchkosky & Michalko, 2009). A major critique of the medical model is its adherence to a positivist perspective of normalcy, an adherence which ignores disability as a legitimate form of human difference that is not unlike other social makers such as gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality (Titchkosky & Michalko, 2009). Oliver (1992) informed us that disability research from a medical model has done little for those with disabilities. He asserted further, “Disabled people have come to see research as a violation of their experience, as irrelevant to their needs and as failing to improve their material circumstances and quality of life” (p. 105). As Davis (2006) reminds us,

For centuries, people with disabilities have been an oppressed and repressed group. People with disabilities have been isolated, incarcerated, observed, written about, operated on, instructed, implanted, regulated, treated, institutionalized, and controlled to a degree probably unequal to that experienced by any other minority group. (p.1)

In the early 1970s a new way to conceptualize disability emerged—the social model. The social model was developed as an alternative to the medical model and other deficit-based approaches (Oliver, 1993).

## *Social Model*

Mike Oliver, a disability advocate, is often cited as the founder of the social model; however, he explained that the principles of the social model were first introduced in 1976 by the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) (Oliver, 1996). The union, one of the first disability-rights organizations in the United Kingdom, worked to eliminate state-run mental health institutions and find ways for disabled people to take more control of their lives by taking up the fight against disability oppression (UPIAS, 1976).

In a document created by the UPIAS, *Fundamental Foundational Principles of Disability*, the premise of the social model can be found. Disability, according to the social model, is a result of how society is organized, a social construction. The *Fundamental Foundational Principles of Disability* document, written by disabled people, defined disability by stating, “it is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments, by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society” (p. 14). The social model gained momentum during the time of the civil rights movements. The disability rights movements in North America, influenced by the work of pioneering rights activists in the United Kingdom, focused on drawing attention to the lack of equality and rights for disabled people. Despite the many variations of the social model, including functionalist (Albrecht, 1992), materialist (Finkelstien, 1980), and feminist (Thomas, 1999), most of the social models share one key element: the recognition of disability oppression (Snyder & Mitchell, 2006).

Disability oppression shares similarities with past and present oppression of other marginalized minority groups, such women, children, people with differing sexual orientation, and poor people (Charlton, 2010). Yet, disability oppression receives noticeably less attention by

researchers and scholars (Oliver, 1992). Embedded in political, economic, and social structures along with social ideas that serve to stigmatize and marginalize people, disability oppression is rooted in prejudice and discrimination (Charlton, 2010). The social model presumes that disabled people experience oppression because of attitudes and beliefs that view disabled people as unfortunate and disability as a disease or condition that can be cured or treated (Charlton, 2010; Titchkosky, 2009). It is these negative attitudes that have become social ideals that make it somehow acceptable or natural to stigmatize and marginalize people based on pathologizing human difference (Charleston, 2009; Titchkosky, 2011). The extent and implication of the oppression of disabled people are evident in all things that impose constraints—for example, segregated education, inaccessible buildings, and economic disadvantage (Charlton, 2010; Oliver, 2009). The many ways in which *the University* might actually make disability oppression naturalized is a primary interest of this study.

Disability from a social model is not seen as a thing to be measured and categorized against normalcy. Instead the social model places the onus of disability on society. Oliver (1990) explained how the social model

does not deny the problem of disability but locates it squarely within society. It is not individual limitations, of whatever kind, which are the cause of the problem but society's failure to provide appropriate services and adequately ensure the needs of disabled people are fully taken into account in its social organisation. Further, the consequences of this failure does not [sic] simply and randomly fall on individuals but systematically upon disabled people as a group who experience this failure as discrimination institutionalised throughout society. (p.3)

Social modelists see the distinction between impairment and disability as a key element. Impairments are functional limitations in a person's physical, emotional, and social functioning (Barnes, 1991; Evans et al., 2017) and merely a way to describe differences in the human body (Titchkosky & Michalko, 2009). Disability is not viewed as simply a medical problem, but as a result of systemic barriers in society. It is the barriers to participation which act to isolate and marginalize people who are considered the disability (Linton, 1998; Oliver, 1996; Titchkosky & Michalko, 2009). In short, people are not disabled by their impairment, but by the exclusion of society. The social model does not attempt to refute or ignore the medicalized aspects of disability (e.g. biological pain); however, it challenges the belief that impairments are understood as solely a biological reality without any social meaning.

Oliver (2009) explained that one of the main goals of the social model was to make sense and change the relationship between professionals and disabled people. Defining and understanding disability from a medical model exemplified professional dependency and authority for disabled people (Lord & Hutchison, 2007; Titchkosky, 2009). This was evident by the policy statements of the *Foundational Principles of Disability (1976)* document, which reads,

We [disabled people] reject also the whole idea of "experts" and professionals holding forth on how we should accept our disabilities, or giving learned lectures about the "psychology" of disablement. We already know what it feels like to be poor, isolated, segregated, done good to, stared at, and talked down to—far better than any able-bodied expert. We as a Union are not interested in descriptions of how awful it is to be disabled. What we are interested in, are ways of changing our conditions of life, and thus overcoming the disabilities which are imposed on top our physical impairments by the way this society is organised to exclude us.

In our view, it is only the actual impairment which we must accept; the additional and totally unnecessary problems caused by the way we are treated are essentially to be overcome and not accepted. We look forward to the day when the army of "experts" on our social and psychological problems can find more productive work. (p. 5)

Social modelists argued that the strengths of the social model are many, including that it is easily understood and has been used in advancing disability rights movements, particularly with respect to policy and practice (Shakespeare, 2006). By framing disability as a social construct, the social model works to depathologize disability, and demand society remove or eliminate social barriers. Shakespeare (2006) discusses how the social model has encouraged a positive collective and individual identity for disabled people that was liberating for many by shifting the obligation onto society.

Oliver (1996) pointed out that he did not conceive the social model as a disability theory, but rather a "big idea" underlying a social movement. Whether viewed as a disability model or a big idea, the social model has had significant implications for the study of disability. The social model helped to move research away from positivist research dominated by the medical model and towards constructionism. Scholars working from a constructionist stance emphasized the move away from focusing on the cause, cure, prevention and rehabilitation of disability towards considering ways that society contributes to people being disabled. The emphasis is on the lived experience rather than studying disability as an object for which expertise can be developed (Oliver, 1996; Titchkosky & Michalko, 2009).

The concept of false consciousness illustrates how the social model can be effective in its application. False consciousness is a Marxist theory that suggests that many members of society

are unable to see how they experience domination and subordination because of the historical and overarching societal structures (Charlton, 2010). Charlton (2010) explained that disabled people begin to internalize their disadvantaged state and create a (false) consciousness that results in them believing they are less-than and somehow abnormal. He further explained, “Self-pity, self-hate, shame, and other manifestations of this process are devastating for they prevent people with disabilities from knowing their real selves, their real needs, and their real capabilities and from recognizing the options they in fact have” (p. 220).

A disabled student who does not recognize the pervasive system of disability oppression in post-secondary institutions is an example of false consciousness. False consciousness contributes to the notion that segregated education is the best and only way to educate students with ID because it is not recognized as a source of oppression. The social model can disrupt the false consciousness of disabled students by recognizing and acknowledging barriers that are created by ableist ideas and bureaucratic structures and by challenging dominant ways that disability and education are understood. False consciousness is one reason why disability-related research needs to go beyond asking disabled people about their experiences and also include positioning them within historical and social contexts (Snyder & Mitchell, 2006).

Despite advancements, many argue that the social model has not gone far enough in making changes to the lives of people with disabilities (Shakespeare, 2006). Shakespeare (2006) argued a primary criticism of the social model is the maintenance of binary dichotomies: us (the non-disabled) versus them (the disabled) and disability/impairment. This dichotomy manifests in many different ways, including maintaining the need for distinctions in research. Scholarship related to learning disabilities and adult education is an example. The application of the social model is evident in recent research that perpetuates the myth that two

types of theoretical perspectives are needed: perspectives for disabled students and perspectives for non-disabled students. Rather than situating disability as a social construct that intersects with other social markers, most scholars doing research in this area continue to objectify students on the basis of their impairments (Elias et al., 2019), oppression (Miller & Schwartz, 2016), and specialized teaching methods (Fracasso et al., 2014).

There are also concerns that the social model failed to put enough emphasis on the lived experience of disabled people (Barnes, 1991), or the concept of embodiment which Titchkosky (2007) uses. Embodiment, according to Titchkosky (2007), can be described as “all the many and various ways that we (self and other) accomplish relations to being in possession of the bodies that we are... [and] to speak of embodiment is to form some knowledge of it, and how we know our embodied reality acts upon how we orient toward disability” (p. 13). This line of thinking is demonstrated by prominent scholars in critical disability studies who highlight how the social model has overlooked opportunities to further theorize ways that disabled people experience their bodies and their environment, such as race and disability (Annamma et al., 2018), culture and disability (Albrecht, 1992), and gender and disability (Morris, 1991).

It is evident that the social model has been instrumental in advancing shared and individual thinking about disability; however, many believe it is narrowly defined to just one way of theorizing disability (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009; Shakespeare, 2006). More recently, there has been an increased emphasis on critical disability theory (Devlin & Pothier, 2006; Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009; Peña et al., 2016) as a way to challenge or expand existing disability models, namely the social model (Davis, 2002).

### *Critical Disability Theory*

In their article titled “What is so ‘critical’ about critical disability studies?” Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2009) discussed why critical disability theory has recently emerged as the preferred model or theoretical framework to conceptualize disability. The authors explained that critical disability theory emerged in the 1990’s and encourages new ways to think about disability and disabled people through “a social, political and intellectual re-evaluation of explanatory paradigms used to understand the lived experience of disabled people and potential ways forward for social, political and economic change” (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009, p. 49). Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2009) argued that, as an academic discipline, critical disability theory centres disability within structures of power and knowledge creation.

The emergence of critical disability theory can be traced to an eclectic mix of critical theory, such as critical race theory, critical gender theory, and feminism (Devlin & Pothier, 2006). Critical theory is generally defined as a social theory that is concerned with the reflection and critique of society. A primary assumption of critical theory is that certain members of society are dominated and subordinated by others, which results in oppression (Crotty, 1998; Patton, 2002). Critical approaches reject claims that suggest society can be studied rationally and objectively and instead position the production of knowledge as arising from social relations and cultural meaning (Crotty, 1998; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005; Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009). Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) explained that critical theory may be distinguished by other traditional theories because of its commitment to “empowerment of individuals... [and] attempt to confront the injustice of a particular society” (p. 291).

The origin of critical theory is most often associated with the Frankfurt School, but it can also be traced to Freire’s (1970) seminal book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Crotty, 1998;



Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005) At the centre of Freire's approach to education is an act of freedom. Freedom, for Freire, means that people find their own voice to address issues of injustice in their personal situation by self-reflection and emancipation (Freire, 1970). Those who seek emancipation are attempting to confront domination and subordination in their lives by realizing the extent of their oppression and by making a commitment to gaining greater autonomy and human agency. Although Freire based his work on the power imbalance between the colonized (the oppressed) and the colonizer (the oppressor), it can also be understood using the lens of ableism.

Ableism is concerned with the freedom of disabled people (the oppressed), which can only occur when able-bodied (the oppressor) along with disabled people deepen their understanding and implication of social relations that serve to disadvantage certain groups of people. Using Freire's theory means that both disabled people and able-bodied people are understood as dehumanized. Able-bodied people dehumanize themselves by their egocentric and paternalistic thinking, which makes them think they know what disabled people need, want, and ultimately deserve (Freire, 1970). As oppressors, able-bodied people use their power to dominate and subordinate disabled people into thinking they are worthy of less and warrant unequal treatment. Disabled people are dehumanized by having their daily lives socially organized by knowledge and power to act in certain ways—follow rules, obey orders, perform tasks, and respect authority—that often cause false consciousness. What follows false consciousness is the belief that disabled people need to consistently and systematically rely on helping professions because of their lack of capabilities.

Freire's work is also based on the concept of conscientization. Conscientization involves the process of understanding the world better and allowing for the development of critical

consciousness about issues of power. Freire defines conscientization as learning “to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality (Freire, 1970, p. 35). Put differently, to conscientize means that people become critically aware (conscious) of ways that knowledge and power subtly or overtly control their lives. Freire’s work explained how conscientization is not easy because the oppressed often have little or no voice. This is especially true for disabled people who are relegated to being silenced, excluded, and eliminated, or as Freire states, “prohibited from being” (1970, p. 50). While the work of Freire has greatly influenced critical traditions, it is only recently being used to inform critical disability theory (Peters, 2009).

The evolution of critical disability theory is not clearly described in the literature; some scholars argue that it is a maturing of the disability studies discipline, while others suggest it is a distinct theory (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009). I have examined the literature and have seen how the disability-related scholarship is expanding and use critical disability studies as a way of developing my understanding for this study. Critical disability theory should not be viewed as developing in a linear trajectory from the social model. Some scholars argue that critical disability theory emerged as a result of challenging the social model (Davis, 2002), while others situate it as an expansion of the social model (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009). Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2009) note:

We believe that it is not a question of including the social model as one of a number of separate tools in our analysis, but rather of incorporating a more complex conceptual understanding of disability oppression in our work that nevertheless still employs key ideas about disability that saw the light of day with the ascendance of the social model. (p. 50)

The authors' above statement highlights that critical disability theory is a movement away from the lengthy debate between binary preoccupations such as the medical model versus the social model and disability versus impairment (Evans et al., 2017; Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009). In contrast, critical disability theory treats disability ontologically as a social phenomenon that is fluid, intersectional, and changing over time (Connor et al., 2008; Evans, et al., 2017; Titchkosky, 2011). Disability, from a critical disability studies lens, is placed within the structures of social life and is understood through lived experience, which results in a focus on meaning, interpretation, and consequence rather than a singular way of conceptualizing disability (Titchkosky, 2011). For example, disability scholars Devlin and Pothier (2006) explained, "disability is not fundamentally a question of medicine or health, nor is it just an issue of sensitivity and compassion; rather, it is a question of politics and power(lessness), power over, and power to" (p. 2). In addition, Titchkosky (2011) notes disability is an embodied interpretation or "a way of perceiving and orienting to the world" (p. 4), while Gabel and Danforth (2002) define disability as "a symbol of oppression, as a marginal social status, as membership in a minority group, as an embodied experience" (Gabel & Danforth, 2002, p. 3).

Evans et al. (2017) and others suggest some defining characteristics of critical disability theory. First, disability must be understood as a complex and temporal social construction that is situated within cultural meaning, embodiment, and social life. Second, the lived experience of disabled people must be recognized and privileged. Third, a critical disability perspective encapsulates emancipation and social justice aims. Finally, binary dichotomies (e.g. impairment /disability; disabled/able-bodied) used to define disability must be resisted. As an approach, critical disability theory challenges societal ideals and institutions to explicitly analyze ableism in colleges and universities.

Only recently has a critical disability theory using an ableist lens been applied to post-secondary education. Dolmage's (2017) work shows how colleges and universities work to promote ableism by mandating able-bodiedness and able-mindedness, which results in policies and programs being designed to manage disabled students. Similarly, Hutcheon and Wolbring (2012) argue that viewing disability as negative or undesirable leads to policies, programs, and structures embedded in ableism at colleges and in universities. The conceptualization of disability in special education is also an example of ableism. This is evident by the behavioural and remedial approaches to education that dominate the education of disabled students. These approaches to education maintain a student who is unsuccessful as being at fault rather than scientific-based teaching theories and practices that seemingly do little more than continue social exclusion and dependency.

The bureaucratic structures of post-secondary education need to be explored using an ableism lens to expose ways that disability may be negatively implied in written material and organizational talk and practices at a post-secondary institution. Learning how ableism occurs, when, where, and by whom, is necessary to understand disability and how post-secondary institutions work. If ableism in higher education remains an under-theorized phenomenon, it will continue to be maintained, reproduced, and justified in the education of disabled students.

## **Critical Disability Studies and Institutional Responses**

### ***Higher Education***

Dolmage (2017) provides a compelling argument to map the relationship between disability and higher education, stating, "We need to understand how universities work to fully understand disability. Inversely, we really need to understand disability to understand the history

and the future of higher education” (p. 4). Post-secondary institutions are places that use knowledge and power to decide what happens to disabled people. As Snyder and Mitchell wrote, “Historically, disabled people have been objects of study but not purveyors of the knowledge base of disability” (p. 198). This statement explains how keeping disabled people away from knowledge and power contributes to the strong hold of ableism within higher education.

Disabled students in higher education are subjected to the dominant attitudes, beliefs, and practices of society, which reflect changing times (Carey, 2003; Dolmage, 2017; Evans et al., 2017). History shows that past educational practices once thought of as rational and justifiable are now seen as morally and ethically wrong (Danforth, 2009; Dolmage, 2017). For example, at one time women were restricted in their access to higher education based on beliefs that they were the weaker sex with inferior intellectual abilities (Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). Another example is the residential school system, which is a reminder of pervasive discrimination that is now seen as a form of educational apartheid (Henderson, 2015). These educational practices once deemed acceptable are now understood as being nothing less than shocking and appalling. Many scholars have documented the devastating impact of isolating, segregating and congregating students based on the underlying assumption that they are incapable or have little to contribute to a learning environment. Widespread belief in these eugenic ways of thinking continues to be reinforced today for disabled students through low expectations, restricted learning options, diminished opportunities, and discrimination (Collins et al., 2016; Lord & Hutchison, 2007).

### ***Mental Health Institutions to Segregated Education***

The education of students with disabilities, specifically those with the label of ID, can be traced to state-run mental health institutions. In British Columbia, the largest such asylums

opened in 1878 under the name of the Provincial Lunatic Asylum. This institution underwent many name changes, including Woodlands School to Woodlands, until its closure in 1996. The purpose of Woodlands aligns with that of many other such institutions across North America, with the aim of reintegrating patients into society after they had been *fixed*. Woodlands, like many other institutions, originally provided an educational provision what was referred to as work therapy (Eugenic Archive, 2019).

Work therapy was based on the idea that having patients perform manual labour, such as gardening, light construction, and domestic work, would result in a cure or treatment of their disability (Eugenic Archive, 2019). Very quickly, it was learned that patients performing manual labour failed to produce the desired intellectual and behavioural changes in people, and as a result, many such institutions shifted their operating philosophies from custodial care to rehabilitation to education and employment (Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). Some scholars have suggested the general shift towards education and employment can be explained by eugenicists' exploitation of the notion of independence (Carey, 2003). Eugenicists drew on the key rationale that disabled people were economic and social strains to families and society, and the idea that by focusing on education and employment, they could gain skills that would allow them to contribute in some economic way (Carey, 2003).

The philosophical shift of the institutional landscape to education and employment resulted in a shift in the treatment of those living in the institutions. The focus became life skills, vocational training, and vigorous physical exercise. Based on Edouard Séguin's (1866) concept of *physiological method*, it was thought that manual exertion would stimulate brain function and improve a disabled person's cognitive ability (Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). As a physician and educationist, Séguin believed that the feeble-minded could be trained to do things using orderly

participation in activities, such as gymnastics, nature walking, self-care, and low-skill labour that would be of benefit to themselves and society (Séguin, 1866; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). As Snyder and Mitchell (2006) pointed out, the orderly participation of activities within institutions gave way to theory and practice that continue to inform how disabled students are educated today. This parallel can be made to adult special education programs that emerged from institutional models, including sheltered workshops and similar settings that continue to use practices of authority, obedience, and behavioural management.

Eventually, public schools began participating in similar institutional eugenic practices (e.g. IQ testing) by gaining the authority to identify, label, and track those who were seen as having some level of deviancy (e.g. non-English-speaking immigrants, the poor, and the feebleminded). The impetus was to create a separate place in schools to educate disabled students in an attempt to protect the general population from those deemed inferior or abnormal (Crawford & Bartolomé, 2010; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). Once a student was labelled feebleminded, they were placed in non-grading classrooms which offered distinct educational pedagogy that focused on remedial education rather than academic learning presented in regular classrooms (Brantlinger, 1997; Gerrard, 1994). As Snyder and Mitchell (2006) showed us, non-graded classrooms were holding tanks for students who fell short of the normative ideals. The authors explained,

Teachers identified slow students, administrators passed on the list of potentially feebleminded participants to eugenics authorities, and eugenic researchers implemented IQ testing to confirm the identification of “affected” individuals. Once identified, feebleminded students were placed in ungraded classes that

adopted the physical training protocols developed in eugenic training schools. (p. 96)

The predecessor of non-graded classes was special education (Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). Special education as we know it today can be traced to the 1930s, but it gained real significance during the 1950s with the stated purpose of providing access to public education for children with obvious human differences (e.g. cultural, learning and behavioural) (Kliwer & Drake, 1998; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006). The curriculum of special education did not emphasize academic achievement but was viewed as a place to hold students on their way to institutionalization (Blatt, 1997). As Erevelles (2009) explained, the emphasis of special education on life skills has enabled only a few disabled students to find employment, while most are permanently unemployed and are dependent on disability assistance for their well-being.

Adult special education follows many of the tenets of special education. This was highlighted during a personal experience I recently had at *the University*. While serving on a committee responsible for university-wide curricula matters, the students in adult special education were referred to as big problems. The conversation was around the medicalized language used for eligibility criteria to get into the program. The committee was struggling to align the need for students to demonstrate the ability to travel independently and safely in the community with the academic standards and expectations of *the University*. Rather than bureaucratic processes of the institution, such as the eligibility criteria, being seen as acting as barriers or failings, the students were seen as the problems.

Despite limited scholarship, what is available specifically on post-secondary education for students with ID is mostly made available by an American organization called Think College. Think College is federally funded and legislatively driven to achieve the purpose of “developing,



expanding, and improving inclusive higher education options for people with intellectual disabilities” (Think College, 2019). A review of this literature shows that much of Think College’s publications are self-funded fact sheets and reports rather than theory-driven published scholarship, with the focus being linked to topics such as program descriptions (Papay & Bambara, 2011), student participation (Hart et al., 2001), and transition planning (Grigal et al., 2013). This type of scholarship makes the practice of educating students with ID more about managing bureaucratic structures rather than adult learning and makes the practice seem irrelevant and incoherent within the academic arena (Felten, 2013). As Péna (2014) explained in her article “Marginalization of Published Scholarship on Students with Disabilities in Higher Education,” it is important what type of literature is published in an academic field (e.g. top-tier journals versus other formats). Péna goes on to suggest that the type and amount of academic literature in an academic field influence how students are viewed and treated by the broader educational community.

What is void from the scholarship related to educating ID students is the use of theory grounded in evidence-based teaching and learning philosophies and principles. The lack of scholarship informing the education of students with ID prompts the following questions: Where do instructors go to learn about the practice (e.g. curricula)? How do we know the practice is effective? What do we know about the experiences of students? McEahron and Beuhring (2011) justify the need to answer these questions by stating that the practice of educating students in specialized programs is unfounded because it is embedded in “untested assumptions, critical gaps in knowledge, and inconsistencies in the definition of key terms” (p. 1).

Critical approaches to disability and education recognize the limitations of segregated educational models. Research that supports the benefit of teaching skills in these kinds of self-

contained classrooms is meagre (Kliewer & Drake, 1998). In contrast to segregated education in post-secondary education is inclusive post-secondary initiatives. Inclusive post-secondary initiatives recognize and privilege the disabled student's experience, outcomes, agendas, desires, and wants.

### ***Inclusive Post-Secondary Education***

Inclusive post-secondary education is a version of post-secondary education that is distinct in many ways. First, the initiative grew out of a group of parents in Alberta, Canada, who were concerned about the poor post-school options for their children rather than professionally lead by researchers, educators, or administrators. These parents wanted more for their children than the segregated service options of sheltered workshops, special education, and continual work experience placements (Hughson et al., 2006). Second, at the root of inclusive post-secondary education is the desire for ID students to experience normative educational pathways of inclusion rather than segregated education. According to Uditsky (1993), normative educational pathways are life experiences such as relationships, activities, and routines typically pursued by any other student. Applying a normative educational pathway as a theoretical framework to the concept of inclusive post-secondary education means “creating new pathways in ordinary settings that are valued and used with benefit by ordinary citizens” (O'Brien et al., 2009, p. 6).

The central philosophy informing inclusive education as an educational movement is that everyone has the right to fully participate and experience life-long inclusion that includes family, work, leisure, and education (Uditsky & Hughson, 2008). The concept of inclusion embodies principles of human rights and social equity (Ferri, 2008) and evolved from the “integration” movement of the 1970s and “mainstream” movement of the 1980s. The benefits of living an

inclusive life are widely recognized and offer the greatest chance of living the good life (Uditsky & Hughson, 2012). The notion of the good life may seem ordinary for many; however, for individuals with ID it is by no means certain (O'Brien et al., 2009). For example, almost 72% of working-aged adults reported not being in the workforce, while another 6% said they were unemployed. The research on inclusive post-secondary education provides an alternative story. One of the most promising outcomes of inclusive post-secondary education is 70% of learners completing their programs finding employment (Hughson et al., 2006).

O'Brien et al. (2009) explained that one of the greatest challenges for adult learners in inclusive post-secondary education is to overcome the commonly held assumptions about student competency and capabilities. The authors noted that segregated education reinforces negative assumptions; for example, the students can't learn curricula covered in colleges and universities; they may take too much time and energy from instructors; they may water-down the learning experience; and they have nothing meaningful to contribute and nothing in common with fellow learners without disabilities. The authors go on to suggest that these assumptions justify the need for difference-making practices such as special education. In contrast, research on inclusive post-secondary education contradicts these assumptions and indicates that adult education settings are receptive, accommodating, and supportive of inclusive post-secondary initiatives (Uditsky & Hughson, 2008; Mosoff et al., 2007).

The inclusive post-secondary education initiative in British Columbia is STEPS Forward. STEPS Forward is a family-driven organization that provides inclusion support to learners with ID, including those with severe and multiple disabilities, at seven colleges and universities throughout the province (Steps Forward, n.d.). Because students of typical inclusive post-secondary education initiatives do not meet the academic entrance requirements established at

many post-secondary institutions, they are registered as auditing learners. As auditing students, they have full access and privilege to campus life and are fully included in regular courses and completely modified course readings, assignments, and exams (Mosoff et al., 2009).

Inclusive post-secondary education initiatives provide inclusive support to learners by assisting with tasks so the learner can have an authentic student experience (Mosoff et al., 2009). This support is individualized and could include assisting with choosing coursework or liaising with the campus community to promote inclusion (Mosoff et al., 2009). The notion of an authentic student experience is decided in comparison to the experience of a typical student. In other words, an authentic student experience for a learner with ID is compared to the experience of peer attending regular courses and participating in campus life (Uditsky & Hughson, 2012). Uditsky and Hughson (2012) provided a framework to describe the authentic student experience. The framework includes 1) academic (choice in program of study and course-related activities, 2) social (make friends and social connections), 3) associational (join and participate in organizations), 4) employment (explore employment options), and 5) family (grow in competence and autonomy and assume new roles in family). Aspects of this framework align with constructivist pedagogy by assuming competence of students, encouraging students to take control and responsibility, and allowing for individual autonomy in learning.

Despite a number of new programs being made available at colleges and universities in Canada and the United States with claims of an inclusive approach, many still embody special education principles and practices (Uditsky & Hughson, 2012). According to Uditsky and Hughson (2012), the term inclusion “has become increasingly ambiguous” (p. 299). The authors maintain that the degree of authentic inclusion offered by an educational setting directly corresponds to the values and beliefs of those designing and implementing opportunities.

O'Brien et al. (2009) also caution against attempts to reform special education from within an existing setting:

Despite recent efforts to reform this specialized world from within, the scope for belonging almost always remains limited to those congregated at the social margins; learning is typically restricted by either focus on remedying skill deficiencies or avoidance of intentional instruction; identity is too often undermined by either paternalistic control, as a reaction to paternalism, a refusal to offer robust support and guidance; and contribution is usually constrained to the opportunities originated in specialized settings. (p. 6)

Inclusive post-secondary education has opened up new modes of thinking and lines of inquiry related to higher learning. Yet inclusive initiatives face many of the long-standing debates seen between special and public education of children (Hughson & Uditsky, 2019). Hughson and Uditsky (2019) summarized common debates related to inclusive education, and more specifically, inclusive post-secondary education in their article "30 Years of Inclusive Post-Secondary; Scope, Challenges and Outcomes". The authors discuss how inclusive educational research adheres to a type of inquiry that requires "proof of concept" (p. 55). Proof of concept in research focuses on demonstrating ways inclusion *works* within established bureaucratic structures and professionalized schemes. This type of research, for example, might focus on model program design, while ignoring the need to examine practices and policies entrenched in ableism. Inseparable from this concern is the co-opt of the term *inclusion*, which is increasingly being used by researchers and educators to promote what are believed to be innovative teaching and learning strategies. These strategies often resemble traditional

educational practices that perpetuate devaluing beliefs and assumptions about disabled students and overlook institutional and attitudinal barriers (Hughson & Uditsky, 2019).

In the past few decades inclusive post-secondary education initiatives have persevered to expand and gain momentum by offering new ways to talk about and enact practice related to post-secondary education and life-long inclusion. This has occurred against cultural knowledge and practices that convey meanings of education and disability which are, as Dolmage (2017) described, “inverse of opposite” (p. 3). I agree with leaders in the inclusive post-secondary education movement when they say “Realizing inclusion is hard work” (O’Brien et al., 2009, p.6). I also agree that it offers students with ID the best chance of achieving the good things in life and holds the promise of impacting structural change within a post-secondary education context.

### **Summary of the Literature**

In this chapter I critically reviewed literature related to models of disability and adult learning. Models of disability were an important tool in shifting how I conceptualize disability and disabled people. The medical model helped me to understand the social-historical beliefs about disability while the social model emphasized the medicalized perspective of disability as an important research factor to consider. Critical disability theory illuminated the need for fluid boundaries of disability and complex issues of non-disabled researchers conducting disability-related research. The ambiguities and tensions of these models is an ongoing epistemological debate in the critical disability studies scholarship (Corker & Shakespeare, 2002; Gabel, 2005). However, it was my experience that a critical evaluation of each of the disability models holds pervasive and effective ways in theorizing about disability and education.

This critical review highlighted many limitations and gaps in the scholarship with the most obvious being the lack research using a of critical analysis related to higher education and ID students. The scarcity of research in this area also showed a void of the ID student voice contributing to scholarship and practice. Educational researchers continue to make claims of situating disability as a social construction while applying methodological approaches influenced by positivism. This study addresses these limitations and gaps by using a critical disability studies with a emphasise on ableism to understand the lives of ID students and their experience with oppression in a post-secondary context. It is my belief that a study using critical disability studies is needed to make visible how research continues to use deficit models of disability and how the current knowledge base used in specialized programs is inadequate and insufficient for ID students.

## Chapter 4: Research Design

### *Research Site*

This study was conducted at the main campus of *the University*. *The University* has four campuses; I do not teach at the main campus and therefore did not have direct contact with the ID students prior to the start of the study. As a special-purpose teaching institution, *the University* is mandated by AVED to deliver adult special education programming. Adult special education operates under a staff-faculty model with three full-time and one part-time faculty, and 22 instructional staff. At the time of the study two adult special education course options were offered with approximately 23 students per campus. The programs offer full-time enrollment over a 10-month period from September to June. There is an opportunity for students to extend their enrolment if additional time is needed to complete graduation requirements or if continued participation is deemed beneficial to the student by a faculty member.

### *Sampling and Recruitment*

Potential ID students were recruited from both courses using criterion sampling as a strategy for recruitment (Patton, 2002). Students were selected using the following predetermined criteria: (1) current students in adult special education programming, and (2) a willingness and desire to participate in the study. Students in adult special education programming undergo a rigid admission process prior to being accepted and either hold a professional designation or self-identify as having learning difficulties that hinder scholastic success (British Columbia Statistics, 2006).

The recruitment of potential ID students for the study had several steps. First, I held a general information meeting for all current students in adult special education, faculty, staff, and



the dean of the faculty. The purpose of this meeting was to provide a general overview of the research study. Second, ID students were recruited face-to-face during class time by an adult special education faculty member who worked at the main campus, using a recruitment script written in plain language. A recruitment script was used to ensure the potential ID students did not feel pressured or coerced to participate in the study. All interested students were asked to contact the researcher by email, and they were then contacted by phone by the researcher to set-up an in-person meeting.

Initial meetings were arranged at a time that suited the ID student's schedule with the purpose of discussing the study in further detail and ensuring free and informed consent. I used several strategies to obtain consent including relying on my past experience adapting consent forms using plain language, along with my knowledge of the student group (Cameron & Murphy, 2006). Consent was initially obtained prior to participating in the study and was also considered a continuous process with various consent check-in points. The consent check-in points occurred prior to the focus group and in-depth interviews, and if written consent was not feasible due to difficulties with written expression, oral consent was obtained and recorded.

### ***Data Collection Methods***

I collected data between April 2018 and June 2019. First, I conducted a focus group of four students for two hours. The focus group was audio recorded and transcribed. I facilitated the focus group and guided the discussion using open-ended questions. The aim of the focus group was to get a variety of perspectives on everyday activities and ID students' accounts of them.

Second, I conducted observations of ID students during in-class and campus activities. A specific focus was on making field notes of what was happening, along with listening to the talk of students which allowed me to begin to hear, see, and experience their lives.

Third, I interviewed four students using in-depth and open-ended interviews that lasted approximately 60 minutes. I followed a general interview guide that allowed for meaning-making to be constructed by the interviewer and interviewee through probing and exploring within the established parameters (Patton, 1990). The ID students were provided with check-in opportunities to ensure accuracy and authenticity of the interpretations. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed fully. Additional interviews were offered if ID students experienced fatigue or other health concerns (e.g. loss of stamina) that required interview time to be reduced or re-scheduled. Field notes were taken during both the observations and interviews to observe the context and perception of the interactions between all those involved. ID students were also encouraged to bring their portfolio or other samples of their work to help explain to the researcher what they were covering in the program.

Fourth, to gain a better understanding of the historical and social context of how the ID student experience is socially organized, I gathered and reviewed documents. The documents were directly related to the research questions. Examples of the written documents include publicly available brochures and forms used within *the University* and, more specifically, adult special education programming. Forms did not contain student information, but rather a sample of the type of information collected.

### ***Recoding, Managing, and Interpretation of Findings***

I used a systematic process to thematically interpret data sets and considered how each set related and intersected with each other through an evolving ableist lens that I had and continued to develop. The logistics I followed included the following. First, I transcribed the audio recording of the focus group and checked it against my field notes. In this early stage of the interpretation, a list of codes was developed. The focus group preliminary interpretation

helped to keep the voices of the students at the centre of my work while refining the open-ended questions developed for the interviews.

Second, the observational data were interpreted, and the list of codes expanded. I also highlighted when the students interacted directly with the adult special education instructor. Third, I transcribed all the interviews and then re-listened to the audio while comparing the document to my hard copy. I reconfigured my list of codes and categories began to emerge. While interpreting the data sets, I continually made handwritten notes on my fieldnotes and in my research journal to reflect on my interpretive decisions and record any thoughts or additional questions that were arising. I also had regular communication with my doctoral supervisor to discuss findings and ensure they aligned with the purpose of the study.

Fourth, I reviewed documents related to adult special education, following a similar pattern of coding and categorizing. After the initial interpretation and coding of observations, the focus group, interviews, and documents, I further developed themes and clustered them in relation to the categories. My list of themes grew as I re-interpreted the findings. Once I identified themes, they were each revisited to ensure important findings were not missed and themes with commonalties were collapsed.

### **Study Rigor**

Lincoln & Guba (1985) described several strategies used to critically judge the trustworthiness of a qualitative inquiry. These strategies include credibility, transferability and confirmability. The following discussion is an overview of the strategies used to address trustworthiness in this study.

## ***Credibility***

The credibility strategies used to establish confidence in the interpretations of this study included prolonged engagement, peer debriefing, and member check-ins.

***Prolong Engagement.*** At the start of the research process, I spent an extended amount of time on campus to gain a better understanding of campus specific culture and context (Tobin & Begley, 2004). I reviewed documents and had some interaction with ID students during activities outside the classroom such as small talk in the hallway, which began the development of a rapport. The data collection methods required me to be in the field for almost 4 months, ample time for me to gain a better understanding of the nuances of the research site and begin to develop trust with ID students.

***Peer Debriefing.*** For my study it was important that I seek scholarly and academic support from peers and my doctoral supervisor. Peer debriefing helped to acknowledge and explore my personal and professional subjectivities, values, and assumptions as a researcher along with the ambivalences and tensions that were created by my changing epistemology. These discussions included feedback on theorizing the data, emerging thematic categories and themes, and strengths and limitations of the data. Regular communication with my doctoral supervisor included reviewing transcription of the focus group and interview data with the purpose of providing feedback on my interpretive processes.

***Member check-ins.*** Member check-ins was a crucial part of this research process. During the focus group and interviews, I checked with ID students for accuracy and clarification. The ID students were invited to attend a follow-up meeting to discuss the interpretations for authenticity and for final comment. Three of the students participated remotely due to a global pandemic.

### ***Transferability***

Lincoln and Guba (1985) maintain that although transferability in qualitative research may be problematic, it can be accomplished if the researcher provides a “thick description” of the study. A thick description is defined as providing a detailed description of not just the experiences of research participants, but the context as well (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A primary way that this study addressed transferability was by providing in-depth information on the ID student experience. This not only included the behaviours and experiences, but the historical and social context as well.

### ***Confirmability***

Confirmability was addressed in this study through field notes and self-reflexive journaling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My field notes provided meaning and gave context to the study by recording activities and events. In my journal was a reflective commentary discussing my biases, prejudices, and values by focusing on questions of why. Why am I making this decision? Why am I including this data? Why do I interpret meaning this way? Asking why helped to provide greater transparency of the research process by exposing beliefs underpinning decisions and in the interpretive process was used to make-sense of the data.

### ***Reciprocity***

Reciprocity was an important consideration during all stages of this inquiry. I worked to cultivate reciprocal relationships with the students by developing and maintaining respectful and ethical relationships. The ID students had the opportunity to check-in and ask for clarification and give feedback throughout the study, which encouraged them to make their own decisions on what to share about their experiences in an open and supportive environment. I responded to

emerging forms of reciprocity as the research process unfolded (e.g. providing suggestions and contact of community resources).

### **Ethical Considerations**

Throughout my study, I adhered to all required ethical review board processes and ensured all principles of respectful and ethical practice were followed. My role as an insider held benefits and complexities related to ethical considerations. Benefits included being familiar with the research context and establishing rapport with authority figures (e.g., colleagues) that may have resulted in easier access and rapport building with ID students. This positioning also had the potential to deepen my self-reflexive skills and bring about organizational change. A complexity included examining my biases, prejudices, and assumptions related to my professional practice, which I addressed by developing and honing my critical perspective through the use of my researcher journal.

Another main concern as an insider researcher related to the principle of Respect for Persons (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2014). Respect for Persons implies that all students who participated in the research did so by providing free, and ongoing consent. This is particularly important for those considered members of a vulnerable population, such as students with ID. Respectful and ethical principles were embedded in all written forms used throughout the research process. For example, the recruitment script included the following safeguards: 1) used plain language to explain power over relationships to potential students, 2) explained how the right to refuse and/or withdraw from the study would have no negative effect on the student, 3) explained to ID students that

they will not be disadvantaged by refusing to participate in the inquiry, and 4) did not overstate the benefits of participating in the project.

At the beginning of each interview, ID students were reminded of their right to opt out of the study, stop the audio recording at any time, and/or refuse to answer the question. To meet confidentiality requirements, data were stored and locked in the researcher's home office and a generic identifier was used to ensure confidentiality of all students. Focus group members were reminded of the limitations of anonymity in a group setting and were reminded orally to respect the confidentiality of discussions after the session had ended.

### **Knowledge Translation**

Findings will be disseminated by submissions to academic and non-academic journals and presented at local and international conferences. Dissemination activities and opportunities for dialogue embraced an emancipatory stance by seeking opportunities to co-present with students at national, international, and local conferences along with advocacy organizations. Additional formats for representation were considered, such as video, photo essay, and web-based sources, which could increase accessibility to a broader audience.

## Chapter 5: Findings and Interpretations

I engaged in a critical analysis of the data as a way of distancing myself from traditional ways of thinking about ID and post-secondary education. This interpretive process provided a lens to examine adult special education more critically. My interpretation of the data sets resulted in three overarching themes: 1) Bureaucratic Structure: Text and Disability, 2) Control and Compliance and Normality: “Don’t Act Like A Kid”, and 3) Social Relations: Who Belongs Where?

### **Bureaucratic Structure: Text and Disability**

*Bureaucratic Structure: Text and Disability* is an over-arching theme used to reveal how text is employed to socially organize students in adult special education. This interpretive work shows how adult special education is embedded in deficit thinking and ways that instructional practices are employed manage, regulate, and control ID students. The theme of Bureaucratic Structure: Text and Disability is linked to the sub-themes of *Pedagogy* and *Interactions of Resistance*. The term Pedagogy includes practices such as class content and learning activities while Interactions of Resistance refers to the resisting of the regulatory practices that impose standardized approaches to education of ID students and of educators and their environment.

### ***Pedagogy***

The written materials and organizational talk and practices used in adult special education mostly used deficit-based language. For example, the name—adult special education—produced meaning and rendered students according to their subjectivization as intellectually disabled. An intellectually disabled student is individualized as a certain type of student—namely, a student that is understood as a medical problem that needs fixing or treatment. The medicalization of ID



students is further illustrated by common terms used to within adult special education practice, such as *case load* and *family meeting*. In this context, case load referred to the number of students that an instructor is responsible for under their workload. The term family meeting is used when members of the student's family join a meeting to discuss the student's progress in the program. These terms have connotations related to clinical terminology that is closely related to institutional-type settings and other community-based human services such as long-term care and social work.

Every month students in adult special education were given a teaching calendar that outlined monthly academic and social activities. The schedule provided classroom hours, days in class, class content, classroom numbers, campus closures, and the names of instructors teaching specific classes. The calendar revealed that students attended class on a fixed schedule from 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. from Monday to Thursday. The class content and learning activities listed focussed on remedial skills, with topics such as goal setting, personal strengths, transit review, personal safety, nutrition, fitness, and first impressions (e.g. how to shake hands and give eye contact). In the following phrases, ID students described the content they covered in class. Student B said he learned about "dress code, resumes, interviews and basic stuff that would require, like to get into a job" and talked about learning how to "use the gym properly and...how to follow the school policy." Student A said he learned about "fire safety, internet safety...and cyber bullying".

Homework, group projects, and individual assignments embedded in a deficit approach were also included in the findings. I observed the students working on a project called the Divisibility Presentation Project. The purpose of the assignment was for students to learn about and describe a specific disability (e.g. learning disability, autism, and schizophrenia). The

assignment reinforced stereotypes of disabled people needing to cope with or overcome their disability, or a common stereotype known as supercrip. In short, supercrip is a term used to frame disabled people as doing something exceptional or overachieving when in fact they are just living their daily lives. A disabled person who is considered extraordinary just because they hold a job would be an example. The ID students researched a disabled person considered to be very successful or with diverse abilities at work or in business. During the observation, the students worked to prepare a media presentation of their topic to later share with the class. The ID students had a list of guiding questions to follow in preparation for their project, which included: Profile a famous person with a disability—Who is it? What are they famous for? What is their disability? What strategies do they use to be successful? What are they great at? How did they overcome their challenges?

The general pedagogical scheme used in adult special education is embedded in eugenics doctrine. Disability, and disabled students, are reduced to being seen as *something* that can be changed with use the interventions and specialized teaching strategies. In the following remarks, students in the focus group talk about the purpose of adult special education. The students explained they were, “preparing for the work force as a person with disabilities” and “preparing yourself to get a job as a future and be a grown-up”. When asked about what they learned from their time in adult special education, one student in the focus group responded:

What I learned that in work experience I'm actually really great. And despite being in this type of program, I am fine. Despite how I'm not great at English. I mean, I mean I'm still really smart and I know what's going on [in] life.

These comments from the students emphasize how they align with Foucault’s description of subjective power. The ID students are being constrained by the disciplinary techniques used in

adult special education that impose deficit knowledge. That is, adult special education is a form of power that subjects students as having an intellectual disability and justifies a relentless emphasis on pedagogy focused on self-care activities and self-mastery of functional skills rather than robust academic content.

My research highlighted Foucault's work on how a deficit text is used as an exercise of power. When asked about the daily routine in adult special education, all ID students talked about the *Sign-in Sheet*. Students highlighted the importance of a sign-in sheet to record when an ID student entered and exited the classroom (i.e. morning, lunch, and afternoon). Student C explained what the consequences are if students did not sign-in when they were supposed to:

It goes in their [the educator's] book. If it is a particular teacher, they'll put it in her book. If you're late or not. Trouble. A little bit of trouble but not big, big trouble. It gets written in your evaluation. That is not good. You can fail.

Similarly, if students were going to be absent from class, they had to ask permission using a form called the *Time-off Request Form*. When asked about the form, Student B explained, "If you have something to go tell the teacher about this and fill out a form. They *might* [emphasis added] let you go."

When asked about activities that ID students participated in outside the classroom, some of the respondents said they attended events around the campus. Students stressed that they participated in activities as long as they were scheduled outside of classroom hours. Two of them said they attended events hosted by the student association (e.g. Welcome Back Events) around campus. In my field notes, I wrote about trying to reconcile what the students described as participating in university life and my historical knowledge of ID student participation in campus activities:

The students talked about attending campus activities. Attending—yes, but were they...welcomed? Involved? Participating? How meaningful was the experience? I should have asked more questions. How do they feel welcomed? Are they interested in the activities? Where do they feel they belong? (Swan, 2019).

My remarks above show how I interpreted the ways that ID students recognize themselves as disabled subjects. ID students are subject to the interventions guised as instructional approaches and prohibitions of *the University* acting upon them organizing their lives as well as being tied to their own identity in constraining and self-regulating ways.

### ***Interactions of Resistance: The Muffin Story***

The findings on Interactions of Resistance between student and instructor and the environment was collected through interviews and observations. In this dissertation, interactions of resistance consist of ID students resisting the authority of instructors and by struggling to take control of their own body within the bureaucratic structure. Student D described a time when she resisted the rules of the classroom because she was almost late for class, was hungry, and wanted to eat a muffin. She explained,

I wanted to eat a muffin. I got a muffin and I just ran out of time. I wanted to eat that muffin and the [instructor] told me: you have one bite of your muffin, then you have to put it away. I don't know, but I was starving. I was hungry. I kind of that morning of rushed out of the house without, because I got up too late and I rushed out the house. I had no food, no lunch, no nothing, so I was really hungry. So yeah, I didn't even have my water bottle on me because I just rushed out the door. I took my stuff, rushed out the door that morning, but I was looking forward to that muffin. Well, I went down to Tim Hortons on a break and I got the muffin

and I brought it back upstairs. By the time I came back upstairs, break time was over and [the instructor] came into the class and I attempted to eat my muffin. Then she told me to put it away. It's like, oh shucks, I can't eat this. [The instructor] told us we have rules because it is like work. The reason might be because you wouldn't be able to eat at work, so then you're not allowed to eat in class. That's kind of, yeah, that's true. We're not allowed to eat at work unless it's a break time.

A second example of resistance is a when I observed an ID student breaking the classroom rule of not leaving the class. In my field notes I wrote:

A student stands up during a lecture and walks towards the door, which is closed. Reaches the door and looks back at the instructor. He says, "I need to go to the bathroom." The instructor responds, "you just had lunch break. You should have used the bathroom then." Student responds, "I need to go now." Student turns and walks out the door and closes it behind him. The instructor continues with class discussion. Student returns to class about two minutes later with his cell phone in his hand. He shuts the door. Does not acknowledge the instructor. Walks to his desk and sits down. Puts his cell phone on the desk facing up. Looks down at cell phone every few seconds (for about one minute). Instructor repeatedly looks at student. Instructor tells student to put his cell in his bag. Student puts cell phone in jacket pocket and avoids looking at the instructor. (Swan, 2019)

In the following remarks, Student A talked about his resistance of being in a specialized program. In the focus group, he talked apologetically about wanting to be in a "normal program with normal people." He goes on to say, "Sorry, no offense guys, but I just want to be, don't mix

up. Yeah, it's me really, I'm sorry, it is just how I feel.” During an interview, Student A further expressed his desire to take “regular courses filled with normal people...normal, regular people like [him].” He stressed wanting to be with his peers taking “an actual *real* course, like college math, science, English...like to get real school skills [emphasis added]”.

Drawing on the ID students’ insights helped me to recognize how adult special education differentiates and compares students while reducing them to objects and subjects. That is, adult special education students struggled against a standard of a norm stemming from an ableist ideal of what it means to be a post-secondary student. It was here that the resistance of disciplinary mechanisms was used to produce a docile body. A docile body that is created by deficit text inscribed on the student body through disciplinary techniques that reads: you are not normal, and never will you be. This inscription was clearly illustrated by a Student B who explained: “We are just different. We are the same really but need to be treated differently. That is why we are here”.

### **Control and Compliance and Normality: “Don’t Act Like A Kid”**

The overarching thematic phrase *Control and Compliance and Normality* is used to describe how adult special education uses educational approaches as a means to observe and evaluate deviancy. The phrase is used to interpret how educational approaches had both a totalization and individualising effect on ID students. The effect on these students was totalizing because it worked to control people by creating pressure for them to achieve a concept of a norm and individualizing because those who are outside a desired range of a norm are seen as deviant. I used a Foucauldian approach to consider how adult special education students were compared, divided, and differentiated based on standardised approaches to education and beliefs of homogeneity.

The sub-themes of the theme Control and Compliance and Normality are *Notions of Independence* and *Fear of Punishment*. The sub-theme *Notions of Independence* is used to describe ways that students experience subjugation to normality and the theme *Fear of Punishment* is used to reflect on ways that disciplinary mechanisms are a form of social control to train adult special education students how to conform and behave.

### ***Notions of Independence***

The *Notion of Independence* was captured as a core element of the data sets. Most of the ID students referred to independence as an activity linked to their ability to do something on their own without assistance. In the interviews the ID students talked about independence as an ability they can be *ready* or *prepared* for such as making personal decisions and taking control of their lives. Similarly, in the focus group, one ID student talked about independence as something “on your own, you do it all on your own (Student B). Others talked about independence being a skill level that was employed to evaluate their performance using an assessment tool.

An assessment tool is used by the instructors in adult special education to measure various skill areas, including a student’s ability to stay on topic when speaking, stay healthy and exercise, get around the community, and perform assignments quickly and efficiently. A rubric scale is used to rate students from 1 to 5 (1: fully support, 2: with support, 3: with minimum support, 4: independently achieved, 5: above and beyond). In the following remark, student D talks about his understanding with the assessment tool:

Um, I think it's three and higher, but I am not sure. I don't know if anyone's passed on a mark that has one and two before. I'm not too sure. But I know that I want... is a high mark. Right. I don't want like a two and a one. I want like an

either three, four, three or four. Right. That's what I would like. Those are the high marks.

The emphasis on an ID student's independence level was further highlighted in written material used in adult special education. For example, the course syllabus referred to students increasing their independence as the primary learning outcome of the course. It reads: At the end of the course students will have increased their independence in campus, community and work settings.

*The University* mandates all students attending a senate-approved course receive a syllabus. A syllabus is intended to act as a contract between the student and *the University* by outlining what can be expect from a course, such as required materials (e.g. textbooks), rights and responsibilities (e.g. policies), and assessment and evaluation components (e.g. quizzes and tests). *The University* provides a template to all instructors, which includes standardized requirements, such as the length of the document and information to include, like institutional-wide resources that would support student learning.

The syllabus for adult special education is significantly different than the template provided by *the University*. For instance, the adult special education syllabus provides a list of supplies that students are expected to bring to class that seems paternalistic, such as “appropriate clothing for a job interview,” “a cell phone”, and a “lunch or money to buy lunch.” The syllabus also described a detailed list of responsibilities of the institution, along with a list of ID student responsibilities. The emphasis of student responsibilities was on institutional-wide policies related to safety, security, and risk management (e.g. student conduct, inappropriate and disruptive behaviour, and violence in the workplace) rather than supporting and guiding student learning. The syllabus also outlined program-specific standards and procedures to follow if an ID



student breaks a rule, yet class-specific rules such as being late are not mentioned in the document. This section reads:

1. If you break a rule, we will speak with you about what happened and try to help you understand the rule.
2. If you break the rule again, the instructor will meet with you again and try to help you understand the rule. You might have to sign a contract that explains the rule. By signing the contract, you agree to not break the rule again. This contract is called a Performance Contract.
3. The Performance Contract gives you time to prove you can follow the rule. We will check in with you during this time.
4. If you are unable to follow the rule, you may be asked to leave the program or course.
5. This decision is made by *the University* personnel and the Dean's office.
6. If you do not agree with the decision, you may follow *the University* appeal process. This is a chance for you to explain why you should stay in the program or course.
7. For serious actions such as threatening, violent or destructive behaviour, the student Conduct Policy will be followed.

Interestingly, there is another obvious omission in the adult special education syllabus: a mandatory university-wide statement about accommodating students or reference to services or resources that ensure the institution, which is governed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and by British Columbia's human rights statute, is meeting

its moral and legal duty to accommodate disabled students. This is curious because *the University* has a policy stating its commitment to providing accommodations to ensure fair and consistent treatment for all disabled students be included syllabuses. Such a reflection makes me wonder why the institutions goal of providing accessible and inclusive opportunities for all students not include those in adult special education?

The adult special education syllabus is exceptionally long compared to the institutional template. The document is eleven pages in length with an image (see Figure 1) of former adult special education students on the front page, with a cartooned mascot called Kwinten sitting among them. The image reinforces a negative representation of students with ID by contributing to their subjectivization as infantile, unproductive, dependent, and outcasts (historically this representation would have included the term feebleminded). Having the ID students sitting idle at desks looking at the camera, in an isolated classroom, depicts them lacking the ability to be engaged with meaningful curricula or them being an integral component of university life. The image also sends a message that adult special education students are so profoundly different that they are seen as a threat, a threat to their peers that is best minimized by segregating and congregating them. This offensive image has been used repeatedly since 2017 to promote program-specific documents within and outside of the institution.

**Figure 1**

*Adult Special Education Syllabus, 2017*



Applying a Foucauldian approach to my study allowed for a greater understanding of how the notion of Independence being used as a disciplinary punishment to train ID students to act in a specific way. A specific way that is enacted by fear of being punished. Being punished for doing something wrong, such as wearing the unsuitable clothes, saying something inappropriate, or coming to class late was a part of their daily existence as an ID student.

## *Fear of Punishment*

The sub-theme Fear of Punishment for ID students was perpetual: students talked a lot about what would happen if they did not comply with the expectations placed upon them.

When asked what happened if classroom rules were not followed, the students said:

*Student A:* If they don't work very hard and if they enter the program and if they don't work very hard and do any of those stuff, they're eventually gonna get kicked out really. The teacher's going to kick them out.

*Student D:* They would get a talking to by the teachers or if they kept getting late, they probably get kicked out of the program if they're late.

*Focus Group:* No temper tantrum. Don't act like a kid. You'll get kicked out.

I wrote about my interpretation of the students' experience with fear of being punished in my research journal, making connections to disciplinary mechanisms that I had used in past teaching practice:

Have I kicked a student out because they were not independent enough? This is so wrong...we [adult special education] accept students based on an admissions process that uses independence as criteria and then when they are student's we tell them they are not independent enough. Can we even do that? The students are being taught to follow the rules and behave properly, that is what I am teaching and what the students are learning. And they do, they are willing to do this.

(Swan, 2019)

A further example is when students discussed the importance of being on time when arriving to class in the morning and returning from breaks throughout the day. Applying Foucault's theory of corrective training shows students desire to conform to norms by self-

regulating their behaviour. ID students willingly participated in repetitive corrective practices and routines under the guise of pedagogy. When they were asked about what is expected in order to be successful in the course, the students responded:

*Student B:* But you gotta you gotta know well you got to work hard or and figuring out travel transportation.

*Student A:* Like you gotta kind know, like the bus route to like where you're going to be placed on the bus route and not to be late, not to be late, don't like go get angry or stressed at this place. And uh, you need more respect to be more respectful to your teachers.

*Student B:* Well, there are simple rules. Don't be late. Follow the instructions, behave, and usually that's the common rules....don't bother others and don't... don't make too much noise and don't use your phone.

*Student A:* Um, and I guess we are expected to eat, use the bathroom and that kind of thing (breaks); it goes in their book. If it is a particular teacher, they'll put it in her book. If you're late or not.

*Student A:* Need more respect to be more respectful to your teachers.

These responses illustrate an interplay of power and knowledge that is exemplified by authority. Authority in adult special education is held by educators who are viewed as the experts, those who hold the knowledge of how to change or fix students with ID. It is an infusion of deficit knowledge used to understand disability and educational approaches that results in the enactment of deficit text. An interpretation of the text used in adult special education gave insight into the meaning-making of ID students and the internalized self-regulating behaviours and standard of an one-size-fits all type of education for ID students. The students' descriptions

of their experiences highlight how students conform to bureaucratic and social expectations of being a post-secondary student. I wrote about my interpretation in my reflective journal:

The students talked a lot about keeping the instructors happy. There was a real fear of being kicked out of the program for not behaving—behaving like an adult. Why? What does that mean? Their behaviour is seen as deviant...the underlying premise of why they were in the program and how they would be successful and ultimately pass is by them being seen as not deviant. Deviance is linked to how independent they are. What about students being successful based on academic curriculum they learn in the class? What other group of students tries so hard to behave and act like an adult just so they can stay a student? (Swan, 2019)

The process of conforming begins with practices that reinforce the idea that a student with ID is not capable of taking control of their lives or making their own decisions. The admission process for students applying to adult special education marks the beginning of the pressure to conform. In many ways the entrance criteria used by the program pre-selects students with ID who are willing to conform because it is based on the student's medical diagnosis and past behaviour rather than academic merits. For example, although under revision, the stated entrance criteria to the program included type of disability and documentation, level of community independence, and success on previous work experience. Many of these skills, including work experiences, are facilitated and evaluated by special education programming in a public-school system. In addition, ID students are asked a series of questions like: Do you have a disability? Did you have any behaviour issues in high school? Who pays for your tuition? Where will you live during the semester? A person in the role of offering support to the applicant is often asked similar questions to confer with or dispute the applicant's responses.

In addition, rather than applying to a specific course during the admission process, students are placed in one of two programs based on value judgements made by instructors. It does not matter if students met the established admission criteria for a specific course, students are placed in one of the programs and do not learn of their placement until after they have been officially accepted by *the University*. The ID students talked about being placed in a course with little control over or input into the decision. Student A said, “I didn't know at the time, but I now realize that it's job preparation. It is weird that I did not know which program when I applied.” Student D also said, “Well, I originally wanted to apply for job prep, but then they [the instructors] thought, okay, work exploration would be best suited for me”.

Further interpretation showed how ID students understand themselves as having limited options and choices when it comes to decision making. When asked about whether a student could talk to an instructor about being dissatisfied about where they were placed on a work experience placement, Student B replied, “I don't want to. It might cause problems.” Similarly, Student D said, “They chose that one for me too. I didn't, I didn't get a chance to choose where I wanted to go. They just chose it for me.”

Student D also talked about compliance and knowing her *place* when she was “helping [a friend] too much.” She explained how a student in her course was having difficulty learning a bus route. Student D offered to help learn and practice using the bus. Shortly thereafter, an instructor asked her to come to her office so she could talk about how disabled people can be easily taken advantage of by others. After talking to the instructor, Student D came to recognize that her role in helping a fellow student was something a student with ID should not, or could not do, so she decided “Okay, well then, I'll, I won't help as much” (Student D). Student D went on to explain, “I didn't want to be taken advantage of. I never want people to keep nagging me for

help after she talked to me about that.” Student D came to understand her *place* as someone not capable or worthy of being in a position to provide guidance or support to another person because her label as disabled, a label that presupposes the *type* of post-secondary student she should be.

Foucault’s description of subjecting power showed how disciplinary mechanisms shaped the student experience and internalized the need for students to “act like an adult” (Student B) and “follow the rules and behave” (Student A). It becomes naturalized to expect ID students to be managed, regulated and controlled by instructors who impose sanctions on them to behave and act in certain ways to give the illusion that they have access to a fair and equitable post-secondary education. The illusion comes from the fallacy that ID students are enrolled in classes that interest them and participating meaningfully in campus life alongside their peers.

### **Social Relations: Who Belongs Where?**

The overarching theme *Social Relations: Who Belongs Where?* is used to explore how adult special education is socially organized in such a way that it draws lines around who belongs in university life and who does not belong. The categories linked to the theme of Social Relations: Who Belongs Where are *Social Life* and *Social Space*. Social Life refers to students in adult special education being embedded in the bureaucratic structure of *the University* through access and inclusion. Social Space refers to how meanings are reproduced by taken-for-granted ableism that makes it seem natural and reasonable to segregate and exclude some students.

### ***Social Life***

There is an assumption that because students with ID are on campus that they have access and are included in and by all people, events and places of academic and social activities.



However, my field notes pointed out how students in adult special education were excluded and isolated by the disablist bureaucracy of *the University*. I wrote about how the students had little involvement with campus life outside of adult special education programming and that it was naturalized for them to remain on the outer edges of social life and social relations by practices that define where students were educated (segregated classrooms), by whom (specialized teachers), and the type of curriculum they learned (remedial). Unlike non-disabled students who are grouped based on pursuing studies of their interest (e.g. sociology, geography, carpentry), ID students are grouped together solely based on their disability label.

In the focus group and interviews the ID students talked about their desire to make friends and be involved in university life. However, when asked about what it is like being a post-secondary student, they described what I considered minimal participation in the social life of the campus. One of the students explained that the only thing he did outside of the classroom was eat lunch in the cafeteria, and the only friend he had was a student in the other adult special education class that he had known from high school. The other ID students described their involvement in social life as including activities such as shopping in the bookstore, eating in the cafeteria, or attending social events during lunch. I wrote about the contradictions between what I observed and what some of the ID students described:

Student B explains that he eats lunch at the same table every day. Participant D says sometimes other adult special education students join them and sometimes the other students eat by themselves. I ask them if they ever sit with other university students (not in adult special education) and they all answered no. I ask if they have made friends with other university students. Student B says yes. She explains that she sees lots of students in the library in the morning. I ask her if she

sits with them. She says no but she waves hi to them. Students A and D say they have not met any other university students.

When asked if she had made new friends while being a student at *the University*, Student B replied she mostly only made friends in the adult special education program, however, she did describe one relationship with a peer: “I’ve actually met one person that came to do a presentation to the class, like a guest speaker. I see her frequently, at Timmy’s. We say hi.” The data showed that the other ID students replied similarly to a question about developing relationships with peers:

*Student A:* No, I haven't met anyone new actually, but I did, I only did is just reunite with finding one of my old friends.

*Student B:* Like that was my main goal of being in here is actually making new friends because for me as a high school student like making friends like was like the toughest thing for me to do.

### ***Social space***

The space used for adult special education communicated meaning to and about students with ID as well. The classrooms were located on the third floor with the unusual classification of designated classroom space. Designated classroom space means the classrooms are reserved only for adult special education use. This is unusual considering *the University* has a classroom space shortage and the adult special education students only use the classroom on a part-time basis. The classroom is identified with signage above the door reading “Adult Special Education” and promotional material in the hall shows images of alumni sitting in empty classrooms or hallways and language used explains that potential applicants must have a permanent disability or learning challenge to apply to the program.

There is an accessible washroom on the floor of the building, but no electronic door openers or other modifications for access. The office used by the adult special education faculty member is only accessible through two manual doors and offers very little space for anyone using adaptive equipment such as a wheelchair. In class, students sit at tables that face the instructor; therefore, it can be assumed that a banking concept of education is a common style of instruction. Students have little opportunity or room to maneuver the classroom space or participate in active learning activities. The use of a banking concept was also noted during my observations where I described students being passive objects in their learning by talking about topics that appeared to have minimal relevance or connection to their lives. I talked about how this style of instruction provided little or no opportunity to find their voice or develop a positive disability identity.

The everyday practices of students in adult special education offered insight into how ID students are included and excluded in university life and ways that social space and social relations are closely linked social processes that work to enforce and reproduce keeping disabled people in their place and maintain the dominance of the able-bodied. For instance, when I interpreted the interviews, some ID students talked about how they engaged in social and academic experiences on campus—developing relationships, participating in activities, and connecting with social networks. Even though the ID students described participating in campus life by accessing resources such as the cafeteria or the library, this did not reflect what I observed during my observations. Students were observed either eating alone in the cafeteria or eating only with other ID students or sitting in the library during their break time with no or limited contact with peers.

## **Insights into My Contradictions**

In this chapter I used a critical disability lens to interpret and try and make sense of the data collected. The data was thematically interpreted with the goal of keeping the voices of ID students at the focal point of the study. The findings and my field notes helped me to gain a deeper understanding of how ruling relations contribute to social control in bureaucratic structures. I also gained a greater insight into my ethical and moral responsibilities as an educator. During the interpretation stage, I found myself thinking about ways the social world shapes understandings of disability and education in a post-secondary context and reflecting on my post-secondary school as an able-bodied student and educator. It made visible and prompted me to continually question my past failure to understand disablism and ableism embedded in the bureaucratic structures and curricula to which I contributed. I learned more about the privilege I live with every day as well as how power is exercised in the research context and also embedded in my social relations with the ID students.

The ID students helped me to gain insight into the discomfort I described in earlier chapters between my ideals of adult education and practice of adult special education. I learned that this discomfort was not just me, and my thinking, but shared by ID students as well. The totalizing disability identity that ID students experienced was summarized by Student A when he described how students “need more respect to be more respectful to your teachers” as a criterion to be successful in the program. This student understood how his identity as an ID student created dividing practices that in the institution that objectivized him as holding low regard in comparison to the adult special education educators. The educators assume the authority, and are in the position, to determine how ID students should act and feel towards them in order to become a successful post-secondary student.

## Chapter 6: A Discussion on Making Obvious What Was Hidden

### Situating Myself: How I Got Here

In this study, I talked to students, observed students, and reviewed documents in an effort to learn more about the lives of ID students and their experiences in adult special education. My aim was to contribute the voices of ID students, voices that are rarely heard, to existing scholarship and practice related to post-secondary education. I engaged with a critical disability studies framework with an emphasis on ableism to theorize literature and interpret data sets. To accomplish this task, the following questions are explored: 1) How is adult special education programming at a post-secondary institution socially organized? and 2) How are knowledge and power reflected in the academic and social activities of students with ID through text? To explore these broad questions, I asked the following sub-questions:

1. What are the written materials and organizational talk and practices that describe adult special education programming at a post-secondary institution?
2. How do students with ID experience ruling relations in adult special education programming in a post-secondary institution?
3. How are in-class and campus activities of students in adult special education programming managed, regulated, and controlled by written material and organizational talk and practices at a post-secondary institution?

Using various methods to collect data brought an awareness of the complexity of combining deficit models of disability with educational text. The theoretical knowledge I gained through my doctoral studies intersected with my growing understanding of the experiences of ID students and provided new forms of thought that expanded beyond my previous held beliefs, values, and assumptions. I was able to deepen my awareness of deficit constructs and identities,

subjugated forms of knowledge, and ways power is exercised. This re-evaluation forced me to expand my thinking about human diversity, adult learners and learning theories, and principles of normality and deviancy. As a critical scholar, I advocate for a continued interrogation of traditional practices used in specialized programs and press for an expansion of ethical and moral imagination of inclusive post-secondary opportunities for ID students.

This chapter begins with a discussion on the use of the medical and charity models used to education ID students. Next I discuss the *othering* of ID students, followed by ways that their exclusion is naturalized. Finally, I summarize my learning with a postscript.

### **I Wanted A To Be A “Real Student” and This Is What They Told Me**

The medical model assumes people are disabled by their impairments and that people can be fixed, changed, or treated. This approach to correct the deficit is clearly revealed through the examination of the ways that the adult special education program socially organizes the academic and social activities of students. During my interpretive work, I considered how a variation of the medical model—the charity model—intersected with and complemented my current theoretical understandings of disability and education. The charity model helped me move beyond the traditional medical model and theorize more deeply about disability identity and consider how the *University* perceives ID students. Dan Goodley’s (2016) work on identity formation and models of disability provided insight into the effect on social relations within a bureaucratic structure and question dominant practices and meanings of inclusion and access.

The charity model stems from values associated with charity, the practice of a donor giving and a recipient receiving. The values of charity invoke a need by individuals, organizations, and institutions to provide services to those who are seen to be suffering from

social problems such as poverty, sickness, or disability (Goodley, 2016; Shakespeare, 2000). The response of a charitable institution such as a church or school is to act on behalf of those deemed worthy and deserving to receive the service. The expectation of those deemed deserving of the goodwill is to be grateful and thankful for support and services. The role of *the University*, in this situation, is to *help the helpless* by providing a specialized space for ID students to overcome their disability and become more normal. The charity paradigm positions *the University* as a place of dominate power and utilizes the same negative images and stereotypes of disability inherent in the medical model, while promoting a disingenuous and paternalistic sense of inclusion and access.

The charity model depicts disability as a problem that resides in an individual, similar to the medical model. A difference is that a charity lens views disability as a tragedy or misfortune that deserves pity, and when possible a cure. Whereas the medical model focusses almost entirely on the eradication of disability (Goodley, 2016). *The University* is an institution of charity by virtue of offering a service (adult special education) as a way to deal with a social problem (ID students). As a charitable institution, it uses the rhetoric of *doing the right thing* by engaging in *othering* of ID students. The right thing, according to charitable values, is to offer adult special education for students with ID to be placed and congregated so they do not disrupt their peers. The work of Ferri (2006) and others shows us that segregation is a sub-standard provision of education for children, however, through this study we now know that similar educational practices of adult special education also fails to deliver an education that recognizes an ID student's identity, competence, learning, human rights, or sense of belonging.

The charity model posits *the University* as holding the authority to define disability and determine, without considering the knowledge or experience of ID students, who will receive

supports and services. From this perspective, *the University* is void of accountability for addressing systemic barriers that serve to exclude ID students, examining unfounded and outdated educational practices, or being responsive to the educational wants, desires, or needs of students. This void is therefore self-perpetuating. Shakespeare (2000), writing about the notion of values of care explains, “Charities are ways of managing and organising altruism: they set a limit to individual obligation, create appropriate roles, and enable effective delivery to those in need” (p. 10). The data in my study showed how ID students internalize a charity perspective by believing they should be grateful and are lucky to even have the opportunity to attend adult special education.

Students in adult special education are organized around the deficit models and subjected to disciplinary techniques while participating in self-regulating practices sought to change their student body—a student body that is perceived to be socially devalued (Pylypa, 1998; Tremain, 2018). This study also identified what Foucault (1972) argues are practices of disciplinary function that ensured ID students were constantly observed, judged, and examined in search of or in the “hunt” (Baker, 2002) of pathologizing human difference. Such interpretation of the patterns invokes consideration of Foucault’s (1979) theorizing about the power of normalization to measure and fix. If Foucault’s (1972) concept of dividing practices is correct, then adult special education aligns with the description insofar as ID students are identified as a particular social grouping and compared against their peers. Through the lens of ableism, students with ID are seen to exhibit human difference that is understood as so abnormal that being classified and categorized is justified and, in some cases, deemed as necessary. Dividing practices in adult special education are both social and spatial: social because students are classified around normality, and spatial because students are excluded (Tremain, 2018).



Dividing practices in adult special education can be illustrated by the ways in which the academic and social activities of ID students are socially organized. The label of an intellectual disability disenfranchises students by restricting and limiting their full inclusion and access in campus life. As Foucault (1977a) explains, the evolution of dividing practices applied to disabled people can be linked to historical eugenic-based practices such as the asylum or prison, but a more contemporary example is revealed in the design of self-contained post-secondary programs. In a similar manner, the practices of specialized programs are governed by authority and revolve around disciplining students into conformity, legitimizing the labelling, and scrutinizing bodies.

The adult special education model implies disciplinary practices are techniques inherent within the structure of *the University*. The disciplinary practices include mechanisms like constantly observing students (surveillance) and segregating them (punishment). The overall goal of these practices is to make them into *real* students; however, the underlying message to students in such programs is that you are not a *real* student, and you need to learn to be more like *real* students. ID students become known by others, and themselves, in these terms as deviating from the norm. This deviation from the norm involves further labelling and stigmatizing a student as incompetent and tragic, and viewing them from the perspective of the charitable model as objects of pity (Swain, French, Sally, 2003). Central to the thinking using this deficit power-knowledge regime is the design of remedial educational practices to enforce normality: for example, evaluation tools that rate adult behaviour, personal hygiene, safety plans, money skills, transit use, personal relationships, and safety awareness.

For Foucault (1977a), the fear of punishment is a normalizing operation in bureaucratic structures. This is apparent in this study of adult special education. ID students reported that they never knew exactly what was expected of them, when they were being observed, or exactly how

they would be punished. My examination of documentation and observations in classrooms concluded that the ID students were not expected to take up the same roles and responsibilities as their peers, nor did the institutional infrastructure apply university-wide policies to the conduct of an ID student. In place of the university-wide policies, the adult special education program asserted control and management of students by applying their own program-specific standards and procedures (e.g. class-specific rules related to student conduct). These additional standards and procedures reinforced the students' self-concept that their disability was such a threat to others that a specialized regime was needed to protect peers from their disruptive or dangerous behaviour.

In reviewing the themes of the interviews, it could be assumed that students had a desire to remain in the program, which in part, could explain their conformity to program-specific standards and procedures. Drawing on insights from other critical scholars can also lead to the interpretation that these ID students internalize the dominant values and beliefs held about their identity, accepting these assumptions of incompetence and dependence to comply with programmatic requirements to become *real* students. The students in my research spoke about how they felt about the instructors ostensibly knowing what was best for them—how they should behave, how they should feel, and what decisions they should make. The accounts of ID students illustrate a belief that instructors are the experts in their lives and hold the power and knowledge to fix, change or treat them. Instructors accepted this belief and even used punishment (e.g. emphasis on orderly participation with restrictions on eating and time-management) to re-form the student. These findings parallel Erevelles (2016) argument on the dangers of blurring deficit models and educational text as a mode of social control that disciplines students into conformity

and places disability as an organizing logic that constructs human difference. She goes further to explain how constructs of normalcy are rarely questioned or disrupted.

My interpretation of the ID student experience relies on translating and interpreting the concepts that frame the work practices documented and implemented by the adult special educators. The adult special education text includes modified/subtracted messages drawn from post-secondary educational practices to evaluate the ID student body against normative (ableist) codes of behaviour, skills, intelligence, and capacity. As such this text is reductive practice (Danforth, 2009). My findings support recent critical disability scholars who have found similar evidence that disabled students in dual systems to general education are oppressively marked and kept on the social margins merely on the basis of their human difference (Erevelles, 2016; Ferri, 2006). This continued demarcation persists despite disability-related legislation such as the Convention on the Rights of Disabled People that says disabled people have the right to an “inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning” on an equal basis (CRPD, art. 24, para 1).

Working from Foucault’s (1972) concept of a deficit gaze, I see the use disciplinary techniques in adult special education under the guise of educational pedagogy to make ID students docile. A docile student in adult special education is one who can be shaped and molded to live up to standardized ideals of a post-secondary student. Drawing on these insights, Erevelles (2000) explains, student bodies that challenge the rigidity and conformity of standardized educational practices are identified as “unruly” and subjected to discipline. In this way, adult special education functions similarly to other historical eugenic-based institutions where the bodies of disabled people were deemed as non-conforming and unfit to be with the general population.

Interestingly, the interpreted findings lead me to theorize that a hierarchal understanding of knowledge is reproduced and reinforced by the pseudo-discipline of adult special education that places the authority of legitimized medical science as more important than the lived experience and knowledge of disabled students. One way that adult special education attempts to employ this authority is by adopting practices whereby the dominant *in-group* (adult special educators) construct the real or imagined difference of the stigmatized *out-group* (ID students), resulting in a negation of their identity as *real* students. This notion of *othering* is evident in all aspects of adult special education practice. This is clearly explained by Student B in an earlier quote when he said: “We are just different. We are the same really but need to be treated differently. That is why we are here”.

#### **“Us” and “Them”: Adult Special Education**

The *othering* of students with ID means keeping them in adult special education spaces so that the general population can be protected from their deviance. This practice of *othering* leads to protection from the deviant but also ever more refined measures that calibrate who is most deserving to attend and learn at a college or university. These assessment standards (albeit using different metrics) maintain the long-standing elitist practices that have determined typical access to post-secondary education. The notion of deservingness could be seen as a response to Erevelles (2016) explanation of a binary system of *us* and *them*—*us* being the normal student that meets *the University’s* standards and *them* being the abnormal student who does not and cannot meet *the University’s* standards. This *us* and *them* system reinforces the separation of students with ID from an authentic student experience, thus, positions them as not-quite human. In this way, disablism in adult special education, promotes the production and maintenance of

these differential and unfair practices, working from the idea that being intellectually disabled also means lacking moral and social worth.

The text used in adult special education programs provides the illusion that ID students are valued and engaged members of *the University* community as stated in vision and goal statements. However, post-secondary institutions that offer adult special education remain disablist, practicing prejudice and discrimination against disabled people under the claim of misrepresented accommodation and accessibility guidelines. Most often accommodation and accessibility guidelines are used by post-secondary institutions to address disability-related issues by understanding disability in individualistic terms that can be addressed by making legalistic changes to environments and delivery models. In effect, these guidelines demand that students meet the dominant logic of bureaucratic structures that privilege able-bodied students and does little to confront exclusionary and stigmatizing practices.

The tacit assumption informing adult special education is that ID students are so different from their peers that their difference justifies them being *othered*. The bureaucratic structure of *the University* reinforces the idea that ID students need specialized supports and services because they do not have the ability to participate in campus life independently. These beliefs about the notion of independence are reinforced by the delivery of alternate instructional practices that foster the idea that students are not able to learn typical academic curricula, need specialized instructors, have no interest in campus life, need caregiver support, and are unable or unwilling to make friends with peers. These practices are in stark contrast to research by Hughson and Uditsky (2019) showing the greatest chance of an ID student to achieve the good things in life is to minimize difference-making practices that segregate and congregate students and lead to a never-ending path of specialized settings under claims of care, support, and protection.

Adult special education aligns with Sullivan's (2018) writing in which he theorizes that rehabilitation programs totalize the identity of those objectified as paralyzed. Similarly, in this study, ID students are subjectivized as a certain type of disabled body—a disabled body that needs to increase its independence before it can become a *real* post-secondary student. At the end of the program, students in adult special education do not actually become *real* post-secondary students because they remain in a liminal space. This liminal space allows ID students to continually repeat the program, graduate the program, exit the program with no academic penalty, or achieve entry-level employment (i.e. part-time, low pay).

Students with ID who do successfully meet graduation requirements attend an university-wide convocation ceremony and receive a non-credit-based certificate stating they completed an employment program for disabled people. It is unclear how this certification prepares ID students to be job-ready or how this accomplishment improves their lives overall, which are the two primary objectives of a post-secondary education, and thus the adult special education program. The inherent nature of adult special education reinforces notions that ID students hold a token-type position within the academy.

### **“Kwinten” The Mascot: Rhetoric, Claims, and Tokenism**

Adult special education programs and ID students are largely seen as tokens to promote the social altruism of *the University* and offer an image of community engagement. The University is presented as do-gooders serving the needs of ID students, and this tokenism is most clearly exposed in the images and stories of students with ID that are used as promotional tools. As discussed in Chapter 4, an image used to promote the program constructs ID students as passive learners having all of their educational needs met by adult special education. This image shows a group of homogeneous looking ID students sitting idle in a sterile classroom joined by a

cartooned mascot. A cursory review of the promotional material used by the institution shows that no other program in the University features a mascot in promotional tools—only perhaps sports teams, and even then, the mascot is a cheerleader supporting the athletes who are considered the experts with skill. The image used in adult special education is very different by positing the mascot as an ID student, which reinforces the cartoon nature of the charity-type experience of students in the program. The image shows that the academy promotes a certain type of ID student: normal looking and obedient.

The image tells us that adult special education is not for every disabled student, only those that look and act in certain ways. Similar to the critiques made by critical disability scholars on charity advertisements used by large charitable industries (e.g. Cystic Fibrosis Foundation or March of Dimes), *the University* intertwines stereotypes of fear with paternalism in hope that the right type of ID student will be recruited. One of the students in my study explains how stereotypes are present in adult special education practices when talking about how ID students are encouraged to act as grown-ups and behave like adults.

When interpreting the findings, I confirmed my understanding that adult special education programs do not serve the educational needs of students by making claims of an innovative pedagogy, open and creative learning environments, or rewarding careers; in fact, the similarities to a typical post-secondary experience end there. The experiences of ID students showed systemic barriers, limited social and academic options, few social relations, and limited post-school outcomes. ID students described their educational experience as nothing less than social and educational inequality. The ongoing debate related to the exclusion and inclusion of disabled students is relevant here. Critical disability studies scholars have written about the co-opting of the term *inclusion* to mean a variety of post-secondary practices (e.g. segregated,

integration, mainstreaming) (Uditsky & Hughson, 2012). This co-option leads to great ambiguity within bureaucratic structures, which in turn leads theory, policy, research, and practice all reinforcing the interpretation of ID that perpetuates a status quo approach to disability and education.

The intersection between Foucault's (1977) and Titchkosky's (2011) work on *othering* and hierarchal classification helped me to critically analyze how knowledge and power come together to create and maintain ID students as subjects. I needed to be aware of Foucault's (1972) argument that text "systematically form[s] objects of which they speak" while also considering Titchkosky's discussion on de-naturalizing marginality. Although other social markers of oppression (besides disability) were not explored in this study, I argue that *the University* uses a blend of medical, charitable, and ableist perspectives that allows ID students to be excluded and used for show while the institution takes credit for meeting its legal mandate for diversity and inclusion.

### **The Exclude-able Student**

When I compared observational data collected related to ID students participating in campus life and data collected from their interviews, I needed to consider contradictions. Most of the ID students talked about their participation in university life, outside of adult special education, in relation to accessing resources such as the library, bookstore, and cafeteria. They described making friends with peers, but my observation data did not reflect similar experiences. I interpreted the campus life of ID students as marginal and limited. For example, ID students described experiences where the only communication they had with their peers was greeting them in cafeteria line-ups. My findings support Titchkosky's (2011) analysis of academia naturalizing exclusionary practices in understanding how a deficit view of disability devalues



embodied difference and justifies who has access, who is included, who belongs and where in post-secondary contexts.

Constructing ID students as exclude-able starts prior to the application process. All potential ID students are required to attend an information session to learn about the adult special education program. The advertisement for the session reads: For Students with Disabilities Interested in a Post-Secondary Education. In the information sessions, which are completely separate from the general application process of *the University*, ID students and possibly people in attendance with them are expected to answer intrusive, and possibly discriminatory questions. *The University* knowingly condones these practices which could be considered a barrier to access and possibly in violation of the Provincial Human Rights Act and Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Moreover, this practice quickly exposes ID students to the idea that their bodies justify exclusionary practices and that they do not hold authoritative knowledge about their own lives.

Adult special education uses text that defines disability through an ableist conception that limits and restricts ID students to *know their place*. To know their place within *the University* means that a deficit understanding of disability has been accepted. The ID students came to accept these terms, but also resisted their place in strategic ways. For example, the findings show how students resisted their place by dismissive comments, breaking rules, and questioning pedagogy. The resistance of ID students is highlighted in Chapter Four by Student A who talked about his frustration with adult special education and explained that the only thing he wanted out of his post-secondary experience was to attend what a real course that provided academic skills. The student's want does not seem too obscure considering he was attending a university and pursuing a higher education.

## Teaching “In”dependence?

In interpreting the findings, it is clear that the notion of independence was a prevailing theme. This theme highlighted a totalizing approach grounded in assumptions that all ID students come to the program lacking the ability to be independent enough to be successful in the program. Independence is an arbitrary notion that is understood in relation to functional skill development using medical, charitable, and ableist notions. Teaching independence was reinforced by the fact that ID students are required to attend courses dedicated to daily living skills, personal up-keep and orderly conduct, regardless of their actual ability to perform these skills. In other words, even if students enter the program with the ability to dress themselves professionally, give eye contact when greeting a potential employer, maintain personal hygiene, and use public transit safely they are still required to complete the prescribed course work.

The curriculum used in adult special education is designed as interventions and treatments rather than learning activities designed to help students become strategic, critical thinkers. It can be argued that the remedial instructional practices resemble work therapy of large state-run institutions of the past by having students focus on low-wage manual labour except now it is re-phrased as entry-level work. Similar to Ferri’s (2006) findings on special education, the delivery of the adult special education curriculum starts from a deficit approach that assumes incompetence stemming from the belief that disabled students should be restricted in what they can learn, how they can learn, and where they learn.

By convincing students that they are incompetent, and deserve a sub-standard education, *the University* is able to restrict and limit their educational offerings to curriculum that lacks a well-constructed evidence-based, theoretical framework. Interestingly, ID students in my research spoke repeatedly about independence being the most important aspect of their education

in the program including admission criteria, curriculum, and evaluation. Using remedial instructional practices keeps students in a passive role that emphasizes changing the student body rather than providing intentional and robust, thoughtful academic material. This practice persists despite many of the ID students describing themselves making their own life decisions and being competent learners regardless of any differences in their learning or supports they may use in their daily lives.

My interpretations show how ID students are educated using remedial instructional practices that punish students for *not trying hard enough* to be independent. Yet, one could argue that these students are, in fact, trying hard enough because it is their independent behaviour that actually allowed them to be admitted into the program. If potential ID students didn't meet the behaviour expectations of the admission process they would not have even been admitted to the program. This is because adult special education has built-in mechanisms designed to attract and retain what is considered to be the most productive and suitable ID students. Once in the program these students struggle to understand how these artificial and meaningless levels of independence are to be achieved or evaluated. The ID students then rely on the instructor for approval and direction because of inconsistencies in behaviour expectations and criteria for grading in the program.

The ruling relations in the program that align with the cyclical path of supports and charity systems in human services that promote a continuum of services. Continuum of services is when disabled people are expected to move from human service to human service if they meet specific requirements. In the case of adult special education, these requirements include a level of independence and compliance with behavioural expectations considered desirable by adult special education educators. This is a powerful narrative that keeps students as an excluded-able

type. Having an intellectual disability positions a student as having limited educational options and being exposed to an ever-lasting series of deficit-based educational practices based merely on having their disability label.

### **A Summary - The Academy Divides**

In this chapter I employed a critical disability theory approach in order to talk about ways that ID students hold a token position within the academy that constructs ID students as intellectually disabled. I have argued that adult special education reproduces and reinforces the notion that ID students are so vastly different that they need specialized services that results in a bureaucratic structure that *others* them and creates dividing practices. The dividing practices are reproduced and reinforced by deficit-based text that positions ID students as objects, privileges professional discourse, and limits equitable and inclusive educational opportunities.

## **Chapter 7: Study Limitations, Future Research, Conclusion, and Postscript**

This study used multiple and intersecting layers of interpretation to apply meaning to the data drawn from the voices of ID students and related documents. The theoretical perspectives I used provided me with an understanding of how bureaucratic structures lie beneath contradictions between *the Universities* use of text. The critical ethnography methodology enabled me to get to a deeper meaning of the social-historically situated milieu of disability and higher education and the ruling relations in the lives of ID students. Although the methodology was best suited for the focus of my study, there are study limitations to consider.

### **Study Limitations**

The first study limitation to keep in mind when considering the findings and interpretation of this study is recruitment strategy. As part of the strategy, ID students who expressed interest in participating in the study were contacted by the researcher using text or email. It is possible that some ID students did not pursue the opportunity because of technological barriers. Therefore, only the experiences of ID students who had access to text or email were represented. A second limitation is the work experience component of the adult special education program which was not considered within this study. The work experience is an integral component of adult special education programming; however, it was outside of the scope of this study. A further limitation is the influence of the global pandemic on the final follow-up meeting to review a draft version of the interpretations for authenticity and for final comment. I provided a verbal overview of the interpretations which only three of the ID students participated remotely. This format may have hindered their contributions.

## **Future Research**

In many ways this examination of ID students was pioneering and has a number of implications for future research. The first is that little is known about how knowledge and power are exercised in specialized programs. In light of this, more research is needed from those experiencing the effects of these programs—the ID students. It would be particularly interesting to apply a critical disability studies lens to enquiries related to queer studies, critical race studies, feminist scholarship, gender studies, and ethnic identity to gain a greater understanding of diversity and the intersection of social categories of experience in the context of higher education.

A second recommendation is to critically examine the cultural beliefs, values, and meanings used to inform the pseudo-discipline of adult special education programs. It would be worthwhile to explore more deeply the assumptions held by those working in specialized programs (e.g. staff, instructors, administration) to gain a better understanding of the theory bridging research and practice as well as legal duty of post-secondary institutions to accommodate ID students. The line between legalistic frameworks and adult special education programming is rarely discussed in the scholarship and appears to be an under-theorized phenomenon that needs further consideration and analysis.

A third recommendation is to explore the viewpoints of families supporting ID students in adult special education programs. The family perspective using a critical lens is absent from the scholarship and is needed to gain a deeper and broader understanding of the adult special education phenomenon. I suggest further examination could include the family perspective on topics such as a) wants and desire for their adult children, b) expectations of a post-secondary experience, and c) success, achievement, and post-school outcomes.

A final recommendation is to explore further the notion of independence. Independence is an overall theory of human growth and development. However, this can become convoluted and complicated for parents of adult children with ID because often an independent future is believed not possible for their child. Research that examines the notion of independence and ID adults from the perspective of the parent is needed to contribute to an understanding on inclusion across the lifespan.

### **Concluding Thoughts: What Would I Say Now? Go Ahead & Eat The Dam Muffin!**

The results of this study start to add a critical perspective to the scholarship and practice related to specialized programs. Using a critical ethnography methodology allowed for a rich collection of findings that will be useful for those wanting to gain an understanding of what it is like to be an ID student experiencing the deficit knowledge-power regime of a post-secondary institution. No matter the context, this study shows 1) that ID students are reliable and capable research participants, 2) specialized programs fail to deliver an education that recognizes student's identity, competence, learning, human rights, or sense of belonging, and 3) the structure of post-secondary settings are socially organized to subjectivized ID students as child-like, dependent, and incapable.

The critical lens used in this study allowed me to conduct research that was respectful and ethical and will hopefully, even in just small ways, make a difference in the lives of ID students. While I am confident that a critical disability studies perspective provided an appropriate theoretical approach for this study, I do not suggest that it is the only framework for which all disability-related research should be measured. I encourage researchers to be deliberate and skeptical when conducting an inquiry especially when using the title of *critical*. I also want to remind readers that this study was not the actual voice of ID students, but rather my voice

interpreting their experiences. As Thomas (1993) reminds us critical ethnographers “speak to an audience *on behalf* of their subjects as a means of empowering them by giving more authority to the subjects’ voice” (p.4, emphasis in original). It is my hope that the voice of ID students who shared their stories and wanted people to understand what it means to be in an adult special education program are recognized and heard.

Engaging in interpretive research that recognizes and acknowledges lived experience was complicated work. The theoretical framework I used took a deep appreciation of qualitative methodological considerations, ethical and respectful processes, collection and interpretation of findings, and complex issues of representation. I want to emphasize to readers that if critical disability-related research is taken seriously, it is necessary for researchers to answer the call for self-reflexivity. Self-reflexivity was used here to engage with deep questioning about the *self* and others, while make visible ways that privilege, knowledge, and power intersect and to understand how this intersection influenced my research act.

This study showed how deficit text influenced by ableism contributes to deep structural inequities that exist within academe. As Titchkosky (2007) says, “what is essential is that the appearance of disability in text comes under radical interpretive scrutiny, where how we regard the embodied existence of self and other is reconsidered” (p. 21). Likewise, I support Titchkosky in arguing that the ways that people and places are interpreted in post-secondary education needs to be under constant examination and critique. My scrutiny of adult special education brings me to the conclusion that specialized programs should cease being offered. Similar to historically restricting a women’s right to education and the residential school system were once deemed acceptable and are no longer, specialized programs should also now be understood as being nothing less than outdated and irrelevant.



The practice of adult special education is positioned as a post-secondary program, but in actuality it is a human service day program. A day program that incarcerates ID students by merging medical, charitable, and educational doctrines to makes them behave and keep *busy* doing trivial employment-related activities. I argue that there are so few opportunities for disabled people to be involved and supported in community that specialized programs seem like the least bad option. Rather than attending a human service agency that provides segregated recreational activities, people with ID attend specialized programs because they hold more social value by being part of a post-secondary institution. However, my study shows ID students share little or no similarities to that of a typical college or university experience.

The students who participated in this study helped to shift my thinking about disability and education and showed me of the blind spots I hold as an educator and researcher. Conducting this research was both humbling and galvanizing. I am forever grateful to the ID students for participating in this study. Their honesty, openness, and determination allowed me to further my education and professional credentials. The dichotomy between my privilege as a doctoral student and their dismal post-secondary opportunities has not been overlooked or dismissed.

Finally, I want to share a memorable hall-way discussion that I had with an ID student where he reflected on his disappointed being in the adult special education program. He explained, “I was planning on going to an actual real school rather than a program like this” (Student A). I used this phrase as the title of the paper because it summarized how I understood the ID student made sense of his discontent of being in the adult special education program. I don’t remember my exact response to his statement, however, today I would say something

different. My response would have the underlying message similar to, “Go Ahead and Eat The Dam Muffin!”.

## PostScript

“the research does not change anything; it’s the research that changes you”.

Anonymous, n.d.

I write this postscript during an unprecedented period in history. The COVID-19 pandemic is changing how we live in the world. In the daily news I see disturbing images and read about how the lives of disabled people are disproportionately at risk compared to the non-disabled. I can’t help but think about what I learned in my study about inequalities in a post-secondary and how it parallels larger society. It seems, no matter the context, the lives of people with disabilities are not seen to be equal. The pandemic has further exposed how disabled people are made to be disposable by bureaucratic structures and ableism.

Just as the pandemic is forcing post-secondary institutions to change quickly and launch new ways of teaching and learning, my life has changed as well. When I was nearing completion of my graduate studies, I left my faculty position at the adult special education program where I conducted this research. I wanted to pursue other academic interests that aligned more closely with my philosophical stance on disability and education. My doctoral studies, and more specifically this study, resonated with the quote above about change. I changed. I had been illuminated by the experiences of ID students, and I no longer felt obligated to simply follow what was expected of me by *the University*. I envisioned a way to proceed with being involved with inclusive post-secondary education. The work of inclusion is challenging work, but I felt ready to pursue it.

In this postscript I engage a critically reflexivity to my research experience. I feel compelled to do so for one main reason: I am still processing my learning. I have unanswered questions about ways this study could have been conducted differently and ways the experience

continues to influence my thinking. The complexity of conducting respectful and ethical research, I believe, does not end when the project concludes, or the dissertation is submitted. Instead it is more of a launchpad in continuing to think broadly about social issues while provoking conversations that might contribute to social change and action.

As I write this discussion and reflect on specialized programs and ID students, I think about how fortunate I was to have access to the adult special education program and to the ID students willing to participate in the study. I wonder why the ID students were so willing to talk to me about their experiences. An easy answer would be because of my affiliation with the research site—they felt comfortable. Yet I think it was more; at least, I hope it was more. When the ID students spoke about their experiences, there was an authenticity that came through as they shared honestly and openly, without hesitation or trepidation, about the punishing regime of *the University*. In my journal I wrote about the fearlessness of the ID students. In one entry I said: “Why can they [the ID students] talk about anything and I can’t probe them for more?” There were times during data collection that I hesitated to ask clarifying questions or enquire further into the topic being discussed. It is something I still ponder today: Why did I ask some questions and not others? What were my blind spots as a researcher? What totalizing beliefs did I hold about the ID students that limited the questions I asked?

This research process forced me to consider the ableist messages that I held, accepted, and employed. I carried these messages for many reasons, but one that I most readily recognize is protection—protection in the sense of securing the many privileges I was afforded to complete the study. Some of these privileges include positioning as a researcher, gaining access to the research site, and positioning students as participants. Engaging in self-reflexivity helped me to recognize ways that I, and others, embody ableist messages. Let me give you an example. Just

prior to starting my data collection, I was talking to a colleague explaining to her my research interest in adding lived experience to professional scholarship. After a lengthy description on my part about the value of local knowledge, her response was: What do *they* [ID students] have to tell you? What would you learn from *them*? I found the response startling, but her message clear. She did not believe that ID students had anything of value to tell me or to add to the discussion related to disability and education.

In British Columbia, not much has changed for ID students in the past five years since I started graduate studies. Adult special education programs remain how most ID students attend a post-secondary setting. Inclusive post-secondary initiatives are gaining recognition by students and families seeking more equitable, relevant, and meaningful opportunities. Yet most of the funding from the Ministry of Advanced Education remains with colleges and universities mandated to deliver specialized programming. Despite the ongoing debates and evidence about the use of segregation in special education for children, it remains the favoured approach. However, there are some newer forms of advocacy that could help the pursuit for more inclusive life for disabled people.

A family-run, grassroots organization in the province is using surveys to provide descriptions of the devastating impact on disabled students who experience exclusion in public school settings. I think about how findings from this type of research could be used in a post-secondary context to promote social, political, and economic change for ID students. How impactful could a report documenting exclusion from the perspective of students and parents be in a post-secondary setting? One of the ways forward with critical disability studies research would be to bring issues related to all levels of education to the forefront—this approach could contribute to scholarship that supports inclusion across the lifespan.

In light of what is happening in current times, it is difficult to envision how the landscape of post-secondary settings will change for ID students. The world is facing a global economic crisis and decisions that need to be made in response to the pandemic are happening at an unprecedented pace. There is a realization that a shift in the purpose, value, and cost of a post-secondary education is needed. Dolmage (2017) talks about how ableism is expressed by economic values and the industry of post-secondary education. In his own words: “What we have seen over the past 150 years of disability history is that, during periods of economic collapse or downturn, people with disabilities are the first to be constructed as drains or threats” (108). This makes me worry about ID students—what will happen to this already dismissed group of students? In these times of uncertainty is it time to think critically and ask ID students the question: What else is possible?

## References

- Albrecht, G. L. (1992). *The disability business: Rehabilitation in America*. (190). Sage.
- Annamma, S. A., Ferri, B. A., & Connor, D. J. (2018). Disability critical race theory: Exploring the intersectional lineage, emergence, and potential futures of discri in education. *Review of Research in Education*, 42(1), 46–71. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X18759041>
- Anonymous. (2018). *Academic Plan 2023*. <https://www.kpu.ca/vp-academic/academic-plan-2023>
- Armstead, C. L., Bessell, A. G., Sembiente, S., & Plaza, M. P. (2010). What students need, what students say they want: Student perspectives on the promise of smaller learning communities. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 85, 365–374. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956x.2010.491706>
- Baglieri, S., Valle, J. W., Connor, D. J., & Gallagher, D. J. (2011). Disability studies in education: The need for a plurality of perspectives on disability. *Remedial and Special Education*, 32(4), 267–278. [http://doi: 10.1177/0741932510362200](http://doi:10.1177/0741932510362200)
- Baker, B. (2002). The hunt for disability: The new eugenics and the nor-malization of school children. *Teachers College Record*, 104(4), 663–703. <https://doi.org/10.1111/14679620.00175>
- Ball, E. W., & Harry, B. (2010). Assessment and the policing of the norm. In C. Dudley-Marling & A. Gurn (Eds.), *The myth of the normal curve* (pp. 105–123). Peter Lang. <https://doi.org/10.3726/978-1-4539-0039-0>
- Banack, H., & Morishita, T. (2012). *Final Report: Access programs for people with disabilities department curriculum development*. Faculty of Academic Career and Advancement.
- Barnes, C. (1991). *Disabled People in Britain and dis-crimination*. Hurst and Company.

- Baum, S., & Payea, K. (2005). *The benefits of higher education for individuals and society*. Education Pays 2004: Trends in Higher Education Series.  
<https://research.collegeboard.org/pdf/education-pays-2004-full-report.pdf>
- Becker, H. S. (1963). *Outsiders: Studies in the sociology of deviance*. Free Press.
- Belenky, M. E., Clinchy, B. M., Goldberger, N. R., & Tarule, J. M. (1986). *Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, voice, and mind*. Basic Books.
- Brantlinger, E. (1997). Using ideology: Cases of nonrecognition of the politics of research and practice in special education. *Review of Educational Research*, 67(4), 425–459.  
<https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543067004425>
- Brantlinger, E. (2004). Ideologies discerned, values determined: getting past the hierarchies of special education. In L. Ware (Ed.), *Ideology and the politics of (in)exclusion* (pp. 11–31). Peter Lang.
- Blatt, B. (1987). *The conquest of mental retardation*. Pro-Ed.
- British Columbia Statistics. (2006). *Final Report of the adult special education 2006 cohort study*. Ministry of Advanced Education. [http://www.llbc.leg.bc.ca/public/PubDocs/bcdocs/419810/ASE\\_Registrant\\_Survey\\_Report.pdf](http://www.llbc.leg.bc.ca/public/PubDocs/bcdocs/419810/ASE_Registrant_Survey_Report.pdf)
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*, December 2014.  
<http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/>



- Cameron, L., & Murphy, J. (2007). Obtaining consent to participate in research: The issues involved in including people with a range of learning and communication disabilities. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 35(2), 113–120.  
<http://doi:10.1111/j.1468-3156.2006.00404>
- Campbell, F. (2008). Exploring internalized ableism using critical race theory. *Disability & Society*, 23(2), 151–162. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687590701841190>
- Campbell, M., Copeland, B., & Tate, B. (1998). Taking the standpoint of people with disabilities in research: Experiences with participation. *Canadian Journal of Rehabilitation*, 12(2), 95–104. <http://doi.org/10.1191/026921598676771879>
- Campbell, M., & Gregor, F. (2002). *Mapping social relations: A primer in doing institutional ethnography*. University of Toronto.
- Carey, A. C. (2003). Beyond the Medical Model: A reconsideration of 'feeble-mindedness', citizenship, and eugenic restrictions. *Disability & Society*, 18(4), 411–430.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0968759032000080977>
- Carspecken, P. F. (1996). *Critical ethnography in educational research: A theoretical and practical guide*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.34-1057>
- Cassidy, F. (1983). Adult special education in B.C.: Toward a lifelong learning approach for persons with mental handicaps. *B.C. Journal of Special Education*, (7)4, 301–306.
- Charlton, J. (2010). The Dimensions of disability oppression. In L. J. Davis (Ed.), *The Disability Studies Reader* (3rd ed.) (pp. 147–159). Routledge.
- Clark, M. A. (2006). Adult education and disability studies, an interdisciplinary relationship: Research implications for adult education. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 56(4), 308–322.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713606289661>

- Collins, K. M., Connor, D., Ferri, B., Gallagher, D., & Samson, J. F. (2016). Dangerous assumptions and unspoken limitations: A disability studies in education response to Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier, Mattison, Maczuga, Li, and Cook (2015). *Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners*, 16(1), 4–16.
- Connor, D.J., & Gabel, S. (2013). “Crippling” the Curriculum Through Academic Activism: Working Toward Increasing Global Exchanges to Reframe (Dis)Ability and Education, *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 46(1), 100–118.  
<http://doi:10.1080/10665684.2013.750186>
- Connor, D. J., Gabel, S., Gallagher, D., & Morton, M. (2008). Disability studies and inclusive education—Implications for theory, research, and practice. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 12(5–6), 441–457. <http://doi:10.1080/13603110802377482>
- Crawford, F. A., & Bartolomé, L. I. (2010). Labeling and treating linguistic minority students with disabilities as deficient and outside the normal curve: A pedagogy of exclusion. In C. Dudley-Marling and A. Gurn (Eds.). *The myth of the normal curve* (pp. 151–170). Peter Lang. <https://doi.org/10.3726/978-1-4539-0039-0>
- Crotty, M. (1996). *Phenomenology and nursing research*. Churchill Livingstone.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Sage.
- Danforth, S. (2009). Compliance as alienated labor: A critical analysis of public school programs for students considered to have emotional/behavioural disorders. In S. Gabel and S. Danforth (Eds.). *Disability Studies in Education: Readings in theory and method* (pp. 85–102). Peter Lang.

- Danforth, S., & Gabel, S., (Eds.). (2006). *Vital questions facing disability studies in education* (2nd ed.). Peter Lang. <https://doi.org/10.3726/978-1-4539-1832-6>
- Davis, C.A. (1999). *Reflexive ethnography: A guide to researching selves and others*. Routledge.
- Davis, L. J. (2002). *Bending over backwards: Essays on disability and the body*. New York University.
- Davis, L. J. (2006). *The disability studies reader*. Taylor & Francis.
- Davis, L. J. (2010). Introduction. In L. J. Davis (Ed.), *The disability studies reader* (pp. 1–6). Routledge.
- Denzin, N. K. (1978). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods*. McGraw-Hill.
- Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.). (1998). *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues*. Sage.
- Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (2005). Introduction: The Discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*, (3rd ed.) (pp. 1–32). Sage.
- Devlin, R. F., & Pothier, D. (2006). *Critical disability theory: Essays in philosophy, politics, policy, and law*. University of British Columbia.
- Dolmage, J. T. (2017). *Academic ableism: Disability and higher education*. University of Michigan Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mpub.9708722>
- Driscoll, M.P. (2005). Constructivism. In *Psychology of Learning for Instruction* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Pearson.
- Dudley-Marling, C., & Gurn, A. (Eds.). (2010). *The myth of the normal curve*. Peter Lang. <https://doi.org/10.3726/978-1-4539-0039-0>

- Elias, R., Muskett, A. E., & White, S. W. (2019). Educator perspectives on the postsecondary transition difficulties of students with autism. *Autism*, 23(1), 260–264.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361317726246>
- Erevelles, N. (2000). Educating unruly bodies: Critical pedagogy, disability studies, and the politics of schooling. *Educational theory*, 50(1), 25-47.
- Erevelles, N. (2009). Rewriting critical pedagogy from the periphery: Materiality, disability, and the politics of schooling. In S. Gabel (Ed.) *Disability studies in education: Readings in theory and method* (pp. 65–83). Peter Lang.
- Erevelles, N. (2016). Deconstructing difference: Doing disability studies in multicultural educational contexts. In S. Danforth & S. Gabel (Eds.), *Vital questions facing disability studies in education* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (pp. 17–30). Peter Lang.  
<https://doi.org/10.3726/978-1-4539-1832-6>
- Eugenics Archives. *Eugenics*. <https://eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/tree>
- Evans, N. J., Broido, E. M., Brown, K. R., & Wilke, A. K. (2017). *Disability in higher education: A social justice approach*. Jossey-Bass.
- Felten, P. (2013). Principles of good practice in SoTL. *Teaching and Learning Inquiry*, 1(1), 121–125.
- Ferri, B. A. (2008). Doing a (dis)service: Reimagining special education from a disability studies perspective. In W. Ayers, T. Quinn, & D. Stovall (Eds.). *Handbook of social justice in education*, (pp. 417–430). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203887745>
- Finkelstein, V. (1980). *Attitudes and disability*. World Rehabilitation Fund.

- Fracasso, L.E., Bangs, K., & Binder, K. S. (2014). The contributions of phonological and morphological awareness to racy skills in the adult basic education population. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 49*(2), 141–151. <http://doi:10.1177/0022219414538513>
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Herder and Herder.
- Foucault, M. (1972). *Genealogy and social Criticism*, Reprinted in: Steven Seidman (1994), *The Postmodern Turn: New Perspectives on Social Theory*. University Press.
- Foucault, M. (1976). *The history of sexuality*. Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1977) ‘Intellectuals and power: A conversation between Michel Foucault and Giles Deleuze’, in BOUCHARD, D. (Ed.) *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Foucault, M. (1977a). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. Vintage.
- Foucault, M. (1982). The Subject and Power. *Critical Inquiry, 8*(4), 777–795.  
<https://doi.org/10.1086/448181>
- Gabel, S. L. (2001). “I wash my face with dirty water” narratives of disability and pedagogy. *Journal of Teacher Education, 52*(1), 31–47.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487101052001004>
- Gabel, S., & Danforth, S. (2002). Disability studies in education: Seizing the moment of opportunity. *Disability, Culture and Education, 1*, 1–3.
- Gallagher, D. (2009). Searching for something outside of ourselves: The contradiction between technical rationality and the achievement of inclusive pedagogy. In S. Gabel and S. Danforth (Eds). *Disability Studies in Education: Readings in theory and method* (pp. 85–102). Peter Lang.

- Gerrard, L. C. (1994). Inclusive education: An issue of social justice. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 27(1), 58-67.
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Prentice-Hall.
- Goodley, D. (2007). Towards socially just pedagogies: Deleuzoguattarian critical disability studies. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 11, 317–334.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110701238769>
- Goodley, D. (2016). *Disability studies: An interdisciplinary introduction*. Sage.
- Griffith, A. I., & Smith, D. E. (1987). Constructing cultural knowledge: Mothering as discourse. In J. Gaskell & A. McLaren (Eds.), *Women and education: A Canadian perspective*, 3(1), (pp. 87–103).
- Grigal, M., Hart, D., & Weir, C. (2013). Postsecondary education for people with intellectual disability: Current issues and critical challenges. *Inclusion*, 1(1), 50–63.  
<http://doi.org/10.1352/2326-6988-1.1.050>
- Guba, E.G., and Lincoln, Y.S. (2005). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.), *The Sage Publications Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 191–215). Sage.
- Hart, D., Zaft, C., & Zimbrich, K. (2001). Creating access to college for all students. *The Journal for Vocational Special Needs Education*, 23(2), 19–31.
- Henderson, M. (July 20, 2015). *The Indian Act: Teaching apartheid in Canada*.  
<https://www.spectatortribune.com/the-indian-act-teaching-apartheid-in-canada/>
- Henn, M., Weinstein, M., & Foard, N. (2005). *A short introduction to social research*. Sage.
- Heshusius, L. (1984). Why would they and I want to do it? A phenomenological-theoretical view of special education. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 7(4), 363–368.

- Hughson, E.A., Moodie, S., & Uditsky, B. (2006) *The Story of Inclusive Post Secondary Education in Alberta, Final Research Report 2004-2005*. Edmonton: Alberta Association for Community Living.
- [https://thinkcollege.net/sites/default/files/files/resources/The\\_Story\\_of\\_Inclusive\\_Post\\_Secondary\\_Education\\_in\\_Alberta.pdf](https://thinkcollege.net/sites/default/files/files/resources/The_Story_of_Inclusive_Post_Secondary_Education_in_Alberta.pdf)
- Hughson, A. E., & Uditsky, B. (2019). 30 years of post-secondary education: Scope, challenges and outcomes. In O'Brien, P., Bonati, M. L., Gadow, F., & Slee, R. (Eds.) *People with Intellectual Disability Experiencing University Life* (pp 51-68). Leiden Netherlands: Brill. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004394551>
- Hull, H.G. (2007). Equal Access to Post-Secondary Education: The sisyphian impact of flagging test scores of persons with disabilities. *Civil Rights and Discrimination Commons, and the Disability Law Commons*, (15), 16–57.
- <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/clevslr55&div=8&id=&page=>
- Human Rights Code of British Columbia Act*, RSBC, c 210 (1996). [http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/00\\_96210\\_01](http://www.bclaws.ca/Recon/document/ID/freeside/00_96210_01)
- Hutcheon, E. J., & Wolbring, G. (2012). Voices of “disabled” post-secondary students: Examining higher education “disability” policy using an ableism lens. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 5(1), 39–49. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0027002>
- A BC HISTORY Institutions and People with Intellectual Disabilities
- (n.d.). *Woodlands Institution*. Inclusion BC. <https://inclusionbc.org/our-resources/institutions/>

- Johnstone, D. (2012). *An introduction to disability studies*. Taylor and Francis, Hoboken.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203462379>
- Jurkowski, J. M. (2008). Photovoice as participatory action research tool for engaging people with intellectual disabilities in research and program development. *Intellectual and developmental disabilities, 46*(1), 1–11.
- Kanter, R. M. (1977). *Men and women of the corporation*. Basic Books.
- Kauffman, J. M., Anastasiou, D., & Maag, J. W. (2017). Special education at the crossroad: An identity crisis and the need for a scientific reconstruction. *Exceptionality, 25*(2), 139–155.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09362835.2016.1238380>
- Kincheloe, J.L. & P.L. McLaren. (2005). Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research. In N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 303–343). Sage.
- Kliwer, C., & Drake, S. (1998). Disability, eugenics and the current ideology of segregation: A modern moral tale. *Disability and Society, 13*, 95–111.
- Knowles, M. S. (1977). *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy Versus Pedagogy* (8th ed.). Association Press.
- Kunc, N. (2013). *Fostering Ability Through Opportunity. Conversations that Matter*.  
<https://conversationshatmatter.org>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Sage.
- Linton, S. (1998). *Claiming disability: Knowledge and identity*. New York University.
- Lord, J., & Hutchison, P. (2007). *Pathways to Inclusion: Building a new story with people and communities*. Captus Press.



- Merriam, S. B., & Bierema, L. L. (2013). *Adult learning: Linking theory and practice*. John Wiley & Sons.
- O'Brien, J., Bowman, T., Chesley, B., Hughson, A. E., & Uditsky, B. (2009). *Inclusive Post-Secondary Education: Measuring Quality and Improving Practice*. Government of Alberta. Edmonton: Alberta Association for Community Living.  
<https://www.centre-ipse.org>
- O'Brien, P., McConkey, R., Garcia-Iriarte, E. (2014). Co-researching with People who Have Intellectual Disabilities: Insights From a National Survey. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 27, 65-75.
- Oliver, M. (1990) *The Politics of Disablement*. Macmillan.
- Oliver, M. (1992). Changing the social relations of research production? *Disability, Handicap & Society*, 7(2), 101–114.
- Oliver, M. (1993). Re-defining disability: A challenge to research. In J. Swain, V. Finkelstein, S. French and M. Oliver (Eds.) *Disabling barriers—enabling environments*, (pp. 61–68). Sage.
- Oliver, M. (1996) *Understanding Disability: from theory to practice*. Macmillan.
- Olkin, R. (1999). *What psychotherapists should know about disability*. Guilford.
- Okin, S. M. (1992) Women, equality, and citizenship, *Queen's Quarterly*, 99, 56–71.
- Madison, D. S. (2011). *Critical ethnography: Method, ethics, and performance*. Sage.
- Miller, B., & Schwartz, J. (2016). The intersection of Black Lives Matter and adult education: One community college initiative. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 2016(150), 13-23.

- Ministry of Advanced Education. (2016). *Perspectives: Best Practice Guidelines for Equitable Education*.
- Ministry of Advanced Education. (2016a). *Special education services: A manual of policies, procedures and guidelines*.  
[https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/inclusive/special\\_ed\\_policy\\_manual.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/inclusive/special_ed_policy_manual.pdf)
- Ministry of Advanced Education. (2018). *Adult education policy framework*.  
[https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/post-secondary-education/adult-education/adult\\_education\\_policy\\_framework.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/post-secondary-education/adult-education/adult_education_policy_framework.pdf)
- Ministry of Education. (1980). *A draft policy on the provision of adult special education services and programmes in the public education system of British Columbia*. Ministry Advisory Committee on Continuing Education.
- McEathron, M., & Beuhring, T. (2011). Postsecondary education for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities: A critical review of the state of knowledge and a taxonomy to guide future research. Institute on Community Integration University of Minnesota, 21(1), 1–16. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED517501.pdf>
- Morris, J. (1991). 'Us' and 'them'? Feminist research, community care and disability. *Critical Social Policy*, 11(33), 22–39.
- Mosoff, J. M., Greenholtz, J., Hurtado, T., & Jo, J. (2007). *Models of inclusive post-secondary education for young adults with developmental disabilities (1st year of 3-year research project)*. Canadian Council on Learning.  
<https://thinkcollege.net/sites/default/files/files/resources/Mosoff-FinalReport.pdf>

- Meekosha H., & Shuttleworth, R. (2009). What's So 'Critical' About Critical Disability Studies? *Australian Journal of Human Rights*, 15, 47–76.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1323238X.2009.11910861>
- Papay, C. K., & Bambara, L. M. (2011). Postsecondary education for transition-age students with intellectual and other developmental disabilities: A national survey. *Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities*, 46(1), 78–93.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/23880032>
- Patton, Q. M. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. Sage.
- Peters, S. (2009). Transforming literacy instruction: Unpacking the pedagogy of privilege. In S. Gabel and S. Danforth (Eds.), *Disability Studies in Education: Readings in theory and method*, (pp. 155–172). Peter Lang.
- Peña, E. V. (2014). Marginalization of published scholarship on students with disabilities in higher education journals. *Journal of College Student Development*, 55(1), 30–40.  
<https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2014.0006>
- Peña, E. V., Stapleton, L. D., & Schaffer, L. M. (2016). Critical perspectives on disability identity. In E. S. Abes (Ed.), *Critical perspectives on student development theory: New directions for student services*, (pp. 85–96). Jossey-Bass. <http://doi:10.1002/ss.20177>
- Pylypa, J. (1998). Power and bodily practice: Applying the work of Foucault to an anthropology of the body. *Arizona Anthropologist*, 13, 21-36.
- Quetelet, L. A. (1849). *Letters on the theory of probabilities* (O. G. Downes, Trans.). Layton
- Rioux, M. H., & Bach, M., (Eds.). (1994). *Disability is not measles: New research paradigms in disability*. L'Institut Roehar. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED390194.pdf>

- Rocco, T. S. & Delgado, A. (2011). Shifting lenses: A critical examination of disability in adult education. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 132, 3–12.  
<http://doi:10.1002/ace.426>
- Sayer, A. (1992). *Method in social science: A realist approach*. Psychology Press.
- Séguin, E. (1866). *Idiocy and Its Treatment by the Physiological Method*. W.Wood & Company.  
[https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=9uFb0xDxHV4C&hl=en\\_GB&pg=GBS.PA9](https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=9uFb0xDxHV4C&hl=en_GB&pg=GBS.PA9)
- Shakespeare, T. (2006). The social model of disability. In L. Davis (Ed.), *The Disability Studies Reader* (2nd ed.) (pp. 197–204). Routledge.
- Slee, R. (2004) Inclusive education: A Framework for Reform? In V. Heung and M. Ainscow (Eds.), *Inclusive education: A Framework for Reform?* (pp. 58–66). Institute of Education.
- Smith, D. E. (1987). *The everyday world as problematic: A feminist sociology*. University of Toronto.
- Smith, D. E. (1990). *The conceptual practices of power: A feminist sociology of knowledge*. University of Toronto.
- Smith, D. E. (1999). *Writing the social: Critique, theory, and investigations*. University of Toronto.
- Smith, D. E. (2005) *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People*. Alta Mira Press.
- Smith, D. E. (2006). *Institutional ethnography as practice*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Smith, D. E. (Ed.). (2006). *Institutional ethnography as practice*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Stanley, N., Manthorpe, J., Penhale, B. (1999). *Institutional abuse: perspectives across the life course*. Routledge.

- Statistics Canada. (December 2012). *Disability in Canada: Initial findings from the Canadian survey on disability*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2013002-eng.pdf?st=OVcG5J87>
- Sullivan, M. (2018). Subjected bodies: Paraplegia, Rehabilitation, and the Politics of Movement. In S. Tremain (Ed.), *Foucault and the Government of Disability* (pp. 27–43). University of Michigan.
- Snyder, L. S., & Mitchell, D. T (2006). *Cultural Locations of Disability*. University of Chicago. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15017410701345365>
- Think College. (2019). *What is think college?* <https://thinkcollege.net/about/what-is-think-college>
- Titchkosky, T. (2001). Disability: A rose by any other name?— ‘People- first’ language in Canadian society.” *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 38(2), 25–40. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1755-618X.2001.tb00967.x>
- Titchkosky, T. (2007). *Reading and writing disability differently: The textured life of embodiment*. University of Toronto.
- Titchkosky, T. (2008). To Pee or not to Pee? Ordinary Talk about Extraordinary Exclusions in a University Environment. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 33(1), 37–60. <https://doi.org/10.29173/cjs1526>
- Titchkosky, T. (2010). The not-yet-time of disability in the bureaucratization of university life. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 30(3/4). <http://dx.doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v30i3/4.1295>
- Titchkosky, T. (2011). *The question of access: Disability, space, meaning*. University of Toronto.

- Titchkosky, T., & Michalko, R. (2009). *Rethinking Normalcy: A Disability Studies Reader*. Canadian Scholars.
- Thomas, C. (1999). *Female forms: Experiencing and understanding disability*. McGraw-Hill Education.
- Thomas, J. (1993). *Doing critical ethnography*. Sage.
- Tobin, G.A., and Begley, C.M. (2004). Methodological Rigour within a Qualitative Framework. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 48, 388–396.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2004.03207.x>
- Tomlinson, S. (2014). *The politics of race, class and special education: The selected works of Sally Tomlinson*. Routledge.
- Tremain, S. (2018). *Foucault and the Government of Disability* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). University of Michigan.
- Uditsky, B. (1993). From integration to inclusion: The Canadian experience. In R. Slee (Ed.), *Is there a desk with my name on it? The politics of integration* (pp. 79–92). Falmer Press.
- Uditsky, B., & Hughson, E. A. (2008). *Inclusive post-secondary education for adults with developmental disabilities: A promising path to an inclusive life*. Alberta Association for Community Living.  
[https://thinkcollege.net/sites/default/files/files/resources/A%20Promising%20Path%20reduced\\_1.pdf](https://thinkcollege.net/sites/default/files/files/resources/A%20Promising%20Path%20reduced_1.pdf)
- Uditsky, B., & Hughson, E. (2012). *Inclusive Postsecondary Education-An Evidence-Based Moral Imperative*. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities*, 9(4), 298–302. <http://doi:10.1111/jppi.12005>
- Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation. (1976). *Fundamental principles of disability*.

<https://disability-studies.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/library/UPIAS-UPIAS.pdf>

United Nations. (2010). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. Ottawa: Department of Canadian Heritage.

<https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

Weber, Max. (1947). *The theory of social and economic organization*. The Free Press.

Wehmeyer, M. L. (Ed.). (2013). *The story of intellectual disability: An evolution of meaning, understanding, and public perception*. Brookes.

Wolbring, G. (2008). Is there an end to out-able? Is there an end to the rat race for abilities? *Media and Culture Journal*, 11(3).

<http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/57%C2%A0>

Wolbring, G. (2008a). The Politics of Ableism. *Society for International Development*, 51(2), 252–258. <http://doi:10.1057/dev.2008.17>

Wolfensberger, W. (1983). Social Role Valorization: A proposed new term for the principle of normalization. *Mental Retardation*, 21(6), 234–239.

## Appendices



### **Appendix A: Recruitment Script**

**TITLE:** Informing the practice of students with intellectual disabilities at a post-secondary institution: A critical ethnography

**SPONSOR:** N/A

**INVESTIGATORS:** Teresa Swan

I am talking to you on behalf Teresa Swan. Teresa is an instructor in ASE and works at the Langley campus. Teresa talked you last month about the research project she is doing and would like me to invite you to be part of a research study. The study is about students in ASE and their experience in ASE.

Let me tell you about the project so you can decide if you want to be a part of it.

Teresa wants to learn more about what you do as students in ASE. For example, what are some of the important things Teresa should know about ASE? What things do you do on campus outside of the classroom? Your answers will help people better understand how ASE works.

Teresa would like to meet with you twice to ask you these types of questions. The first meeting would be a focus group with about 5 other current ASE students. In this meeting she would ask the group questions like tell me what you do in ASE. The second meeting would be just with you. She will ask you things like your age, how did you feel when you were accepted into ASE, and what is your typical day as a ASE student.



Each meeting will take about 1 hour and you would be welcome to bring any work from the class you wanted to share. You can choose to participate in one or both of the meetings. Teresa will also spend about 4 days observing you when you are in class and on campus. When she is observing you she will be taking notes on things like who you talk to, where you eat your lunch, and what areas of the campus you use.

Teresa would like to tape what you say during the meetings, so she does not miss anything. Teresa will be the only person to hear the tape. After Teresa writes down what is on the tape, she will erase it. Your name and other private information such as where you live will not be written in the study. The information used in the study will not identify you (nobody will know what you said). Teresa will keep the answers you give and the form you signed to be part of the study locked in a file. Five years after the study is done, Teresa will destroy all the information she collected.

Nothing bad will happen if you decide to say "no" to this study; your ASE program will be the same. Nothing will change. If you do not want to answer a question during the interview, you do not have to. You can also tell her if you do not want to talk or participate any more, even if you agreed to and then change your mind. You will not receive any gifts (e.g. money) for participating in the study.

If you want to ask more about this study, you can call Teresa Swan at xxx-xxx or email her at [Teresa.swan@theuniversity.ca](mailto:Teresa.swan@theuniversity.ca). If you have any questions concerning your rights as a possible participant in this research, please contact the Chair, Conjoint Health Research Ethics Board, University of Calgary at xxx-xxx.

This study has been approved by the University of Calgary Conjoint Health Research Ethics Board (REB17-1640)



## Appendix B: Recruitment Script- Consent

You are being invited to give consent for Teresa Swan to contact you at some time in the future to invite you to participate in a research study. Are you willing to learn more about the Informing the practice of students with intellectual disabilities at a post-secondary institution: A critical ethnography study? (Circle one)

YES NO

If yes, you will be contacted at a later date. Please include your contact information below.

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Every effort will be made to safeguard your contact information. Although access to this information will be limited, there is a small chance that this information could be shared or inappropriately accessed by mistake. You have been made aware of the reasons why the contact information is needed and the risks and benefits of consenting or refusing to consent. This consent is effective immediately. Your consent to be contacted can be revoked by you at any time.

Student's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Name: \_\_\_\_\_



## **Appendix C: Informed Consent - Focus Group**

**TITLE:** Informing the practice of students with intellectual disabilities at a post-secondary institution: A critical ethnography

**SPONSOR:** N/A

**INVESTIGATOR:** Teresa Morishita

This consent form is only part of the process of informed consent. Informed consent means that you know the basic idea about what the study is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something talked about here, or information not included here, please ask. Take the time to read this carefully and make sure you understand all the information. You will receive a copy of this form.

### **BACKGROUND**

In the province of British Columbia students with intellectual disabilities attending a university or college attend adult special education programming. Adult special education programming has been offered at the university for over 30 years and goes by the name of Access Programs for People with Disabilities (ASE). Teresa is interested in learning more about the experiences of students in ASE at the University.

### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?**

The purpose of this study is to learn about the experiences of students attending ASE. More specifically, Teresa is interested in the academic and social activities of students such as how they apply to ASE, what they learn in class, and how they engage in campus life.

## **WHAT WOULD I HAVE TO DO?**

Participate in a focus group with other ASE students to talk about your experiences in ASE. This kind of discussion is called a focus group. The purpose of this focus group is to learn about what it is like to be a student in the ASE program.

The focus group will be about two hours and will happen between September 2018 and June 2019. The focus group will take place on the university campus.

## **WHAT ARE THE RISKS?**

- Nothing bad will happen if you participate in this focus group.
- You might feel tired or feel stressed or emotional from participating in the focus group.
- The information Teresa collects will be made public through reports and/or presentations.
- Teresa cannot guarantee that you will not be identified through reports and presentations which may result in feelings of stress or embarrassment.
- Teresa is an instructor in ASE but does not work at the Langley campus. Because the study is being conducted by an instructor (Teresa) in the program, the following steps will be taken to minimize any conflict of interest that could emerge:
  - All participation in this study is voluntary
  - Use of a recruitment script
  - No information about the participants will be shared with other instructors in the program

## **ARE THERE ANY REPRODUCTIVE RISKS?**

N/A

## **WILL I BENEFIT IF I TAKE PART?**

You will not receive any direct benefit (e.g. food or money) for participating in this focus group, however, other benefits may include you feeling empowered by sharing your personal stories and participating as study participants.

## **DO I HAVE TO PARTICIPATE?**

- Participation in this focus group is your choice.

- You can withdraw (stop participating) from the focus group at any time and you may also request that any information that you have provided to be withdrawn, meaning that Teresa will not use any of the information that you have shared. It will however not be possible to withdraw that information once it has been made public.
- If you do not want to join this focus group or if you withdraw (stop participating) from the focus group, you will still receive the same quality of instruction and support that other ASE students receive. It will not affect your grades, evaluations, or academic standing in any way.
- You can ask Teresa any questions you have about this study.
- You can ask Teresa questions in the future if you do not understand something that is being done or said.
- Teresa will share with you if anything happens during the course of the study that might cause you to change your mind about participating.

### **WHAT ELSE DOES MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?**

Teresa will ask all the participants in the focus group not to talk to other people about what was said in the focus group. However, she cannot promise that they will not tell someone what was said.

Teresa has also asked that you participate in an individual interview.

At any time, you may also request that any information that you have provided will be withdrawn, meaning that Teresa will not use any of the information that you have shared. It will however not be possible to withdraw that information once it has been made public.

In agreeing to participate, you are giving Teresa permission to share this information in reports and presentations about the study project.

### **WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING, OR DO I HAVE TO PAY FOR ANYTHING?**

You will not be given money to participate in this study.

### **WILL MY RECORDS BE KEPT PRIVATE?**

- The focus group discussion will be recorded on an audiotape and Teresa will be taking notes.
- After Teresa is finished writing down what is on the audiotape, she will erase it.
- Your private information such as where you live will not be written in the study.

- You can choose the use a generic name (e.g. Student A) or your name (full or partial) in the public documents.
- Teresa will keep the written copies along with notes of what you said and the consent forms you sign in a locked file. These documents will be destroyed 5 years after the study is done.

### **IF I SUFFER A STUDY-RELATED INJURY, WILL I BE COMPENSATED?**

No harms or inquiries are expected.

### **SIGNATURES**

Your signature on this form means that you have understood what has been talked about and you are willing to participate in this study. It does not give up your legal rights nor make the researcher (Teresa) or the The university not responsible for their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without any impact to your education in ASE.

If you have any questions or feel that you have been treated badly during this study, you can call Teresa at xxx-xxx; [teresa.swan@theuniversity.ca](mailto:teresa.swan@theuniversity.ca) or call the university Research Ethics Board and Office of Research and Scholarship at xxx-xxx; [research@theuniveristy.ca](mailto:research@theuniveristy.ca).

In the public documents you would like to use:

a generic name (e.g. Student A)

or

your (first and/or last) name

I understand all that has been talked about and am willing to take part in the study.



## **Appendix D: Informed Consent - Interview**

**TITLE:** Informing the practice of students with intellectual disabilities at a post-secondary institution: A critical ethnography

**INVESTIGATORS:** Teresa Morishita

This consent form is only part of the process of informed consent. Informed consent means that you know the basic idea about what the study is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, please ask. Take the time to read this carefully and to understand all the information. You will receive a copy of this form.

### **BACKGROUND**

In the province of British Columbia students with intellectual disabilities attending a university or college attend adult special education programming. Adult special education programming has been offered at the university for over 30 years and goes by the name Access Programs for People with Disabilities (ASE). Teresa is interested in learning more about the experiences of students in ASE at the university.

### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?**

The purpose of this study is to learn about the experiences of students attending ASE. More specifically, Teresa is interested in the academic and social activities of students such as how they apply to ASE, what they learn in class, and how they engage in campus life.

## **WHAT WOULD I HAVE TO DO?**

- Participate in an interview to talk about your experiences in ASE.
- The interview will last between one to two hours and will happen between September 2018 and June 2019.
- The interview will take place in a space that is chosen by the student such as the University campus or community centre.

## **WHAT ARE THE RISKS?**

- Nothing bad will happen if you participate in this interview.
- You might feel tired or feel stressed or emotional from participating in the interview.
- The information Teresa collects will be made public through reports and/or presentations.
- Teresa can not guarantee that you will not be identified through reports and presentations which may result in feelings of stress or embarrassment.
- Teresa is an instructor in ASE but does not work at the Langley campus. Because the study is being conducted by an instructor (Teresa) in the program, the following steps will be taken to minimize any conflict of interest that could emerge:
  - All participation in this study is voluntary
  - Use of a recruitment script
  - No information about the participants will be shared with other instructors in the program

## **ARE THERE ANY REPRODUCTIVE RISKS?**

N/A

## **WILL I BENEFIT IF I TAKE PART?**

You will not receive any direct benefit (e.g. food or money) for participating in this interview.



## **DO I HAVE TO PARTICIPATE?**

- Participation in this interview is your choice.
- You can withdraw (stop participating) from the interview at any time.
- You can withdraw (stop participating) from the interview at any time and you may also request that any information that you have provided to be withdrawn, meaning that Teresa will not use any of the information that you have shared. It will however not be possible to withdraw that information once it has been made public.
- If you do not want to join this interview group or if you withdraw (stop participating) from the interview, you will still receive the same quality of instruction and support that other ASE students receive. It will not affect your grades, evaluations or academic standing in any way.
- You can ask Teresa any questions you have about the research study.
- You can ask Teresa questions in the future if you do not understand something that is being done or said.
- Teresa will share with you any new things related to this interview or the study that may happen while you are participating.
- Teresa is an instructor in ASE but does not work at the Langley campus. Because the research is being conducted by an instructor (Teresa) in the program, the following steps will be taken to minimize any conflict of interest that could emerge:
  - All participation in this research is voluntary
  - Use of a recruitment script
  - No information about the participants will be shared other instructors in the program

## **WHAT ELSE DOES MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?**

Teresa has also asked that you participate in a focus group.

At any time, you may also request that any information that you have provided will be withdrawn, meaning that Teresa will not use any of the information that you have shared. It will however not be possible to withdraw that information once it has been made public.

In agreeing to participate, you are giving Teresa permission to share this information in reports and presentations about the research project.

## **WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING, OR DO I HAVE TO PAY FOR ANYTHING?**

You will not be given money to participate in this research study.

## **WILL MY RECORDS BE KEPT PRIVATE?**

- The interview discussion will be recorded on an audiotape and Teresa may also take notes.
- After Teresa is finished writing down what is on the audiotape, she will erase it.
- After Teresa is finished with the notes, she will erase it destroy them.
- Your private information such as where you live will not be written in the study.
- You can choose the use a generic name (e.g. Student A) or your name (full or partial) in the public documents.
- Your name and other private information such as where you live will not be written in the study.
- Teresa will keep the written copies of what you said along with notes and consent forms you sign in a locked file. This will be destroyed 5 years after the study is done.

## **IF I SUFFER A RESEARCH-RELATED INJURY, WILL I BE COMPENSATED?**

No harms or inquiries are expected.

## **SIGNATURES**

Your signature on this form means that you have understood what has been talked about and you are willing to participate in this study. It does not give up your legal rights nor make the researcher (Teresa) or the University not responsible for their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without any impact to your education in ASE.

If you have any questions or feel that you have been treated badly during this study, you can call Teresa at xxx-xxx; [teresa.swan@theuniversity.ca](mailto:teresa.swan@theuniversity.ca) or call the university Research Ethics Board and Office of Research and Scholarship at xxx-xxx; [research@theuniveristy.ca](mailto:research@theuniveristy.ca).

In the public documents you would like to use:

- a generic name (e.g. student A)  
or  
 your (first and/or last) name

I understand all that has been talked about and am willing to take part in the study.



## **Appendix E: Informed Consent – Participant Observation for Students**

**TITLE:** Informing the practice of students with intellectual disabilities at a post-secondary institution: A critical ethnography

**SPONSOR:** N/A

**INVESTIGATOR:** Teresa Morishita

This consent form is only part of the process of informed consent. Informed consent means that you know the basic idea about what the study is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something talked about here, or information not included here, please ask. Take the time to read this carefully and make sure you understand all the information. You will receive a copy of this form.

### **BACKGROUND**

In the province of British Columbia students with intellectual disabilities attending a university or college attend adult special education programming. Adult special education programming has been offered at the University for over 30 years and goes by the name of Access Programs for People with Disabilities (ASE). Teresa is interested in learning more about the experiences of students in ASE at the University.

### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?**

The purpose of this study is to learn about the experiences of students attending ASE. More specifically, Teresa is interested in the academic and social activities of students such as how they apply to ASE, what they learn in class, and how they engage in campus life.

## **WHAT WOULD I HAVE TO DO?**

- Participate in observations while in the classroom.
- Notes will be used to record information such as how the classroom is set-up, topics the instructor talks to you about, and the types of learning activities you do in class.
- The observations will happen between September 2018 and June 2019.

## **WHAT ARE THE RISKS?**

- Nothing bad will happen if you participate in the observations.
- The information Teresa collects will be made public through reports and/or presentations.
- Teresa can not guarantee that you will not be identified through reports and presentations because all study participants have the option of including their name in reports and presentations, which may provide identifying information such as location of the study.
- You can choose the use a generic name (e.g. Student A) or your name (full or partial) in the reports and publications.

•

## **ARE THERE ANY REPRODUCTIVE RISKS?**

N/A

## **WILL I BENEFIT IF I TAKE PART?**

You will not receive any direct benefit (e.g. food or money) for participating in the observations.

## **DO I HAVE TO PARTICIPATE?**

- Participation in the observations is your choice.
- You can withdraw (stop participating) from the observations at any time and you may also request that any information that you have provided to be withdrawn, meaning that Teresa will not use any of the information that you have shared. It will however not be possible to withdraw that information once it has been anonymized (i.e. identifying information removed) or made public in reports or presentations.
- You can ask Teresa any questions you have about this study.
- You can ask Teresa questions in the future if you do not understand something that is being done or said.

•

## **WHAT ELSE DOES MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?**

In agreeing to participate, you are giving Teresa permission to share this information in reports and presentations about the study project.

**WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING, OR DO I HAVE TO PAY FOR ANYTHING?**

You will not be given money to participate in this study.

**WILL MY RECORDS BE KEPT PRIVATE?**

- You can choose to use a generic name (e.g. Student A) or your name (full or partial) in the reports and publications.
- Your private information such as which campus you attend will not be written in the study.
- Teresa will keep the written copies along with notes of what you said and the consent forms you sign in a locked file. These documents will be destroyed 5 years after the study is done.

**IF I SUFFER A STUDY-RELATED INJURY, WILL I BE COMPENSATED?**

No harms or inquiries are expected.

## **SIGNATURES**

Your signature on this form means that you have understood what has been talked about and you are willing to participate in this study. It does not give up your legal rights nor make the researcher (Teresa) or the University of Calgary not responsible for their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without any impact to your education in ASE.

If you have any questions or feel that you have been treated badly during this study, you can call Teresa at 604-599-2605 or call the Chair, Conjoint Health Research Ethics Board, University of Calgary at 403-220-7990.

In the public documents you would like to use:

a generic name (e.g. Student A)

or

your (first and/or last) name

I understand all that has been talked about and am willing to take part in the study.



## **Appendix F: Informed Consent – Participant Observation for Instructors**

**TITLE:** Informing the practice of students with intellectual disabilities at a post-secondary institution: A critical ethnography

**SPONSOR:** N/A

**INVESTIGATOR:** Teresa Morishita

This consent form is only part of the process of informed consent. Informed consent means that you know the basic idea about what the study is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something talked about here, or information not included here, please ask. Take the time to read this carefully and make sure you understand all the information. You will receive a copy of this form.

### **BACKGROUND**

In the province of British Columbia students with intellectual disabilities attending a university or college attend adult special education programming. Adult special education programming has been offered at the University for over 30 years and goes by the name of Access Programs for People with Disabilities (ASE). Teresa is interested in learning more about the experiences of students in ASE at the University.

## **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?**

The purpose of this study is to learn about the experiences of students attending ASE. More specifically, Teresa is interested in the academic and social activities of students such as how they apply to ASE, what they learn in class, and how they engage in campus life.

## **WHAT WOULD I HAVE TO DO?**

- Participate in observations with ASE students during in-class activities.
- The purpose of observations is to learn about what it is like to be a student in the ASE program.
- The observations will be during class and will happen between September 2018 and June 2019. The observations will take place in ASE classroom

## **WHAT ARE THE RISKS?**

- Nothing bad will happen if you participate in the observations.
- The information Teresa collects will be made public through reports and/or presentations.
- Teresa can not guarantee that you will not be identified through reports and presentations which may result in feelings of stress or embarrassment.

## **ARE THERE ANY REPRODUCTIVE RISKS?**

N/A

## **WILL I BENEFIT IF I TAKE PART?**

You will not receive any direct benefit (e.g. food or money) for participating in the observations.

## **DO I HAVE TO PARTICIPATE?**

- Participation in the observations is your choice.
- You can withdraw (stop participating) from the observations at any time and you may also request that any information that you have provided to be withdrawn, meaning that Teresa will not use any of the information that you have shared. It will however not be possible to withdraw that information once it has been made public.
- You can ask Teresa any questions you have about this study.
- You can ask Teresa questions in the future if you do not understand something that is being done or said.



## **WHAT ELSE DOES MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?**

In agreeing to participate, you are giving Teresa permission to share this information in reports and presentations about the study project.

## **WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING, OR DO I HAVE TO PAY FOR ANYTHING?**

You will not be given money to participate in this study.

## **WILL MY RECORDS BE KEPT PRIVATE?**

The observations will be documented by field notes. Your private information such as which program you specifically work in will not be written in the study. Teresa will keep the written copies along with notes of what you said and the consent forms you sign in a locked file. These documents will be destroyed 5 years after the study is done.

## **IF I SUFFER A STUDY-RELATED INJURY, WILL I BE COMPENSATED?**

No harms or inquiries are expected.

## **SIGNATURES**

Your signature on this form means that you have understood what has been talked about and you are willing to participate in this study. It does not give up your legal rights nor make the researcher (Teresa) or the University of Calgary not responsible for their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without any impact to your education in ASE. If you have any questions or feel that you have been treated badly during this study, you can call Teresa at xxx-xxx or call the Chair, Conjoint Health Research Ethics Board, University of Calgary at xxx-xxx.

In the public documents you would like to use:

a generic name (e.g. Sally)

or

your (first and/or last) name



## **Appendix G: Focus Group Guide**

**TITLE:** Informing the practice of students with intellectual disabilities at a post-secondary institution: A critical ethnography

**INVESTIGATOR:** Teresa Morishita

The purpose of the focus group is to facilitate an intersubjective, open-ended conversation with students in adult special education programming (referred to as the Access Programs for People with Disabilities-ASE). The conversation will focus on how students use language in ASE and how their experience can help the interviewer develop a meaningful conversation during the individual interviews.

- Tell me what are the most important things I should know about your experience in ASE.
- Tell me who the people are involved in your experience in ASE.
- Tell me what you do in ASE.
- Tell me what the instructors say that you have to do in ASE



## **Appendix H: Interview Guide**

**TITLE:** Informing the practice of students with intellectual disabilities at a post-secondary institution: A critical ethnography

**INVESTIGATOR:** Teresa Morishita

The individual interview process is designed as an open-ended, in-depth conversation with students in adult special education programming (referred to as the Access Programs for People with Disabilities-ASE). The purpose of the interview is to gain greater breadth and depth from students who are rarely asked about their experience in post-secondary education. This interview guide is meant to guide the conversation, not restrict the sequence of topics discussed. The interviewer will use follow-up probes to reach a deep understand of the conversation.

### Introductory Information

- What is your name?
- What is your age?
- What course are you in at the University?
  - Job Preparation, Work Exploration or Strategies for Employment?
- Is this your first or second year?
- Tell me a little about yourself (e.g. what you do for fun, work, community involvement)

### Theme: Life as a University Student

- Tell about what it is like to be a university student in ASE.
- What course did you think you were applying to when you submitted your application to ASE? Is that the course you are currently attending?
- Tell me how you felt when you were accepted into ASE.
- Tell me about the other students in the ASE program.

Theme: Student activities

- Tell me what a typical day (routine) looks like as a student attending the Job Preparation (or Work Exploration or Strategies for Employment) course?
- For example: start time, break time, location of classrooms
- Tell me some of the skill areas you are learning in class.
- How are you provided feedback on these skill areas?
- Tell me what a typical day (routine) looks like for students in Job Preparation (or Work Exploration or Strategies for Employment) on a work experience placement?
- For example: start time, break time
- Tell me about some of the duties you have done on work experience.
- How are you provided feedback on these duties?
- Tell me how your work experience placements are chosen.
- It is really important for students to get involved in campus activities outside of the classroom.
- Tell me what campus activities you are involved with outside of the classroom.
- Tell me how you learned about these campus activities.
- Tell me how you are supported to participate in these campus activities.
- Tell me about the people you have met on campus outside of ASE.

Theme: How student activities are organized

- If you attended a college or university before starting ASE was it recognized (e.g. receive credit) in anyway when you applied to ASE?
- Tell me what is expected of a student in ASE.
- Tell me what happens if a student does not meet the expectations.
- What, if any, is the difference in expectations between a Job Preparation and a Work Exploration, and a Strategies for Employment student?
- 

Theme: Benefit of attending ASE

- Tell me what you plan to do after graduating from ASE.
- Tell me how attending ASE has prepared you for life after graduation?
- 

Probing questions

- Can you give me an example?
- Is there anything you would like to add?
- Is there anything anybody else would like to add?  
Can you tell me why you feel that way?

## **Appendix I - Documents Reviewed**

Adult Special Education Cohort Survey 2006  
Adult Special Education Course Evaluations  
Adult Special Education Course Outlines  
Adult Special Education Employer Handbook  
Adult Special Education Participant Handbook  
Adult Special Education Program Descriptions  
Adult Special Education Promotional Material  
Adult Special Education Website  
University – Admission Policy  
University Act and Amendment  
University - Principles of Academic Freedom and Responsibility Policy  
University - Student Evaluation and Grading Policy  
University – Services for Students with Disabilities  
University – Vision and Commitments, Strategic Planning  
University Website

**Appendix I: Template used for Data Analysis**

Broad Theme	Notable quotes / Examples / Interpretations
Theme 1	
Theme 2	