

Social Work Education and Disability: A Multicase Study of Approaches to
Disability in Core and Specialized Curricula at Three Bachelor of Social Work
Programs

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine ideas about disability within social work education within three Bachelor of Social Work programs in Canada, and to identify and describe major perspectives and themes of disability. One important aspect of the study was to determine the extent to which critical disability studies perspectives were presented, explained, and discussed in the classroom within core social work theory courses, and specialized courses addressing disability.

Three Bachelor of Social Work programs; St. Thomas University School of Social Work in New Brunswick, the Dalhousie School of Social Work in Nova Scotia, and the University of Manitoba Faculty of Social Work, Fort Garry Campus, were purposefully chosen for this multicase study based on a theoretical replication logic that predicted that social work education on disability within each of the schools would represent different points on a range of disability perspectives, as developed from the disability studies literature. Data collection and analysis included multiple methods, including a manifest content analysis of texts, a modified inductive analysis of transcriptions from interviews with key informants, and a critical discourse analysis of transcriptions from an audio-taped session of classes addressing disability in each case.

Findings from the multicase study indicate that the original research suppositions were not supported. Based on the analysis of texts and interviews, the approach to disability followed by each Bachelor of Social Work program was found to incorporate a broad range of disability theory, particularly social pathology and critical disability perspectives. However, there was little evidence of classroom discussion and use of social work practice approaches supporting these perspectives. It was argued in the literature review to the study that anti-oppressive social work approaches, such as structural social work, were congruent with critical disability perspectives,

but that there is also a need for an “infused” approach to integrating disability content into core curriculum. In conclusion, I also suggest that the Canadian Association for Social Work Education has an important leadership role to play in providing specific recommendations for disability inclusion in social work education.

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Chapter One

Introduction to the Study

Many disability activists and scholars are concerned that their wish for greater inclusion in community life has not been well served by the profession of social work (Meekosha & Dowse, 2007). The dominant discourse on disability within social work has been the individual/medical model in which disability is viewed as an individual deficit or limitation (Hiranandani, 2005a). The disabled people's movement, and its academic wing of disability studies, have rejected the medical model of disability as personal tragedy and have developed a view of disability as being socially constructed (Oliver, 1996, 2004; Linton, 1998). Critical disability theorists argue that the problems faced by disabled people are not the result of their impairment, but are the result of disabling environments, barriers and cultures (Oliver, 2004). British social work educators and disability activists, Michael Oliver and Bob Sapey (2006), believe that one of the major problems of conceptualizing social work practice with disabled people is that there are few theoretical frameworks adequate for the purpose. They argue that most attempts to develop a professional basis for the practice of social work with disabled people have never really come to grips with the perennial problem of the relationship between theory and practice, and that both the individual and social models of disability are dependent on that relationship.

In 1993 the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work (now referred to as the Canadian Association for Social Work Education, CASWE) established the Persons with Disabilities Caucus for the purpose of reviewing educational policy pertaining to persons with disabilities and to develop accreditation standards promoting disability-related courses, as well as to ensure that disabled persons would be recruited into social work academic programs (Dunn, Hanes, Hardie & MacDonald, 2006). As a part of its mandate, the Caucus undertook a research study to

answer a number of questions relating to existing policies and practices of inclusion within Canadian schools of social work, including the examination of how the schools prepared students for working with individuals who are disabled, and identification of possible future directions in responding to disability issues. With respect to curriculum, the Caucus recommended that the study of disability required a social oppression theoretical lens so that students would be challenged to deconstruct the myths, images and stereotypes that they have learned about disabled people (Campbell, 2003, as cited in Dunn et. al., 2006, p. 15). The Caucus also asserted that schools of social work must develop curricula that specifically address issues of disability at all levels of social work education. At an annual general meeting of the CASWE, new standards of accreditation were recommended that emphasize the need for schools of social work to promote; “An understanding of theories relevant to disability and their implications for social policy and the practice of social work” (CASWE, 2008).

Academic foci on disability in the social sciences and humanities prior to the 1990s have represented disability in terms of individual functional limitations or defects (Barnes & Mercer, 1996; Barnes, Oliver & Barton, 2002), based on a form of functional determinism (Gilson, DePoy & MacDuffie, 2002). Hiranandani (2005a), and other critical thinkers within social work, contend that social work needs to place a greater emphasis on integrating paradigms and concepts from the current field of disability studies. Using new paradigms emerging from critical disability studies would suggest ways of developing social work education and practice which engage with the policy, practice and political dimensions of a disabling society (Meekosha & Dowse, 2007).

This study examined ideas about disability at three Canadian Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) programs to identify and describe the major perspectives and themes of disability dominant

within each of the programs. Multiple sources of data were accessed during the study: a manifest content analysis of social work texts related to core theoretical curricula and specialized course work on disability; a modified inductive analysis of transcriptions from interviews of key informants; and a critical discourse analysis of transcriptions from audio-taped classes addressing disability or oppression; all of which were utilized to explore the fit between the theories of disability studies and approaches to social work within the three BSW programs. This study explores how the various theories and models of disability being discussed and studied in some social work education programs are being interpreted and understood in relation to anti-oppressive social work practice with persons with disabilities.

Rationale for the Study

Social work education, research and practice have not caught up to the ideas and principles promoted by the disabled people's movement (Dunn et al. 2006). Disability activists and theorists assert that foci on the growth of ideologies and the organization of professionals are crucial to understanding the social and historical context in which disability has been constructed in Western societies (French & Swain, 2001). Disabled people are generating the impetus for fundamental change through the work of disabled people's movements and through disability studies, but the targets of change have been professional structures, policies, practices and ideologies (French & Swain, 2001). Yet, according to French and Swain, power relations and structures are, by their nature ingrained, and cosmetic changes have only served to mask a lack of fundamental change.

American social work educators, Gilson and DePoy (2004) believe that social work responses to disability have been limited because they primarily serve to maintain the status quo of public assistance, poverty and marginalization. British social worker and educator, Andy R. A. Stevens

(2008) contends that even when social workers subscribe to a social model of disability, the extent to which they understand the different interpretations of the social model is not clear. He claims that the social model of disability has become part of the jargon of social work, but that it is unethical for social workers to be promoting the social model when they have little understanding of what it means for disabled people. This study examined social work education for the purpose of determining how disability was being addressed within three BSW programs in Canada in relation to the various theoretical approaches to disability, as identified in the disability studies literature.

The Theoretical Framework Informing the Study

In his book, *Challenging Oppression and Confronting Privilege* (2010), Canadian social work educator and theorist Bob Mullaly emphasizes that theory carries out four important functions for social work practice; description, explanation, prediction, and control and management of events and changes. He suggests that social work students require a classification scheme that helps to make sense out of social theory, particularly in regard to understanding the nature of people, society and social problems. He believes that the order and conflict perspectives of social problems, as explained by Sears and Cairns (2010), provide opposite ends of a *continuum* (italics by this author) for understanding social work theories. Sears and Cairns argue that an understanding of the social order and conflict models allows students to engage with a wide range of formal theories developed within the humanities and social sciences, providing bridges to connect the theories directly to experience and practice (Sears & Cairns, 2010, p. 16). Mullaly cautions against dualistic categorizations of theory by acknowledging that social work approaches contain aspects of both the order and conflict perspectives. The importance of the

classification scheme, according to Mullaly, is its utility for understanding the strengths and limitations of dominant explanations for social problems.

The social order and conflict models of social theory, as explained by Sears and Cairns (2010), were utilized in this study to provide a framework for analysis of the theoretical approaches represented in social work educational literature, academic discourse and pedagogy related to disability. It was also used to examine current perspectives on disability and ableism, as found in the literature of disability studies. This framework was then used to compare theoretical approaches to disability, found in core social work curricula and specialized courses on disability, with dominant theoretical concepts found within disability studies. This comparative analysis was helpful in making connections among the ideological preferences, theories and practices consistent within the three social work programs and those within the disability studies literature, in terms of where they fit within the continuum between two competing views of society characterized by Sears and Cairns (2010). The assumptions and explanations held by the order/conflict models are important indicators of how difference is perceived and dealt with in society, of how a social concern or issue becomes defined, and of how the issue or concern is being approached by social workers.

Statement of the Problem

The research study conducted by the Persons with Disabilities Caucus found that 86 percent of BSW programs in Canada had at least one class about disability issues as a part of their core curriculum (Dunn et al., 2006). In conducting their study, the Caucus reviewed previous Canadian research on the inclusion of disability in social work education, completed by Stainton and Swift (1996), and found that attempts to deal with difference in the social work curriculum have traditionally centered on the idea of “deviance”, implying the acceptance of dominant

norms and teaching students from the voice of the oppressor (as cited in Dunn et al., 2006, p. 6). The Caucus concluded that social work education must be approached from a social oppression theoretical lens informed by consumer advocacy groups, the disability community and its allies (Dunn et al. 2006, p. 15). The purpose of this study was to complement the research of the CASWE, Persons with Disabilities Caucus, which asked the question of how schools of social work in Canada prepare students for working with disabled people. This study examined the particular theoretical lenses used to educate social work students about disability, and compared them with current approaches and perspectives on disability advocated by disability activists and theorists, as represented in the literature of disability studies.

Main Research Question

The Persons with Disabilities Caucus has recommended that all courses offered at both the BSW and MSW level should have a critical disability focus (Dunn, Hanes, Hardie, Leslie & MacDonald, 2008). However, there was little discussion in the research article about what a critical disability focus would entail, and whether or not current social work texts are adequate to the task. The Caucus later defined the critical disability focus as a rights-based model recognizing the social construction of disability (Dunn et al., 2008). Beyond disability content represented in texts, it was an important aspect of this study to determine the extent to which critical theories of disability, as developed within the literature of disability studies, were presented, explained and promoted in the classroom, within core theory courses and specialized social work courses addressing disability. This main research question was further divided into two components:

- What dominant ideas inform the theoretical lenses on disability within social work texts, course outlines, and instruction in core and specialized courses related to disability at the three Canadian BSW programs?
- How consistent are current social work perspectives on disability, found in social work texts in core and specialized courses on disability at three selected BSW programs, with the dominant perspectives advocated by disability theorists and activists?

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

The study conducted by the CASWE Persons with Disabilities Caucus surveyed the deans and directors of Canadian schools of social work, rather than students, staff and faculty members (Dunn et al., 2006). This focus provided the study with information about historical trends and plans for the future in regard to disability. However, the pedagogy being used to inform students about disability and ableism was not addressed, although the Caucus makes several recommendations in that regard. This research study included a focus on the pedagogy being used in three accredited schools of social work in Canada that were purposefully chosen, as follows:

- The Faculty of Social Work at University of Manitoba, Fort Garry Campus, was chosen because it has a mission statement supporting diversity, inclusion and social justice. It is different from the following two BSW programs because the program emphasizes psychosocial treatment and professional intervention, it is located on the same campus as a graduate level Disability Studies Program, and it has a 6 credit hour elective course that specializes in social work practice with disabled persons;
- The School of Social Work at Dalhousie University in Halifax was chosen because it places emphasis on critical analysis in understanding oppression and justice, and its

focus is on elective courses that explore the differential impact of social constructs such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and ability. However, unlike the other two BSW Programs in the study, the School is located within a Faculty of Health Professions and there was question about the influence of a medical model perspective on the social work curriculum, especially in relation to disability; and

- The School of Social Work at St. Thomas University was selected because of its major emphasis on structural social work theory and on helping students to understand the structural roots of social problems. According to structural theory, inequality is viewed as being rooted in the social and economic order and not in the individual. The literature review for this study argues that structural theory is congruent with many of the theories and approaches advocated by critical disability studies.

It is understood that a multicase study that includes three programs of social work, out of a possible 25 accredited academic programs of social work in Canada, will be limited in generalizability. The three cases in the study were chosen because it was believed that they would serve to enhance understanding of common or discordant areas of social work theory and curriculum in comparison with the major theoretical trends and approaches within disability studies. Cross-case themes identified by the study indicated that some theoretical perspectives and approaches to disability within social work education hold more promise for anti-oppressive practice than others.

Although the Persons with Disabilities Caucus recommends that; “schools of social work must develop curriculum specifically addressing issues of disability **at all levels** of social work education” (Dunn et al., 2006, p. 15), this study examined **core curriculum content and specialized curriculum content** related to disability at three bachelors of social work (BSW)

programs. Core courses are those courses described in academic calendars as being mandatory and required for successful completion of the BSW program. The BSW is the minimum level of social work education in most jurisdictions in Canada and therefore findings from this study have major implications for social work as a profession in relation to work and collaboration with disabled people. Field placements were not included in this study, but they may offer an area for future research in relation to how social work addresses disability within the field practicum.

Definition of Terms

The term “disabled people/person” is used throughout this thesis. American disability activist, Simi Linton, explains that the terms “disability” and “disabled people” are the most common terms used by disability activists: “When disability is redefined as a social/political category, people with a variety of conditions are identified as *people with disabilities* or *disabled people*, a group bound by a common social and political experience” (Linton, 1998, p. 12).

The Aboriginal people of Canada comprise numerous cultural and ethnic groups. The term “Aboriginal” includes all persons who identify themselves as First Nations, Métis or Inuit, and First Nations applies to those individuals who hold status under the *Indian Act* (Durst, South, & Bluehardt, 2006, p. 34). However, Indigenous is the term that Aboriginal peoples prefer to use because it refers to the populations and their worldview prior to contact with non-indigenous and Euro-based populations. It refers to the social, political, economic, and spiritual expression of their worldview and respects their relationship to Creation. It refers to their heritage of healing, medicines, language, ceremonies, and relationships; in essence, a society (Saulis, 2010).

Summary

The academic literature emerging from the field of disability studies has explored the relationship between professional discourses, such as social work, and the theoretical

frameworks used to educate professional groups. The problem, as identified by both social work educators and disability studies theorists, appears to be that the theoretical frameworks informing social work practice are not congruent with the theory development taking place within critical disability studies. This multicase study examined the theoretical frameworks used to educate social work students, at the baccalaureate level, and then compared those frameworks with approaches/perspectives found in the critical disability studies literature.

This multicase study is presented to the reader in a format that was suggested by the work of Robert E. Stake (2006), whose book, *Multiple Case Study Analysis*, provides a step by step approach to multicase design and methods. The study begins with a review of the literature in Chapter Two, in which the theoretical frameworks of social work are contrasted with the theoretical frameworks of disability studies in order to identify a progressive social work approach with the potential for challenging the policy, practice and political dimensions of a disabling society. Chapter Three provides a description of the methodology and specific research procedures utilized to complete a cross case analysis in exploration of the main research question. Chapters Four, Five and Six each present a description of the context of the individual cases included in the study, as well as the specific research activities, analyses and findings completed for each case. Chapter Seven brings the findings from each case together in a “case-quintain” dialectic in which the findings of situated experience for each case are applied to the larger phenomenon of social work education addressing disability. The concluding chapter, Chapter Eight, presents a discussion of the findings and their implications for social work education and practice.

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

British social work educators, Michael Oliver and Bob Sapey (2006) believe that social work, as a profession, has not given systematic attention to developing a theoretical perspective on disability. This chapter provides an overview of the theory and research literature pertaining to disability studies with the intent to identify specific approaches to disability as developed by activists and academics within the disabled people's movement. These theoretical perspectives are then examined in terms of their coherence with conventional and anti-oppressive social work practice. The aim of this chapter is to identify and discuss an approach to social work practice – structural social work - that not only engages with and supports the theoretical developments within disability studies, but addresses the fundamental problem of “ableism” rather than viewing impairment as the social problem and focus of social work intervention.

Historical Overview of the Theory and Research Literature Pertaining to Disability Studies

A brief overview of some of the major theoretical perspectives informing contemporary disability theory will help the reader to better understand some of the differences, controversies, and contradictions that are reflected in the disability studies literature. Within the academic offshoot of a social movement such as the disability rights movement, there will be paradoxical dimensions in the politics of knowledge creation (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009, p. 48). In recent years there has also been some blurring of the borders and boundary lines between theoretical perspectives, but an understanding of the differences between perspectives has important implications at the practical, material, everyday level (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011), as the reader will observe.

The Influence of Pragmatism

American disability theorist, Gary Albrecht (2002), believes that early American pragmatists working in the social and economic context of the industrial revolution were attracted to the idea of scientific laws that had practical explanations. Pragmatists, such as Charles Sanders Pierce (1839 – 1914), William James (1842 – 1920), as well as more recent work by Rorty (1931 – 2007), challenged the epistemology of positivism which suggests that the relationship between the observer and world is linear, direct and unmediated, and that the laws of nature are predictable, consistent and understandable (Jayanti, 2011, pp. 435-436). Although there are many forms of pragmatism, for many of them the knowledge claims arise out of actions, situations, and consequences rather than antecedent conditions (Creswell, 2003, p. 11). Pragmatism differs from positivism in several important ways:

1. “For pragmatists, values and visions of human action and interaction precede a search for descriptions, theories, explanations, and narratives” (Cherryholmes, 1992, p. 13).
2. Pragmatists are skeptical of scientific realism characteristic of positivism in relation to telling a “true story of what the world is like” (Cherryholmes, 1992, p. 14).
3. Pragmatists support an assumption that we are socially and historically situated, and that when we read the world we can never be sure if we are reading the world or reading ourselves (Cherryholmes, 1992, p. 14).
4. Pragmatists do not know whether our current “picture or conception” is closer or farther from reality than those that have been abandoned. Instead, pragmatists choose some explanations, theories, or stories and dismiss others when the former produce results they desire better than the latter (Cherryholmes, 1992, pp. 14-15).

Albrecht (2002) believes that pragmatism was influential in the development of sociology, and subsequently disability studies, in the United States for three important reasons:

1. Pragmatism endorsed the “scientific method” by embracing the epistemological principle of falsification. If carefully designed tests of theory proved negative, the theory was falsified and researchers modified the theory or proposed a new one. If the tests and data supported the theory, researchers would continue to use the theory to further test and extend the theory. “Thus, pragmatism inculcated an early interest among sociologists in gathering “objective” data through observations, surveys and censuses that would describe social phenomena, help develop theory and serve as evidence testing an argument” (Albrecht, 2002, p. 28).
2. Pragmatism as exemplified in the work of William James encouraged the anchoring of analysis in practical realities and social policies. James believed that pragmatism turned attention away from abstraction towards concreteness, facts, action and power. According to Albrecht, James laid the foundations for grounded theory, the study of social problems, observing behaviors and gathering data in the “real world” (Albrecht, 2002, p. 28).
3. The pragmatism of Charles Pierce moved pragmatist thinking away from objectivism towards the recognition of the importance of subjective experience, relativistic and culturally different conceptions of behavior, paradigm shifts in gathering and interpreting information, and competing communities of discourse. In particular, Rorty influenced cultural studies, including disability studies, by stressing the importance of engaging in conversation about issues, and analyzing texts in an open discourse taking into account the subjective experiences and the cultural grounding of participants (Albrecht, 2002, p. 29).

Albrecht (2002, pp. 31-33) explains that the aforementioned three themes of pragmatism have been carried forward into rehabilitation and disability research. An example of a pragmatic, mixed methods research study in relation to disability can be found in the article “Make measurable what is not so: National monitoring of the status of persons with intellectual disability” (Fujiura, Rutkowski-Kmitta & Owen, 2010). In the article the researchers argue that statistical monitoring is critical for holding governments accountable for the well-being of citizens with disability. The researchers examined key themes in the international literature in relation to data on the life circumstances of the world’s citizens with intellectual disability to suggest that there is a lack of support and infrastructure, exclusion from participation in core cultural activities, poverty, greater risk for poor health and a near universal experience of marginalization (Fujiura et al., 2010, p. 247). The researchers then evaluated various national data systems providing statistics for persons with a disability versus persons with intellectual disability (ID) across seven domains; employment, education, demographics, health, income, services, and participation. They anticipated that the results of the survey would indicate that few data systems included indicators for intellectual disability, but their intent was to explore the potential for surveillance. In evaluating the results, the researchers acknowledge that there is likely no optimal form for monitoring intellectual disability because the character of monitoring varies as a function of the purpose, targeted audience, and stated goals for the data. Since a singular community of interests does not define intellectual disability the intent and utility of the data collection could assume many different meanings (Fujiura et al., 2010, p. 249). In conclusion, the researchers argue that there is a lack of political will to address the disenfranchisement of people with intellectual disabilities and that any policy movement requires the identification of data priorities in relation to intellectual disability:

Unfortunately, there is no simple standard against which an ideal surveillance portfolio can be constructed. Does health take precedence over civil rights? Economic well-being over inclusion? Our point here is that the value of the data does not exist independent of a user's need for the information. What is considered a priority will shift depending upon the perspectives of the users. Not all stakeholders will find all dimensions relevant to their needs. A dialogue over intent will be critical to the development of ID surveillance (Fujiura et al., 2010, p. 255).

Albrecht (2002, p. 34) contends that pragmatic themes continue to influence sociology and disability studies, especially among qualitative and cultural studies scholars who place a strong emphasis on the social construction of reality, place importance on individual experience, culture, and context for interpreting behavior and texts, and want to include the “voices” of people being studied. The interactionist perspective in sociology, for example, emphasizes the importance of understanding the social world from the viewpoint of the individuals who act within it (Albrecht, 2002, p. 35). American sociologist, Talcott Parsons (1902 – 1979) believed that individuals do not simply adapt to objective conditions, but direct their own behaviors according to subjective interests and values (Seidman, 2004, p. 72).

According to Seidman, Talcott Parsons' book, *The Structure of Social Action* (1937, as cited in Seidman, 2004, p.70) was written in the face of a devastating economic depression, a communist revolution in Russia, and the rise of fascism and Nazism. For Parsons, these historic events marked a crisis in social and political thought – an intellectual crisis (Seidman, 2004, p. 71). Parsons compared positivism, utilitarianism and materialism, which described individuals as merely adapting to objective conditions, with opposing perspectives (e.g. American pragmatism), in which the individual was viewed as the originator and director of his or her own action: “In

The Structure of Social Action, Parsons hoped to fashion a perspective that integrated subjective freedom and objective determinism in order to establish stable intellectual foundations for Western liberalism” (Seidman, 2004, p. 72). His idea for a set of premises and concepts that could serve as the basis for a general theory of society was later realized in his work, *The Social System* (1951, as cited in Seidman, 2004, p. 73). The “systems” model of society was composed of three distinct systems: the personality system composed of individual needs and motivations; the cultural system which relates to shared beliefs and values; and the social system consisting of a plurality of social roles and norms (Seidman, 2004, pp. 73-74). Parsons’ model of society shifted the emphasis from the individual actor to patterns of interaction:

Proceeding from the simple to the complex, Parsons argued that well-functioning social systems require a “fit” between the needs and motivations of the individual and the role requirements of the institution or social unit (Seidman, 2004, p. 74).

Parsons believed that in order for there to be a fit between personal and institutional needs, and between individuals and social roles, there had to be a minimum level of shared understanding and values (Seidman, 2004, p. 75). He thought that social stability and integration could be threatened if there was substantial divergence with respect to ideologies that allowed conflicting understandings of needs, expectations, and social norms. His functional analysis of the role of the medical profession, and his view of sickness and disability as deviating from societal norms, has been criticized by British disability theorists who support a materialist social model of disability. Yet, it could be argued that Parsons’ thinking about society as a complex system with many interrelated parts opened the door to the possibility of a social model of disability. For example, Parsons supported a vision of societal progress in which society is viewed as an active, ongoing creation of its members, and societal structures (economy,

bureaucracy) provide the conditions for more efficient allocation of resources and for social inclusion (Seidman, 2004, p. 78). In particular, “Parsons imagined the possibility of a culture-centered sociology or a sociology that took seriously processes of identity formation, the making of social solidarities, the role of ritual and common values in social integration” (Seidman, 2004, p. 80). His aim in creating a model society was to advance personal liberty and to promote an open, fluid environment that permits individuals to interact in a free and empowering way. “Far from society being imagined as oppressive, as burdened with the weight of tradition and coercion, it is imagined as an enabling, secure space for individuals” (Seidman, 2004, p. 79).

The interactionist perspective, and symbolic interactionism, both emphasize the importance of understanding the social world from the viewpoint of individuals who act within it. Symbolic interactionism was heavily influenced by the work of John Dewey, an early pragmatist at the University of Chicago (Albrecht, 2002, p. 35). Dewey’s work was elaborated by American sociologist and psychologist, George Herbert Mead (1863 – 1931)) and sociologist Herbert George Blumer (1900 - 1987), and when Blumer moved to the Department of Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley, he trained many students in this research tradition, including Erving Goffman (Albrecht, 2002, p. 35).

The symbolic interactionist approach is exemplified within Erving Goffman’s book titled *Stigma* (1963) which is an account of the interactions between the “normals” and the “abnormals” in society. Goffman described himself as both a structural functionalist, based in large part on the work of Parsons, and a symbolic interactionist, which was based on the social psychology tradition of George Herbert Mead (Verhoeven, 1993, p. 318). For Parsons, deviants and abnormals are granted specific roles in society that enable them to survive on the periphery of the mainstream. Sickness and disability represented a deviation from societal norms and his

sociological analysis of the “sick role” came to focus on studies of the “reaction to” and the “management of” ascribed social deviance (Parsons, 1963, as cited in Murphy, 2005, pp. 155-156). In America, Goffman’s work on stigma has historically formed an important part of mainstream sociology’s knowledge and understanding about disability. American disability theorists, Elizabeth DePoy and Stephen French Gilson (2011) explain how the social role theory that was applied to human illness by Parsons was later utilized in Goffman’s model of identity and interaction:

That is to say, he described human identity as a function of interaction, suggesting that individuals invent and reinvent the *self*, their identities, through interacting and revising their social role behavior in response to scripted messages from their social stages...Goffman suggested that in the name of cure or community justice, deviant individuals are incarcerated, removed from civil social stages so to speak, and are subjected to exterior conditions that degrade and reshape their identities (DePoy & Gilson, 2011, p. 87).

Symbolic interactionism has importance for understanding the stigma associated with disability. According to Canadian sociologist Tanya Titchkosky, many sociologists have lost sight of the importance of understanding disability as a “stigmatized” attribute and have accepted disability as a “condition” of a body having a problem (Titchkosky, 2009, p. 45). Titchkosky believes that a part of what disability studies has to offer is a critique of those forces and traditions which have functioned as the primary producers of the ascription of meaning to (representations of) the lives of disabled people. “The primary object of the critique is the body of knowledge and practices which constitute disability as an asocial and apolitical condition of

lack and inability...It is a critique aimed at *normal* conceptions of disability that help to constitute and sustain normative culture” (Titchkosky, 2009, p. 52).

The Influence of Constructionism

Parsonian thinking was challenged during the 1960s and 1970s by conflict theory, neo-Marxist approaches, and other theories in sociology in which an analysis of culture was either absent or secondary (Seidman, 2004, p. 81). According to Seidman, the major work of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966, as cited in Seidman, 2004, p. 81), challenged both Marxist and functionalist concepts of society as mechanistic and organismic social orders. Their approach was inspired by the phenomenological thinking of Austrian, Alfred Schutz, who applied phenomenology to the common-sense world of everyday life, and by Marx, Nietzsche, Scheler, and Mannheim who called into question the existence of purely rational, objective knowledge, arguing instead that knowledge arises from processes more related to ideology and power (Alvesson, 2002, pp. 24-25). Other sources of inspiration included Durkheim, who believed that it was necessary to view “social fact as things”, and Weber, who held that subjective meaning content in actions was the central issue (Alvesson, 2002, p. 25).

Their intent was to frame everyday life as a fluid, precariously negotiated achievement of individuals in interaction. The second and chief aim was to offer a general theory of the social origins and maintenance of social institutions. The principal thesis was that individuals in interaction create social worlds through their linguistic, symbolic activity for the purpose of giving coherence and purpose to an essentially open-ended, unformed human existence (Seidman, 2004, p. 82).

Social constructionism supports the understanding that we constantly create new habits and routines within social relations, as well as new categories for observing others and their actions

(Alvesson, 2002, p. 26). According to Berger and Luckmann, we habitualize and typify these habits, routines, and categorizations to develop institutions, or fixed patterns of thought and action that can take the form of family, religion, legal systems, school systems and so on (Alvesson, 2002, p. 26). Individuals create their own reality, their institutions, and in return, this reality creates individuals through a process of socialization, the social influence through which individuals internalize norms and knowledge: “The identity is built up through role-taking – another term from social interactionism – we can see one another with the eyes of significant others, reflect over this, and successively generalize the experiences” (Alvesson, 2002, p. 28).

Socially constructed knowledge claims hold that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live, and in doing so they develop subjective meanings of their experiences – meanings directed towards certain objects or things. “These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas” (Creswell, 2003, p. 8). Creswell identifies several assumptions about constructivism, taken from the work of Crotty (1998, as cited in Creswell, 2003, p. 9):

- Meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage in the world that they are interpreting.
- Humans make sense of their world based on their historical and social perspective.
- The basic generation of meaning is always social, arising in and out of interaction with a human community.

Albrecht (2002, p. 37) explains that social interactionism allows us to analyze how social problems, behaviors, and institutions are socially constructed through three processes; externalization, objectification, and internalization. Albrecht explains that externalization occurs when people produce cultural products through their social interactions. An example of

externalization in the disability arena is group cohesion among spinal cord injured individuals due to the visibility of, and meanings attached to, wheelchair use. Objectification occurs when these externalized products take on a meaning, such as the wheelchair symbol which is used worldwide to denote spaces accessible to disabled people. Internalization occurs when people learn purported “objective” facts about reality from others and make them a part of their subjective consciousness. The stigmatization of persons with mental illness is another example of an internalization process (Albrecht, 2002, p. 37).

A British example of social constructionist thought in relation to disability. Social constructionist thought underpins the United Kingdom’s social model of disability which quickly assumed a status of enormous significance in disability studies during the 1980s, becoming “the British approach” to disability (Thomas, 2007, p. 57). A key turning point for the British disabled people’s movement occurred in 1974 when the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS), an advocacy organization formed by disabled people, introduced a definition of disability as a social construction, making an important distinction between impairment and disability, in which disability is described as;

...the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by contemporary social organization which takes little or no account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities (UPIAS, 1976, as cited in Barnes, 1997, pp. 7-8).

Disability activist Vic Finkelstein credits British sociologist, Michael Oliver with developing a theory for what later became known as the social model of disability. However, it was Finkelstein who developed the first materialist analysis of disability, based on Marxism, and explained in his monograph *Attitudes and Disabled People: Issues for Discussion* (1980).

Finkelstein had moved to the United Kingdom from South Africa following his imprisonment for opposition to apartheid and continued to champion the oppression perspective (Thomas, 2007, p. 52). Finkelstein introduced the idea that the “social relationships embedded in ‘disability’, as opposed to impairment, arise as a product of material conditions of life at a particular socio-historical juncture” (Thomas, 2007, p. 53). In his monograph Finkelstein argues that Goffman’s concept of stigma is responsible for neutralizing the role of stigma in the maintenance of an oppressive relationship between one strata of society and another (Finkelstein, 1980, p. 30). According to Finkelstein, once stigma is neutralized as the natural exercise of marking, then it is viewed as something possessed by disabled people. “Since those attributing stigma to others are, from this viewpoint, not doing anything oppressive but they are reacting differently to disabled people then, it follows, disabled people are losing an opportunity for “normal” socialization” (Finkelstein, 1980, p. 31). He claims that for Goffman, the central feature of a stigmatized individual’s life is “acceptance”, so disabled people are placed into a position of seeking acceptance from those who stigmatize them. Although Finkelstein’s materialist account of disability was criticized on a number of fronts, his concept of disability as a form of oppression became the principle reference in disability studies in Britain (Thomas, 2004, p. 573).

In his seminal book, *The Politics of Disablement* (1990), Michael Oliver explains that his goal in developing a social model of disability was to demonstrate that disability, as a category, can only be understood within a framework which suggests that it is culturally produced and socially structured (Oliver, 1990, p. 22). Since there was not any adequate theory of disability at the time, Oliver found it necessary to draw on the work of earlier classical theorists such as Marx, Comte, and Weber. Marx believed that to understand the nature of human beings one must understand their relationship to the material environment, and the historical nature of this relationship in

creating and satisfying needs. According to Oliver, the material environment includes the constraints of the physical and socio-cultural environments, which are related to the socio-economic structure of society at particular points in history (Oliver, 1990, p. 26). The evolutionary model of the development of human history proposed by Comte was useful in understanding changing historical perceptions. Comte suggested that human intellectual progress could be understood in terms of three stages of development; the theological, the metaphysical, and the positivistic stage. Oliver believes that an analysis of care underlying the development of services for the mentally handicapped suggests that; care was first provided based on a philosophy of compassion linked to religious and philanthropic perspectives, then services evolved to a philosophy of protection, for both the disabled individuals and society, and finally care was provided on the basis of optimism, linked to new scientific approaches addressing the problem of mental handicap (Soder, 1984, as cited in Oliver, 1990, p. 88).

Oliver thought that Weber's theory of "rationalization" was particularly important to understanding why some groups in society have the influence and power to make decisions regarding the welfare of others. Rationalization, as explained by Weber (1968, as cited in Oliver, 1990, p. 40), is the process by which explicit, abstract, and calculable rules and procedures of bureaucracy are increasingly substituted for sentiment and tradition. In an economic version of rationalization the state experiences fiscal crisis because it must continually expand its expenditures while revenues cannot grow fast enough to meet the growth in expenditures (Stone, 1985, as cited in Oliver, 1990, pp. 39-40). A political version stresses legal rights to social aid which engenders support from some sectors of society and opposition from others. Both versions predict an eventual breakdown because of economic crisis or erosion of political support. However, disability, as a socially constructed category, helps to resolve these systemic

contradictions by mediating the boundary between the two conflicting distributive principles.

The category of disability becomes less flexible as the standards of eligibility imposed by policy become more detailed and rigid, but since it is difficult to remove people from the category of disability once accepted, a crisis within disability programs occurs in which the gatekeepers have to elaborate more situations in which people are genuinely needy, until categories are so big that they engulf the whole (Stone, 1984, as cited in Oliver, 1990, p. 42). For both Stone and Oliver, this distributive dilemma, if resolved on the basis of needs, would mark the transition from capitalism to socialism as predicted by Marx.

Oliver also cites the work of French philosopher, Michael Foucault, particularly his work related to madness, in examining how disability came to be an individual problem. Oliver contends that it was under capitalism that disability became pathologized, when disabled people could not meet the demands of individual wage labour and so became controlled through exclusion. Oliver also contends that intellectual discourse in capitalist society is constrained by an ideology of individualism and by cultural images of disabled people as less than human. In order to become more human, the disabled person is expected to undergo medical treatment, rehabilitation, or psychotherapy in order to come to terms with his/her impairment. The issue of adjustment became the focus of professional intervention at the individual level and served to reinforce ideological and cultural constructions of disability by rooting them in practice, ignoring issues of social prejudice and discrimination (Oliver, 1990, pp. 64-65).

Campbell and Oliver (1996) acknowledge that the disabled people's movement in Britain incorporates both revolutionary and reformist approaches, and that some critics find the social model too simplistic in its oversight of the effects of impairment and diversity. British sociologist, Paul Abberley, expressed his concern with the ambiguous way that the term

“oppression” was being used by members of the disabled people’s movement, treating it as a monolithic concept rather than examining the ways in which impairment makes the social oppression of disabled people distinct when compared with women, people from minority ethnic groups, or other excluded groups (Abberley, 1987). Disability activist and theorist, Tom Shakespeare believes that, by rejecting the individual model of disability, the social model has ignored the many valuable contributions that medical sociology and medical ethics can make to understanding disability:

Whereas social constructionism has been welcomed as a tool for political change, it may prove a false friend, as I long argued. For those hidden impairments, such as dyslexia or chronic fatigue syndrome, a realist and medically based approach to defining and understanding impairment is preferable to the vagaries of constructionism (Shakespeare, 2008, p. 13).

It must be acknowledged that the development of the social model of disability and a social constructionist understanding of disability was not the work of one or two members of the disabled people’s movement in the United Kingdom. Many people in the disabled people’s movement view Paul Hunt, a person who used a wheelchair because of muscular dystrophy, as its founder (Campbell & Oliver, 1996). Hunt published an edited collection of 12 essays written by disabled people, *Stigma the Experience of Disability* (1966, as cited in Thomas, 2007, p. 51) to offer insight into “being disabled”. Mildred Blaxter utilized longitudinal research to focus on the problems created for disabled people by bureaucracies and social services in her book *The Meaning of Disability* (1976). Michael R. Bury’s article “Disablement in society: Towards an integrated perspective” (1979) examined the consequences of reductionist thinking about disability, including stereotyping, to argue that there is a complex relationship between medical

and social components of disablement. Paul Abberley explored disability as social oppression in his work; “The Concept of Oppression and the Development of a Social Theory of Disability” (1987). These early works represent but a few of the intellectual insights that have contributed to an emerging program of disability studies in Britain.

In writing about the history of the social model, Oliver (2010, p. 43) explains that he wanted to turn the understanding of disability “completely on its head” by arguing that it was not impairment that was the main cause of the social exclusion of disabled people but the way that society responded to people with impairments. He has attempted to apply this insight into practice in his training of social workers, and in the design and delivery of equality training. Oliver has written a social work text book, *Social Work with Disabled People* (1983, as cited in Oliver, Sapey & Thomas, 2012, p. 4) which is now in its fourth edition. The main theme of the text is “that social work, as an organized professional activity, has given little thought to the problems of disability, and where it has merely reproduced traditional thinking in its application of social work practice” (Oliver, Sapey & Thomas, 2012, p. 4). A second theme of the text is that traditional thinking about disability is incongruent with the personal experiences of many disabled people. Oliver contends that the social model should be thought of as a practical tool for producing social and political change (Oliver, 2010, p. 57).

A North American example of social constructionist thought related to disability. There are two versions of the social model of disability. In the United States, the social model is commonly referred to as the “minority model” of disability (Williams, 2001, p. 134). Within this model disabled people are considered a minority group, and like other minority groups in society they share the minority experience of prejudice, stigma, discrimination and devaluation of culture and cultural norms, with the concomitant pressure to assimilate into the majority culture

(Olkin, 1999, p. 88; Gilson & DePoy, 2002, p. 156; Hanjorgiris, Rath & O'Neill, 2004, p. 25).

However, unlike racial and ethnic groups, person with disabilities have not had centuries of collective identity and history to aid them in rejecting stereotypes and overcoming discrimination (Mackelsprang & Salsgiver, 1999, p. 33). The shifting of disability identity from intrinsic, functional and/or apparent physical characteristics to one of shared experience binds disabled people together to counter hostile attitudes emerging from anxiety occurring outside of group membership (Gilson & DePoy, 2000, p. 212). The minority model of disability views disabled people as an oppressed minority group which has been denied its civil rights (Gill, Kewman & Brannon, 2003, pp. 233-235).

In North America, disability activists also point to a singular event as the precipitating factor for the development of a collective identity. American disability activist and co-founder of the Institute on Disability Culture, Steven E. Brown (1996) believes that it was the actions of Ed Roberts, a young man with quadriplegia, who broke down educational barriers for disabled people when he challenged systemic and physical obstacles to enter the University of California in Berkeley in 1972. Because of Robert's self-advocacy other disabled people enrolled at the university and they coalesced into a group known as the "Rolling Quads"; disabled students who realized that their life experiences contributed to a common understanding of the condition of disability. The first Center for Independent Living (CIL) was set up at Berkeley in 1972, a result of the initiative taken by disabled students who were housed in a local hospital "for their own good". Led by Roberts, they rejected this custodial environment and sought a home in the community where supportive services could be provided, and controlled, by them. The four core principles of the Independent Living Movement were later developed by Roberts as: self-

determination, self-image and public education, advocacy, and service to all (Braddock & Parrish, 2001, p. 48).

The independent living perspective views people with disabilities not as patients or clients but as active and responsible consumers. Independent living proponents reject traditional treatment approaches as offensive and disenfranchising and demand control over their own lives...Independent living encourages people with disabilities to begin to assert their capabilities personally and in the political arena (Mackelprang & Salsgiver, 1996, p. 10).

American sociologist, Irving Zola, explains that the rise of the Independent Living Movement, in combination with his own experiences as a person who used a wheelchair for mobility, helped him to realize that disability was socially constructed (Zola, 1991, p. 4). However, Canadian social policy analyst, Jerome Bickenbach, posits that the social scientific roots of the American socio-political model of disability can be traced to rehabilitation, a therapeutic response to impairment that is related to Talcott Parson's theory of deviance (Bickenbach, 1993, p. 141). Bickenbach contends that disability theorists who have applied deviance theory are making use of "labeling theory", a social psychological version of deviance theory that stresses the importance of social categorization in the creation of social relationships and self-perception (Bickenbach, 1993, p. 143).

Irving Zola made a substantial contribution to the development of disability studies and his work was strongly influenced by social interactionism (Albrecht, 2002, p. 38). In particular, his work highlighted the subjective experience of disability, being an embodied subject, and the universality of disability (Zola, 1989; 1991; 1993, as cited in Albrecht, 2002, p. 38). He was the Chair of the Medical Sociology of the American Sociological Association, a founder of the

Disability Studies Quarterly, a key member of the disability movement and one of the moving forces in establishing the Society for Disability Studies. “Here was a scholar in the symbolic interactionist mode who incorporated a critical component of pragmatism into his research by combining academic research and activism” (Albrecht, 2002, p. 38).

The disability movement in the United States called for legal protection from discrimination and it fashioned a new idea in civil rights; the concept of equal access (Longmore, 2003, pp. 218-219). Longmore explains that, where traditional civil rights theory permitted differential treatment of minorities as only a temporary measure needed to achieve parity (affirmative action), the disability rights philosophy claimed that reasonable access and accommodation should be permanent because they are both necessary for disabled people to achieve and maintain their civil rights in society. The concept of access was extended beyond physical modifications to include equal opportunity: “To ensure equal opportunity, they have declared, equal access and reasonable accommodations must be guaranteed in law as civil rights” (Longmore, 2003, p. 219). Media attention heightened public awareness of the struggle for disabled people’s rights and those struggles culminated in the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (1990), considered to be a landmark piece of legislation in the field of disability (Swain, French & Cameron, 2003, p. 155).

Similar to the British social model of disability, the American minority model views people with disabilities as hindered not by their intrinsic differences but by society’s response to those differences. Gill, Kewman, and Brannon (2003) believe that the minority model of disability bears some resemblance to a person-versus-environment interaction:

However, although ecological frameworks indicate that the environment mediates the consequences of an individual’s functional differences (through barriers or

accommodations), those differences are still deemed aberrant or abnormal at the level of individual functioning. In contrast, the new models treat both disability and normality ontologically as socially constructed statuses (Gill, Kewman & Brannon, 2003, p. 306). An understanding of disability as socially constructed increasingly highlights the importance of social, cultural, political, and economic determinants. For example, Gary L. Albrecht has argued that disabled people are marginalized because it serves the economic interests of professions and businesses who sell over-priced products, medications and services to disabled people (Albrecht, 1992). Albrecht explains that his book, *The Disability Business: Rehabilitation in America* (1992) is devoted to an analysis of the social construction of disability as a social problem, and the development of a rehabilitation industry as an institutional response (Albrecht, 2002, p. 42). A more current version of this economic analysis links disability to a particular ideological paradigm. In a chapter titled “Minority Model: From liberal to neoliberal futures of disability” (2012), David T. Mitchell and Sharon R. Snyder argue that there has been an ascendancy of a more neoliberal contemporary concept of disability as a paradigm for all bodies as lacking capacities that are in need of market-based solutions:

Whereas a prior era celebrated autonomous bodies rich in capacity, our own era turns the corner and proliferates pathologies as opportunities for new product dissemination opportunities...The body is targeted as inherently lacking and the pharmaceutical industry promises not to remove but to mask social symptoms as individualized failing. Nowhere in the marketing scheme is there a direct address of inhospitable environments, workplaces, or living arrangements as the appropriate objects of critique (Mitchell & Snyder, 2012, p. 45).

Mitchell and Snyder contend that the minority model of disability gives primary positioning to disability as located in the environment rather than in the person. However, it also solidifies a rights-based argument about the ability of people with disabilities to actively participate alongside able-bodied people as full citizens on the basis of equal access. “In making this argument, the minority model forwards a concept of disability identity as mirroring the desires of those with normative embodiments that may no longer prove viable for working politics” (Mitchell & Snyder, 2012, p. 42).

Enter Critical Disability Studies

In recent years a more radical perspective of disability has emerged, championed by disability scholars, which has led to the growing demand for a more critical, interdisciplinary field of inquiry known as disability studies (Albrecht, 2002; Thomas, 2002). The field of disability studies spans the boundaries of academia, personal experience, political activism and public policy (Albrecht, 2002). British disability activist and scholar, Colin Barnes, writes that the terminology of “disability studies” first appeared in an academic context in the United Kingdom in 1992, although people had been studying disability-related issues since the 1960s (Barnes, 2003a). Barnes explains that the difference between disability studies and previous courses related to the study of disability is that the focus of disability studies is on the re-definition of disability by disabled people. For Barnes (2007) disability studies is about the various forces; economic, political and cultural, that support and sustain “disability” as defined by the disabled people’s movement, in order to generate meaningful and practical knowledge with which to eradicate this categorization. According to the seminal writing of British disability activist, Tom Shakespeare (2008), disability studies emerged as a radical challenge to individualist and medicalized thinking. It is now a globally recognized discipline with particular strengths in

Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, the Nordic countries, Germany and France, with subtle differences in definition and emphasis. For example, North America is influenced by the minority model of disability that is concerned with cultural representation and meaning. Nordic countries have relied on a relational understanding of disability and have concentrated on evaluating and developing welfare services. British disability theorists and researchers have explored the operation of oppression and the role of barriers in the lives of disabled people.

The International Society for Disability Studies was founded in 1982 as a non profit organization that promotes the study of disability in social, cultural, and political contexts:

Disability Studies recognizes that disability is a key aspect of human experience, and that the study of disability has important political, social, and economic implications for society as a whole, including both disabled and nondisabled people. Through research, artistic production, teaching, and activism, the Society for Disability Studies seeks to augment understanding of disability in all cultures and historical periods, to promote greater awareness of the experiences of disabled people, and to advocate for social change (Society for Disability Studies, 2012).

Disability studies' focus is on the development of an understanding of the direct experience of disability and impairment, including an analysis of the place and meaning of disability in society, and the development of alternative political measures needed to realize an inclusive society (Prince, 2004a). Disability studies has many facets, but a common underpinning is the rejection of the medical model as a foundation for understanding the experience of disability (Williams, 2001). The core theoretical paradigm of this field is the social model of disability, reflecting both the politicization of disability by disabled people and strong sociological roots in the academic field. What is called the "social model" in the United Kingdom and the "minority model" in the

United States has been the guiding framework for disability theorists since the 1970s, with the view that disability is a form of oppression requiring a political and rights-based response rather than a medical or social care response (Williams, 2001).

More recently the focus of disability studies has turned to addressing the core of ableist thinking as “structures of categorical exclusion” (Roulstone, Thomas & Watson, 2012, p. 4). Critical race theory, for example, has been utilized to problematize the notion of race as a permanent and abiding classification. Fiona A. Kumari Campbell has argued that the state of disablement, like racism, is so ingrained in western societies that ableism as a site of social theorization represents the “last frontier of enquiry still preoccupied with the arcane distinction between ‘impairment’ and ‘disability’ in the government of disability” (Campbell, 2008, p. 152). Disability studies is viewed as both interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary, engaging with various disciplinary perspectives as a critique of specific approaches to disability, as a project to evolve an interdisciplinary frame to be incorporated into multiple disciplines, and as a new sphere of scholarly work similar to women’s studies, queer studies and black studies (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009, p. 49). However, while some disability theorists view these developments as part of a process of growing maturity and openness, others view such plurality as a risk to disability studies. Barnes (2012, p. 23) cautions that a shift away from the social model’s analysis of the structural forces of disablism will have serious implications for disabled people in relation to creating a more fair and inclusive global society. Barnes states that even in Nordic states, universal welfare and educational policies continue to rely on medical and psychological interpretations and labels.

Disability is now regarded in policy circles as not simply a medical issue but also a human rights concern. A major catalyst for this development has been the social model

emphasis on the material and structural causes of disabled people's disadvantage. This has led to the introduction of numerous legislative measures and policy initiatives to address the various economic and social deprivations encountered by disabled people across the world...Yet these policies have had only a marginal impact on the everyday experience of disablement, and the majority of disabled people remain the poorest in all societies (Barnes, 2012, p. 24).

According to Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2009, p. 51) critical social theory is much broader than envisioned by Frankfurt theorists, and includes the crisis of representation, the rise of new social movements and identity politics, globalization, and the fragmentation and compartmentalization of everyday life. Critical disability studies has as its purpose to move beyond modernist paradigms of disability, like the social model, to engage with all of the theoretical resources available, including feminism, postmodernism, queer theory, critical race theory and phenomenology of the body (Shildrick, 2012, p. 32). Disability studies is now generally referred to as critical disability studies (CDS) as a way to incorporate critiques from feminism, cultural studies, and postmodernism:

Use of CDS signifies an implicit understanding that the terms of engagement in disability studies have changed; that the struggle for social justice and diversity continues but on another plane of development – one that is not simply social, economic and political, but is also psychological, cultural, discursive and carnal (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009, p. 50).

More importantly, Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2009) believe that CDS represents a distancing away from those who have co-opted disability studies for normalizing ends. For example, Thomas (2012, p. 213) observes that the language of empowerment, inclusion, and disability

rights has been appropriated by politicians and state officials to serve a neoliberal agenda to free up market mechanisms and curtail state welfare provision. Neoliberal regimes, such as the government currently in power in Australia, have been successful in positioning one group's rights and claims against those of other groups (Soldatic & Meekosha, 2012, p. 249).

Although many Western governments, such as Canada, have adopted a sociopolitical understanding of disability and have enshrined disability rights in law, a review of the number of complaints to the Canadian Human Rights Commission in 2011 alleging discrimination on the grounds of disability was 28%, or 404 complaints out of 1,424 complaints received by the Commission that year. The next highest number of complaints was discrimination due to age, at 14% (Canadian Human Rights Commission Annual Report, 2011). These results, although improved from previous years, appear to signify that policy is not a sufficient mechanism for changing people's thinking about disability. Another example of the lag between policy and current thinking about disability can be found in Canadian social policy analyst, Marcia H. Rioux's (1997) four social and scientific formulations of disability, that are still reflected in the treatment of persons with disability in law, in policy, in programs, and in rights instruments and research agendas. She characterizes two of the approaches as emanating from theories of disability as a consequence of individual pathology and two from disability as a consequence of what she refers to as "social pathology". Within these categories Rioux has formulated a framework of characteristics that she uses to distinguish one approach from another, which has been summarized by this writer into table format (see Table 1). A review of disability studies scholarship indicates that Rioux's framework for understanding paradigms of disability is limited because it does not engage with all of the theoretical sources available within critical disability studies. If Rioux's framework was adjusted to incorporate the range of theory within critical

disability studies it would have another category of approach titled Transformative/Participatory (see Table 2). This typology would shift the approach to disability from a social order perspective, based on planned social change and limited political reform, towards the conflict perspective of society. It is a core assumption of the conflict perspective that our present society is organized around fundamental inequalities that can be overcome only by a substantial change in social relations:

The conflict model is the foundation for many strands of Marxist, feminist, postmodernist, anti-racist, and lesbian-gay liberationist theories. In this view, society does not civilize people through moral regulation but rather stymies the human development of the disadvantaged through oppression rooted in systemic inequalities...

The conflict model does not simply express compassion for the disadvantaged as victims of the system, but views them as social actors with the potential to change the world (Sears & Cairns, 2010, p. 21).

Goodley (2012) identifies several important analytical insights arising from the theories comprising critical disability studies:

1. Disability studies is now less centered around a materialist imperative due to theoretical developments from postmodernist and post structuralist influences which emphasize the cultural, discursive and relational undergirding of the disability experience (Goodley, 2012, p. 4).
2. The body is viewed as neither a biological nor a sociological category, but instead, represents an interface where intersecting material and symbolic forces converge; “a surface where multiple codes of sex, class, age, race, and so forth, are inscribed” (Goodley, 2012, p. 6).

3. An intersectional analysis shifts attention away from disablism to the problems of ableism. As disability emerges as a site of otherness and marginality, then so do Other identities and processes. It is a key task of critical disability studies to explain how these conditions of dominance crisscross in ways that promote values and justify forms of oppression such as disablism, racism, homophobia and so on (Goodley, 2012, p. 7).
4. Critical disability studies is mindful of connecting across nation-states on specific socio-historical conditions of oppression in relation to the globalization of disablism (Goodley, 2012, p. 9).
5. Critical disability studies has the task to recapture the self from its position as Other (Goodley, 2012, p. 10).
6. Critical disability studies needs to shift attention onto “the abled” in which ableist processes create a corporeal standard which presumes able-bodiedness, inaugurates the norm and affirms an ableist ideal. The individual remains a key site of everyday life, oppression and resistance (Goodley, 2012, p. 10).

Table 1

An Adaptation of Rioux's (1997) Social and Scientific Formulations of Disability

Individual Pathology	Social Pathology (based on the social model)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability is a field of professional expertise. • Disability is characterized as incapacity. • Disability is viewed as anomaly and social burden. • Inclusion of disabled people is viewed as a private, rather than a public responsibility. • The unit of analysis is the individual • The point of intervention is the individual condition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assumption is that disability is not inherent to the individual independent of the social structure. • Priority is given to political, social and built environments. • Disability is viewed as difference rather than seen as an anomaly. • Disability is viewed as the interaction of individual to society. • Inclusion of disabled people is viewed as a public responsibility. • The unit of analysis is the social system. • The intervention: accommodation and accessibility within social, environmental and economic systems.

Table 2

Transformative/Participatory Approaches to Disability

Critical Disability Studies Perspectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professional and institutional discourses function as techniques of power, and medical discourses on disability contribute to an understanding of disability as a medical problem or as an individual characteristic caused by impairment, rather than as socially and culturally constructed.• Binary divisions, such as medical versus social, biological versus social, normal versus abnormal, are all rigid categorizations that serve to exclude and segregate people from sites of power and privilege.• The body is a complex site of cultural and corporeal production.• An intersectional analysis of ableism reveals that disability is just one form of oppression because disability is wrapped up with other categories of difference, and experiences of marginality.• A global disability studies perspective must be cognizant of socio-historical conditions of oppression alongside wider considerations of the globalization of disablism.• Ableist processes presuming ablebodiedness should be the focus of analysis and activism since there are many members of society, not just disabled persons, who are judged against equally pernicious standards of worth.

The Theory and Research Literature Pertaining to Social Work and Disability

In choosing the research for this section of the paper I was primarily interested in recent studies examining how BSW social work texts were presenting and representing critical social work theories and practice approaches, particularly in relation to disability. A review of the disability studies literature spanning ten years or more has revealed the evolution of disability studies from a simple binary approach of individual model/social model to include a broad range of critical social theory; post-structuralism, feminism, postmodernism, Marxism, and so on. The question that I wished to explore in reviewing the studies was; has social work education literature kept abreast of current developments in disability theory? Previous research studies have questioned the role of social work text books in limiting theoretical discourse, leading to common disciplinary assumptions that are not representative of the wide range of social theories represented in fields such as disability studies.

A seminal British study of how social work education is able to respond to the changing social, political, economic, and ideological context of contemporary society will provide some insight to current criticism from the field, that social work education and practice tend to be influenced by, and supportive of, dominant ideologies such as neo-liberalism. In the study by Macey and Moxon (1996) the authors examined the political, socio-economic, and ideological contexts contributing to racism in Britain during the 1990s to find that economic and social restructuring from the globalization process, combined with an ideology supporting free market mechanisms and individualism, had led to the exacerbation of inequality and poverty for certain groups in society, primarily women, the working class and black people. The authors found that social work education did not have the foundations of sociological theory to be able to analyze racism, or to counter allegations of “political correctness”. There was also concern that anti-

racist social work literature tended to view racism, and racial oppressions as a monolithic concept, rather than as a complex phenomenon requiring different levels of analysis. The teaching of anti-racist social work to social work students was also found to be problematic due to the “silencing” of students, black or white, and the superficial adoption of appropriate discourse (Macey & Moxon, 1996, p. 307). The authors suggest that a move towards anti-oppressive, rather than anti-racist, social work would address the intersection of divisions such as class, race and gender, addressing multiple forms of oppression.

In his article titled “Do Books Write Authors? A Study of Disciplinary Hegemony”, American sociologist, Ben Agger (1989), discusses his research study employing a critical reading of sociology textbooks. He evaluated textbooks for what they said about the assumptions that sociologists make about the social world. Agger contends that introductory sociology books socialize students and faculty to common disciplinary assumptions. “The books not only reflect our discipline; they help to reproduce it in the way in which they expose graduate students and faculty to the consensus underlying the dominant approach to epistemology, methodology and theory” (Agger, 1989, p. 366). Agger found that sociology textbooks cling to an outmoded positivism that continues to support the notion of the resemblance of sociology to the natural sciences in pursuit of laws and predictions. Social problems are portrayed as inevitable products of societal modernization. Agger found that the majority of sociology text books did not address the wider range of theories represented in sociological discourse.

Wachholz and Mullaly (2000) utilized Agger’s “Critical Theory of Text” as the theoretical framework for a content analysis conducted on American introductory social work textbooks. Agger’s theoretical framework; “holds that social science textbooks play a political role by serving as delivery systems for assumptions about the social world that largely reflect the

interests of capitalism and patriarchy” (Wachholz & Mullaly, 2000, p. 51). Wachholz and Mullaly initiated the study because they believed that there had been no systemic study of the extent to which the contributions of feminist, anti-racist or radical social work scholarship had been incorporated into mainstream social work literature. To address the gap they employed latent and manifest content analyses of all known American introductory social work textbooks published between 1988 and 1997 (n = 14). Based on Agger’s previous study of sociology texts and the theory that he developed on the relationship between knowledge that appears in textbooks and the larger socio-political order, the researchers expected to find:

- “that feminist, anti-racist and radical scholarship received less coverage than mainstream scholarship” (Wachholz & Mullaly, 2000, p. 57); and
- “that feminist, anti-racist and radical scholarship which was included would be treated in ways that often neutralize their political impact and transformative potential” (Ibid).

Wachholz and Mullaly (2000) completed a manifest content analysis of the number of pages or partial pages that each social work textbook devoted to categories of social work scholarship, as follows: eco-systems theories; any theory of counseling, group work or community work (mainstream); radical social work theories; feminist theories, and multicultural theories.

Feminism was sub-divided into two categories; liberal and transformative feminism. These categories were defined from the theoretical literature that underpins progressive and mainstream social work scholarship. A latent content analysis involved the identification and examination of deeper contextual meanings embedded in the presentation of all feminist, anti-racist and radical scholarship contained in the sample of textbooks. The results of the manifest content analysis indicated that there was a striking discrepancy between the coverage of mainstream social work scholarship and radical, feminist and anti-racist social work scholarship, with mainstream

coverage dominating most textbooks and many excluding any mention of transformative theories. The latent content analysis revealed that there was very limited incorporation of feminist, anti-racist and radical scholarship, and when they were included they tended to be treated unfavourably, trivialized, misrepresented, oversimplified, and eclipsed. Wachholz and Mullaly concluded that their two hypotheses, developed from Agger's "Critical Theory of Text", were confirmed by the findings of their inquiry: "It would seem that introductory social work textbooks published between 1988 and 1997 pose little threat to capitalism, patriarchy and/or White privilege" (Wachholz & Mullaly, 2000, p. 68).

The study of disability remains underdeveloped in the professional education of social workers and in social work literature. A review of *Social Work Abstracts*, by Pardeck (2002), between 1977 and 2001 revealed that only two articles had information pertaining to disability culture. Challenges to the traditional medical model of disability have emerged from various theoretical starting points in the fields of the humanities and social sciences (Hiranandani, 2005a). Hiranandani states that the dominant view of disability in social work has been the medical model, which views disability as a functional limitation or individual pathology or deviance. Within social work interventions, disabled people are often depicted as suffering or grieving, needing assistance to come to terms with the impairment. The social constructionist model of disability explores oppression, and fits with the goals and objectives of social work, yet, the study of disability has not, until recently, been broached by the field of social work (Carter, Quaglia, & Leslie, 2010, p. 125). Historically, social work as a profession lacked exposure to new discourses on disability and the knowledge emerging from critical disability studies (Meekosha & Dowse, 2007). According to Meekosha & Dowse (2007) students need to

be exposed to disabled people's own theoretical developments based on personal insights and experiences in relation to social work practice.

In 2012 *The International Journal of Social Work Education* published a special issue on Disability Studies and Social Work Education. In the Editorial the editors, Hannah Morgan of Lancaster University, UK, and Alan Roulstone, Northumbria University, UK, state that a symposium titled "Teaching disability studies to social work students", hosted by the Centre for Disability Research at Lancaster University in May 2009, provided the genesis for the special edition of the journal. The editors found that the lack of books and papers in social work journals suggested that disability was, and is, a neglected area of social work education. Brief summaries of the salient points for each of the ten articles included in the publication follow.

In an article titled "Stuck in the middle with you: Towards enabling social work with disabled people" (2012), Alan Roulstone reviews the United Kingdom's social work curriculum to identify a significant gap between understandings of disability and enabling practice that has been aired in the wider literature, and social work education and training. In particular, Roulstone found that a reading of key books written by social work academics suggests that while disability is on the agenda, it is subsumed within a lifecycle approach or within a diversity perspective (Roulstone, 2012, p. 146). Diversity approaches tend to reflect liberal ideological frameworks that fail to acknowledge the disadvantage that many disabled people face. Roulstone found that mainstream advanced and undergraduate sociology has also overlooked the sociologies of disability and disability studies. "As social work derives much of its thinking from sociological foundations, the limited connection to disability-related work means that it has been left to disability studies writers to make such progress" (Roulstone, 2012, p. 148). In an effort to enable social work education and training, Roulstone makes a number of recommendations to

embed more critical disability studies, and more reflexive practices into social work education in the United Kingdom. First among his recommendations is a national curriculum review which profiles the positioning of disability issues and awareness into the foundational stages of social work education. A second important recommendation is for a curricular challenge to social work students and educators to reflect on and critique a pathological and problems-focused approach to social work education.

In the paper “Service users, social work education and knowledge for social work practice” (Beresford & Boxall, 2012) the authors explore the implications of service user contributions to social work education in light of Paul Hunt’s (1981, as cited in Beresford & Boxall, p.) historical critiques of disability research and recent developments in UK disability policy and practice. According to Beresford and Boxall, Hunt argued that disability researchers, Eric J. Miller and Geraldine V. Gwynne, exploited the lives and experiences of service users to further their own careers. Miller and Gwynne’s book, *A Life Apart: A Pilot Study of Residential Institutions for the Physically Handicapped and the Young Chronic Sick* (1972) was a key text used in social work courses. Beresford and Boxall examine the implications of Hunt’s critique in relation to mental health service users/survivors’ involvement in social work education, from a feminist perspective (Beresford & Boxall, 2012, p. 156). The work of feminist theorists suggested that standpoint approaches may be relevant when considering service user involvement in education. However, the authors had to contend with the fact that the systems and structures of the academy which control academic knowledge production processes tend to defend and reinforce dominant ways of thinking (Stanley & Wise, 1993, as cited in Beresford & Boxall, 2012, p. 163). Social work students in mental health practice placements were found to be frequently subjected to a medicalized, individual model of understanding mental health service users, limiting the impact

of service users/survivor's involvement in social work education. The authors conclude that, based on feminist theorists' arguments that women's own knowledges must be developed collectively to counter dominant understandings of women in the academy, disabled people's and service users' organizations must become involved in social work education.

In the paper "Disability culture and cultural competency in social work" (Dupre', 2012) the author argues that analysis of the critical theory underpinning disability culture demonstrates that an understanding of the role of cultural politics is fundamental to social work education if social work is to support the work of the disabled people's movement in demystifying and deconstructing the norms, discourses and practices of the dominant able-bodied culture. The author explores three approaches to addressing oppression at the cultural and structural levels of society; assimilation through a politics of integration, multiculturalism through cultural pluralism, and collective resistance through a politics of difference (Mullaly, 2007, as cited in Dupre', 2012, p. 169), and compares them with theories of disability culture as elucidated within the disability studies literature; culture as historical/linguistic, culture as social/political, and culture as personal/aesthetic. The author finds that a politics of difference approach, as elaborated by American sociologist and feminist, Iris Marion Young (1990) and adapted for social work by Canadian social work theorist and educator, Bob Mullaly, fits best with the aims and theoretical developments of the disabled people's movement. Dupre' concludes that coursework on critical disability studies must form a part of the curriculum of social work education if social work practice is to address the oppression of disabled people, and others, in any meaningful way.

In the article, "Increasingly strange bedfellows? An examination of the inclusion of disability issues in university-and-agency-based social work education in a Welsh context" (2012), authors

Jo Rees and Michele Raithby present and discuss the preliminary findings from an ongoing longitudinal study of social work students' knowledge of disability issues and attitudes towards working with disabled people at different stages of the BSc Social Work program at Swansea University, in Wales. The longitudinal study had two main objectives: 1) to investigate the initial attitudes of undergraduate social work students working with disabled people, and the subsequent impact of academic learning and teaching (Phase 1); and 2) to investigate the impacts of both academic learning and assessed practice experience within agency settings in student outlooks on disability (Phase 2). Phase 1 of the study found that prior personal experience is a strong determinant of future interest in working in a particular service area (Rees & Raithby, 2012, p. 198). Additionally, exposure to case studies, service-user led teaching sessions, and dedicated teaching sessions related to disability issues appeared to influence student interest and was a positive method for encouraging students to reflect on "real life" challenges within a safe environment. Findings from Phase 2 indicate that students' self-reported levels of competency in five areas related to disability issues; reflective practice, theory to practice, values, skills and anti-oppressive practice, experienced an increase following the academic and practice-based learning. However, gaps in learning were identified, specifically in relation to the students' lack of confidence in their ability to relate theory to practice. For the researchers, this finding indicated that there is a need to combine a curriculum infusion approach to disability with explicitly focused teaching around disability.

The article "Deconstructing hierarchies: A pedagogical model with service users as co-teachers" (Gutman, Kraiem, Criden & Yalon-Chamovitz, 2012) examines the contribution of service users in the professional education of health and welfare workers in Israel, in the area of disability. The authors describe a new pedagogy of co-teaching that was developed through an

interdisciplinary collaboration between a social work educator, an occupational therapy educator, and a service user with disabilities (Gutman et al., 2012, p. 203). A literature review of the disability studies literature found that disability studies, like gender studies, adopts the tradition of critical pedagogy. “In this tradition, learning is identified as a critical process that requires the development of a critical awareness of one’s social reality through reflection followed by action (praxis) and then further reflection” (Freire, 2007, as cited in Gutman et al., 2012, p. 204). In a year-long undergraduate course in social work two teaching models were employed to explore the potential opportunities for partnership work with service users. The first model modeled partnership through a co-teaching dyad and through intermittent partnerships with service users, family members, and professionals who participated in the class on a one time basis. The second model was that of critical pedagogy, employed in the planning and development of the course. Issues that arose during the co-teaching partnership included: students questioned whether the partnership was genuine or just a form of tokenism, the need to have equal power and shared responsibility, together with involvement in planning, delivery, and evaluation was viewed by the co-teachers as critically important. The need for congruency between content and process in social work education meant that the tenets of a critical pedagogy needed to be identified. Saleeby and Scanlon’s (2006, as cited in Gutman et al., 2012, pp. 211-212) basic components of critical pedagogy were utilized: Socialization towards critical thinking and conceptually driven critical analysis; dialogic learning; and social action as education.

In “The social model of disability as a threshold concept: Troublesome knowledge and liminal spaces in social work education” (Morgan, 2012), the author draws on the experience of an established disability studies led approach to teaching social work to facilitate a discussion about how social work could be taught in a way that effectively scaffolds and supports student

learning and practice. The author discusses the utility of “threshold concepts” which emerged from the work of Erik Meyer and Ray Land (2003, as cited in Morgan, 2012, p. 218). Threshold concepts lead to ‘new and previously inaccessible ways of thinking about something’ (Meyer & Land, 2003, as cited in Morgan, 2012 p. 218). According to Morgan, there are five central characteristics of a threshold concept:

- Transformative – it results in a significant shift in the perception of a subject, which in the case of specific politico-philosophical insights like that of disability studies may lead to a transformation of personal identity, a reconstruction of subjectivity (Meyer & Land, 2003, as cited in Morgan, 2012, p. 218).
- Irreversible – threshold concepts are usually irreversible meaning that they are likely to change a perspective in a way that is hard to undo.
- Integrative – threshold concepts expose the previously hidden interrelatedness of something and that mastery of that concept ‘often allows the learner to make connections that were hitherto hidden from view’ (Cousins, 2006a, as cited in Morgan, 2012, p. 219).
- Bounded – boundedness may constitute the demarcation between academic disciplines and within disability studies there is debate about whether the social model can or should constitute disability studies (Goodley, 2010, as cited in Morgan, 2012, p. 220).
- Troublesome – the idea of disability as an individual personal tragedy is so hegemonic that it is extremely difficult for some students to grasp.

Meyer and Land (2003, as cited in Morgan, 2012) suggest that transition to mastery of a threshold concept may be sudden or take considerable time. During that time students are said to occupy a “liminal space” in which they may oscillate between old and new emergent understandings (Cousins 2006a, cited in Morgan, 2012, p. 220). This framework for identifying

“what works” in teaching social work students about disability has proven beneficial in understanding why students sometimes “get stuck” in the learning process and for identifying what it is instructors want students “to get”.

The short paper, “Preparation for practice: can philosophy have a place in helping students incorporate the social model of disability within their praxis?” (Reeve, 2012) was written to engage with the previous paper written by Morgan (2012). Reeve suggests that introducing social work students to philosophical concepts such as recognition at an early stage of their learning about skills, values and anti-oppressive practice, could facilitate the transition over the disability studies threshold. Reeves suggests that Axel Honneth’s book, *The Struggle for Recognition* (1995), relating to a critical theory of recognition, places emphasis on the importance of recognition within all human interaction. According to Honneth (as cited in Reeve, 2012, p. 228) recognition takes three forms; love, rights, and solidarity. Forms of misrecognition include exclusion, insult or degradation. Reeve, believes that Honneth’s three forms of recognition can be applied to issues specific to disabled people:

- Love: the fragile balance between autonomy and dependence which occurs within relationships between disabled people and their caregivers. The manner in which care is provided can affect someone’s physical integrity, either undermining or supporting their bodily self-confidence.
- Rights – the fight by disabled people for full inclusion in society and the means to be able to exercise those rights.
- Solidarity – means freedom from denigration and being recognized as valuable to society. The stigmatization of disabled people because of prejudice has a direct impact on self-esteem.

Reeve (2012) comments that, because of the way psycho-emotional disablism is played out at the interpersonal level between disabled people and others, it is particularly important that professionals such as social workers understand how their behavior and attitudes might disable the person with whom they are working.

The brief paper, “Increasing opportunities for co-production and personalization through social work student placements in disabled people’s organizations” (Evans, 2012) focuses on the experience of four social work students who were placed with a Disabled People’s Organization (DPO), and consequently had the opportunity to immerse themselves into an alternative organizational culture. The DPO was run by disabled service users, for disabled service users. Social work students learned to respect and recognize the expertise of the service users, while service users were able to challenge negative stereotypes about social workers’ based on their care management role. The power dynamics of having a disabled person in the position of a practice teacher, responsible for student learning and assessment, was part of the overall learning for the students. Evans concludes that DPOs, along with Centres for Independent Living (CILs), provide a good learning environment for social work students, and make a reality of the social model of disability and independent living, as defined by disabled people.

“Another way of looking” (Cameron & Tossell, 2012) presents a discussion that emerged in response to a dilemma faced by an experienced social work lecturer planning an introductory life course lecture about people labeled as having learning disabilities. Cameron and Tossell (2012) explain that the dilemma is related to whether or not to begin with a quoted statement from a parent reflecting on her own feelings after discovering that her twin children, age six months, had a congenital impairment. The statement was a recollection of what the mother felt when she saw a display of skipping ropes at a department store. The discussion was related to ways of

thinking about impairment from an affirmative model of disability, rather than from a personal tragedy perspective. The authors contend that by defining impairment as difference, an affirmative model avoids making negative judgments in terms of “loss”, “abnormality”, or “limitation”. The social work lecturer also decided not to open with the quote because people with learning disabilities have a legacy of being disregarded and categorized as burdensome.

In the last paper, “Moving the boundaries of feminist social work education with disabled people in the neoliberal era” (Soldatic & Meekosha, 2012), the authors discuss the possibility of expanding social workers’ practice to encourage enabling practices under an Australian neoliberal welfare regime. The authors find it a curious paradox that contemporary social work education in Australia is increasingly informed by critical theories, yet there is little space given to the study of disability within the university curriculum (Meekosha & Dowse, 2007, as cited by Soldatic & Meekosha, 2012, p. 247). Within the Australian social work curriculum, the positioning of a “feminist ethic of care” has been a deliberate political act to encourage a dispositional transformation within students. A “feminist ethic of care” seeks to acknowledge that relationships of ‘care’ and ‘support’ are largely ones of interdependence. However, the neoliberal policy environment draws upon an ‘ethic of care’ to ‘prioritize’ care. The growing prominence of caregivers’ rights movements have also subsumed the rights and interests of disabled people, maintaining a public-private divide that feminists have tried to dispel in citizenship regimes, such that disabled people’s right to support remains privatized and largely reliant on the informal support of unpaid caregivers who are largely women (Galvin, 2004, as cited in Soldatic & Meekosha, 2012, p. 249). The authors contend that there are four pillars of inequality; economic, political, socio-cultural, and affective inequality. The implications for social work education are that, affective equality recognizes that social workers can actively seek

to alter the harshest effects of the neoliberal market by becoming reflexively aware of their own privileges and disadvantages, and by considering new dimensions of love, caring and solidarity in support of the disabled people with whom they work.

A review of a few of the educational texts utilized in Canadian schools of social work indicates that students are being exposed to both the medical and social approaches to disability (Hick, 2006; Chappell, 2006), but the identified skills that social workers are required to develop are still characteristic of conventional social work practice and are described as follows; "...to help an individual and family *cope* (italics placed by this author) while at the same time recognize that many of the difficulties may stem from the social context..." (Hick, 2006, p. 315). Chappell (2006, p. 326) notes that a variety of social welfare, health and other services are designed to help disabled children "to live as *normal* (italics placed by this author) a life as possible" and that the focus of services is to help clients to achieve independence in mainstream settings (Chappell, 2006, p. 340). Many social work texts fail to represent the full range of theories and approaches to disability, particularly critical disability theories, limiting description and analysis to an ecological perspective represented by two main approaches: the minority model (Pardeck, 2002); and the sociopolitical model (Hick, 2006; Prince, 2004). The history of the disabled people's movement and disabled people's versions of history are also absent from the texts commonly used in social work education about disability, except for Juliet C. Rothman's (2003) text titled *Social Work Practice Across Disability*, which has a short chapter devoted to "A Historical Perspective".

A more recent research study examining the relationship between theories of disability and themes used in major textbooks on human behavior and the social environment found that very few of the texts provided theories of disability that could be used to inform social work practice

(Reid-Cunningham & Fleming, 2009). The textbooks were identified as the most frequently used texts for master's level human behavior and social environment courses in schools of social work across the United States (Reid-Cunningham & Fleming, 2009, p. 11). The researchers also found that the overall attention paid to disabled people in the texts was limited and when disability was included, it was not the immediate focus of the discussion. "Though some texts employ a strengths approach and explore theories of disability that are empowerment-based, many texts used a deficits or medical model to present disability content" (Reid-Cunningham & Fleming, 2009, p. 24).

There are now several social work texts written from a critical social theory perspective which specifically address ableism. In the book, *Undoing Privilege: Unearned Advantage in a Divided World* (2010), Australian social work educator Bob Pease examines how human bodies can be used to legitimate privilege and oppression. Pease explains that many non-disabled people have come to accept the premise of the social model of disability because it does not challenge their own able-bodied privilege (Pease, 2010, p. 156). Pease believes that disability activism and politics has often overlooked the role of non-disabled people within the disabled people's movement, and that there needs to be more exploration of supportive and non-oppressive roles for the non-disabled people who have key roles in the lives of disabled people (Pease, 2010, p. 163). In *Challenging Oppression and Confronting Privilege* (2010) Canadian social work educator and structural social work theorist, Bob Mullaly, not only explores the systematic oppression of disabled people but examines the other side of oppression, privilege, and the role it plays in maintaining systems of domination:

...people who fall into categories of privilege must do more than identify the privileges that have been conferred upon them. They must also realize how they actively re-enact

these privileges interpersonally, culturally, and institutionally. In other words, privileged persons must come to recognize their own complicity in the normalization of privilege (Mullaly, 2010, p. 300).

American social work educators and disability theorists, Elizabeth DePoy and Stephen Gilson, argue that rather than social work taking a lead in disability rights, which would be consistent with social work's mission of social justice, social work views disability as a pathological condition that immediately catches the clinical interest of social workers. Social work professionals in the United States are now the largest segment of clinical interventionists in mental health and related systems, and in large part, "the praxis tail wags the theoretical dog" (DePoy & Gilson, 2011, p. 183).

Moreover, through succumbing to the politicization of education, subscribing to developmental theory, and decreasing many of the required areas of scholarship beyond social work itself, social work education has inadvertently reified disability as a category with embodied deficit as the binding and defining element of membership and identity, and as one in which members need "help" (DePoy & Gilson, 2008, p. 7).

In their more recent work, DePoy and Gilson (2011) point out that social work tends to be rooted in longitudinal and intrapsychic theoretical explanations of human deviance. Longitudinal explanations are those related to developmental, stage, phase, and life-course theories (DePoy & Gilson, 2011, p. 67). They believe that these explanations contain essentialist assumptions about disability as tragedy that automatically signify poverty and the need for public support and charity (DePoy & Gilson, 2011, p. 184).

The social work research literature indicates that social work education addressing disability clearly has not caught up with many of the theoretical approaches represented within critical

disability studies. Social work text books in Britain tend to reflect liberal ideological frameworks in addressing disability and disability studies has been overlooked in relation to the core curriculum (Roulstone, 2012). This finding was also reflected in a study of core social work text books utilized for master's level human behavior and social environment courses in schools of social work across the United States (Reid-Cunningham & Fleming, 2009). An understanding of critical concepts of culture, taken from the critical disability studies literature, is fundamental to addressing oppression (ableism) at the cultural level of society, and I suggest an anti-oppressive approach to social work which I believe could facilitate this understanding, based on Iris Marion Young's (1990) politics of difference (Dupre', 2012). In another study related to attitudes, Cameron and Tossell (2012) discussed the importance of reframing personal tragedy assumptions to a disability affirmative attitude based on difference, to counter the cultural hegemony of individual pathology that is dominant within Western culture. In relation to the social work curriculum, Rees and Raithby (2012) continue to carry out a longitudinal study on the impacts of planned learning and teaching in relation to disability on social work student's attitudes and knowledge about disability. Based on preliminary results from the study, the researchers are supporting an approach in which disability is infused into the curriculum, augmented with focused teaching around disability. However, American researchers Gourdine and Saunders (2002) found that, while research in social work has supported infusion as the preferred method to impart knowledge on disabilities, they contend that it is difficult to standardize infusion of content (Gourdine & Saunders, 2002, p. 217).

Various approaches to educating social work students have been considered in social work scholarship in relation to disability theory and practice. There are Canadian social work academics who believe that an interdisciplinary approach incorporating disability studies would

help to transcend the limits of single disciplines (Carter, Quaglia, & Leslie, 2010, p. 124). The authors argue that such an approach would involve having social work students enroll in core disability studies courses reflecting the social model of disability and utilizing deconstructionism as a method of analysis of underlying assumptions and perceptions. In teaching social work at Lancaster University, Great Britain, instructors have adopted the idea that “threshold concepts”, as distinguished from “core concepts” can be used to introduce new ideas and insights to social work practice from disability studies (Morgan, 2012, p. 218). Morgan (2012, p. 219) cites the example of the social model which can become a portal through which students come to understand the interrelatedness of forms of oppression and disablism. Social work education, according to Morgan, must consider areas of troublesome knowledge such as challenging the taken-for-granted assumption that social work practice is always helpful. However, for Morgan, and others seeking to integrate disability studies into social work education, it is important to identify and understand what the threshold concepts in disability studies would be, especially given the dynamic and emergent nature of theoretical developments in this field. Reeve (2012) suggests that Honneth’s (1995) critical theory of recognition can provide social work students with philosophical concepts (love, rights, and solidarity) that could facilitate transition over the disability threshold by addressing the psycho-emotional disablism that often plays out between professional and client. Soldatic and Meekosha (2012) argue that teaching students to practice in accordance with a feminist ethic of care can serve to address affective inequality related to neoliberal social welfare policies.

The role of disabled people, as educators within social work education programs was also explored in the research literature. Beresford and Boxall (2012) experienced some resistance from the academy to the involvement of service users in social work education. However, this

was not the experience of Gutman, Kraiem, Criden and Yalon-Chamovitz (2012), who found that, despite power differentials and differing academic ability, co-teaching with a disabled service user generally supportive of a critical pedagogy that was reflective of both critical disability theory and critical social work theory. Opportunities for social work students to complete practice placements at organizations managed by disabled people, and serving disabled people, also proved to be a good learning environment for social work students to learn to work respectfully and collaboratively with disabled people (Evans, 2012).

The Theories of Disability Studies and Their Coherence with Social Work Practice

Critical disability studies (CDS) has built on the insights of the social model, but the complexity of identity politics, political and theoretical appeals to the significance of the body and the economic climate of globalization and neoliberalism have posed critical questions about the usefulness of dominant theories of disability (Goodley, 2012, p. 2). Disability studies has experienced a remarkable expansion and development in little more than two decades:

As I understand it, CDS is of crucial importance, no longer as some putatively marginal interest, but to scholarship as a whole. Just as feminism, post-coloniality and queer theory have all successfully pushed out the theoretical boat, CDS is now the academic site to watch. What is exciting about each of those areas is that they have forced us to rethink everything. It is no longer a case of just ‘adding on’ women or ethnic minorities to a pre-existing syllabus; the task is to ask how that changes our understanding of society in general...In short, our understanding of all bodies is affected once we take the difference of disability into account (Shildrick, 2012, p. 30).

Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2009) comment that CDS is necessarily eclectic, and it will continue to build on the work of the early pioneers in disability studies. In their article titled

“What’s so ‘critical’ about critical disability studies?” they ask the question of whether or not the growing tendency of disability scholars to employ the term “CDS” represents a paradigm shift or the maturing of a discipline. They give the last word to Mairian Corker, who provided an answer to their question ten years ago. Corker envisioned a mature disability studies opening up to diverse theoretical strands of enquiry, but with the social model as part of its historical development (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009, p. 66).

The insights and limitations of materialism in understanding disability. Goodley (2012, p. 2) asserts that the materialist model of disability was a modernist response to the socio-economic exclusion of disabled people from everyday life. Oliver describes disability as all the things in society that impose restrictions on disabled people:

Unlike previous traditional individual, medical approaches, the social model breaks the causal link between impairment and disability. The ‘reality’ of impairment is not denied but is not the cause of disabled people’s economic and social disadvantage. Instead, the emphasis shifts to how far, and in what ways, society restricts their opportunities to participate in mainstream economic and social activities rendering them more or less dependent. This approach has been a key influence on social policy in general, and disability policy in particular... (Oliver & Barnes, 2010, p. 548).

Barnes (2012, p. 18) explains that the social model should be considered as a heuristic device that draws attention to the limits of individually based interventions in relation to the empowerment of disabled people.

The social model has increasingly come under criticism from disability theorists within the humanities, particularly by theorists coming from feminist, post structural and postmodern perspectives, as being an outdated concept because it viewed disability as primarily a socio-

economic problem. For example, Carol Thomas (1999) believes that feminism argues against the conceptual dualism of the “private and personal” versus the “public and political”. She argues that, by not including areas of the personal in materialist accounts of disability based on Marxist theory, disability theorists and activists have paid less attention to barriers in the more “intimate” life domains in which disablist social relationships operate, such as familial and sexual attachments, areas of reproduction, parenting, and child-rearing (Thomas, 2004). She contends that this omission has the ironic consequence of leaving aspects of social life and social oppression open to psychologists and others who do not hesitate to apply the individualistic/personal tragedy model of disability to these issues (Thomas, 1999).

In recent years, focus has shifted to the cultural locations of disability and how cultural analyses could be developed to explain the ways in which representations of disability and impairment were manufactured by science and popular culture (Goodley, 2012, p. 3). Thomas (2007, p. 60) has also observed that writers who favour a materialist approach are now keen to complement *the economic* with *the cultural* (Thomas’ use of italics) in their analyses of disability. For example, Oliver (1990) has a chapter titled “The cultural production of impairment and disability” in which he concedes that disability is not defined or culturally produced solely in terms of its relationship to the mode of production because core societal values have a role to play (Oliver, 1990, p. 22). Oliver explains how cultural values impact the way economic surplus is distributed in society:

Modern industrial societies invariably produce large economic surpluses which are redistributed and a major mechanism for redistribution is the welfare state. Again, the way in which the welfare state operates is significantly influenced by the ideologies underpinning it (George and Wilding, 1976) and in the case of Britain, the ideology

underpinning redistribution for disabled people is personal tragedy theory (Oliver, 1990, p. 24).

Researchers trained in post-Marxist theories, such as post-structuralism and post-colonialism, find materialist social model theories out of tune with the ever more complex nature of disability (Goodley, 2012, p. 3). Post-structuralism, according to Corker and Shakespeare (2002), provides a different view of the subject by arguing that subjects are not the autonomous creators of themselves or their worlds:

Rather, subjects are embedded in a complex network of social relations. These relations in turn determine which subjects can appear, where, and in what capacity. The subject is not something prior to politics or social structures, but is constituted in and through specific socio-political arrangements. In this sense, in some of its interpretations, the social model can appear to be an example of post-structuralist theory. However, to make sense of the ways in which subjects are at once revealed and concealed, post-structuralism contends that modernism's focus on the individual as an autonomous agent needs to be deconstructed, contested and troubled (Corker & Shakespeare, 2002, p. 3).

Post-structuralist thinking poses that disability is a constructed category in the sense that it comprises a set of social meanings "woven together and across powerful scientific discourses" (Thomas, 2007, p. 64). According to Thomas, the task of disability studies is to deconstruct dominant social discourses and cultural representations, whether medical, academic, literary or popular. Post-structuralist, Jacques Derrida, is concerned with the way meanings are organized and established through difference in a play of presence and absence; "Meaning includes identity (what it is) and difference (what it isn't) and is therefore continuously being deferred" (Corker & Shakespeare, 2002, p. 7).

French philosopher, Jacques Derrida's (1930 – 2004) deconstructive reading of text is the major tenet of post-structural theory. Derrida explains that deconstruction is not a method or tool to be applied: "It is an analysis which tries to find out how the writer's thinking works, or does not work, to find the tensions, the contradictions, the heterogeneity within the corpus" (Caputo, 1997: 9). Derrida's thinking on deconstruction took root during the 1960s in his study of humanity and the humanities, in which he began a campaign against the French phenomenon of "structuralism", as represented in the work of Levi-Strauss, Lacan, Barthes, and Althusser (Powell, 2006). In his biography of Derrida, Powell (2006, pp. 58- 61) explains that "structuralism" is the study of human activities on the basis of structure which had been discovered, first of all, in language. This structure proved that human and cultural things could be studied with some accuracy and dogmatism, and human culture could be studied as an exchange of various signs. Derrida attacked structuralism on the grounds that the meanings of the structure of culture were fluid, not static, with no firm harmony or laws, no hard-and-fast meanings because the meanings can change depending on the condition of the system. Social theorist, Steven Seidman (2004) explains that structuralists aim to uncover linguistic patterns while post-structuralists highlight the unstable patterns of linguistic and social order.

In examining the implications of post-structural deconstruction for disability theory, sociolinguist, Mairian Corker (1999) explains that Derrida coined the term *differance*, which loosely translates as "deferral" to suggest that meaning, and therefore knowledge, is never stable. Corker believes that deconstruction is the study of phenomena as they are taken to be and what they appear to exclude or suppress. For example, the identity of something is given by that which it is not, that which is absent from it, as darkness is the absence of light. She posits that Derrida's binary oppositions, in which one term is always privileged over another, are typical of ideologies

which deceive people into valuing one side of a dichotomy over another. Understanding the way in which disability is produced can be found by deconstructing the dominant discourse of normalcy (Corker, 2002). Corker and Shakespeare (2002) contend that a Derridean perspective on disability would support the argument that “normalcy” needs “disability” for its own definition. When “normalcy” is privileged, “disability” becomes a derivative, cultural arrangement that imposes the taken-for-granted status of ‘normal’. Disability theorists continue to debate the contributions of post- structuralism, but they generally recognize that it provides important insights for dismantling the socially constructed divisions between the “disabled” and the “normal” (Thomas, 2004).

Disability activist, post-structuralist theorist and feminist, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (1999) explains that examining persons with disability portrayed in literature arises logically from literary theory’s emphasis on discourse analysis, social constructionism and the politics of representation. Garland-Thomson believes that cultural narratives of disability found in literature often depict disabled people as tragic, inadequate and unattractive figures. These narratives shape the world, inform human relations and mold identity (Garland-Thomson, 2001). In particular, she believes that cultural stories about women and disability have defined women and disabled people as being the same; mutilated males, suggesting that women are actually disabled men. Garland-Thomson (2006) argues that there are many parallels between the social meanings attributed to female bodies and those assigned to disabled bodies because both are cast as deviant and inferior, both are excluded from full participation in public life and both are defined in opposition to a norm that is assumed to possess natural superiority. Garland-Thomson explains that a feminist approach to disability would confront the ability/disability system to address broad feminist concerns such as the status of the lived body, the politics of appearance, the

medicalization of the body, the privilege of normalcy, sexuality, and the commitment to integration.

In examining the disabled figure in culture, Garland-Thomson (2009) exposes the assumptions that support supposedly neutral norms within discourses of disability, race, gender, and sexuality: “Such an analysis furthers our collective understanding of the complex processes by which *all* forms of corporeal diversity acquire cultural meanings undergirding a hierarchy of political traits that determines the distribution of privilege, status, and power” (Garland-Thomson, 2009, p. 63). Garland-Thomson illustrates her argument by explaining that the current legal definition of disability in the United States, established by the *Americans with Disabilities Act* of 1990, acknowledges that disability depends upon perception and subjective judgment rather than on objective bodily states (Garland-Thomson, 2009, p. 64). However, disability is described in the *Act* as an “impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities” which Garland-Thomson believes gives rise to the unstated comparison to norms arising from cultural expectations about how one should look and act. While Garland-Thomson concedes that these assumptions are partly founded on physiological facts, the sociopolitical meanings and consequences are culturally determined.

The work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) (1963 – 2002), at the University of Birmingham, United Kingdom, has also been featured in the disability literature (Barnes & Mercer, 2001; Riddell & Watson, 2003). Stuart Hall was the Director of the CCCS during the 1970s, and although he was a Marxist, he incorporated both a Foucauldian and Derridean analysis in his examination of identity as discursive practice:

In common sense language, identification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an

ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation. In contrast with the ‘naturalism’ of this definition, the discursive approach sees identification as construction, a process never completed – ‘always in process’...Like all signifying practices, it is subject to the ‘play’ of *differance*. It obeys the logic of more-than-one (Hall, 1996, pp. 2-3).

The concept of identity is not essentialist but strategic and positional, fragmented and fractured, multiply-constructed across different, but intersecting and antagonistic, discourses (Hall, 1996, pp. 3-4). He argues that, because identities are constructed within discourse, there is a need to understand them as produced within specific historical and institutional sites with specific discursive formations and practices, and with specific enunciative strategies.

Hall (1997) contends that certain representational practices have been used to mark difference, stigmatizing the Other in Western culture. According to Hall stereotyping reduces people to a few, essential characteristics which are seen as fixed by nature. Stereotyping works to divide the normal and acceptable from the abnormal and unacceptable, then excludes everything that does not fit, which is different. Stereotyping tends to occur where there are gross inequalities of power, with power usually directed against a subordinate or excluded group. Hall cites Derrida (1997, as cited in Hall, 1997, p. 258) in examining the power relationship between binary opposites: “...we are not dealing with... peaceful coexistence...but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs...the other has the upper hand”. He also refers to the work of Foucault and his analysis of power/knowledge as a sort of game that classifies people according to a norm to construct the excluded as the Other (Hall, 1997). Last, he observes that Gramsci would have viewed stereotyping as an aspect of the struggle for hegemony: “Hegemony is a form of power based on the leadership by a group in many fields of activity at once, so that

its ascendancy commands widespread content and appears natural and inevitable” (Hall, 1997, p. 259). One of Hall’s strategies for countering stereotyping is concerned with deliberately contesting the dominant definitions of difference by de-familiarizing the strange and making the body its principal site of representational strategy. To that end, the disability arts movement and disability studies have focused on disability arts as a political expression that is used to expose discrimination and prejudice, as well as to generate group consciousness and solidarity (Barnes, 2003b).

Lennard J. Davis (2006) believes that for all the hype of postmodern and deconstructive theory, little or no impression has been made on identity politics. He contends that postmodern deconstructionism targeted the essentialism that tied identity to the body by emphasizing that the body was socially constructed and performative. However, in doing so, postmodernism created other problems in shaping notions of identity, such as “If all identities as socially constructed or performative, is there a core identity?” (Davis, 2006, p. 233). Davis proposes that we reexamine the identity of disability because it may turn out to be the identity that links with other identities, replacing the notion of postmodernism with something Davis refers to as “dismodernism”. He explains that both science and postmodernism have interrogated the grand categories of the self and identity that were established during the Renaissance and Enlightenment. According to Davis, disability and impairment are both unstable categories. He views the body as not so much as a physical thing so much as a series of attitudes towards it (Davis, 2006, p. 237). As for impairment, he argues that it is not a neutral or easily understood term. He questions if impairment is bred into the bone, or actually a creation of medical, technological, and pharmaceutical interests, and he observes that fidgety children were not considered to have impairments until Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) began.

Davis (2006, p. 239) believes that the dismodern era supports the notion that difference is what all of us have in common. He proposes that a new ethics of the body is required, one that is concerned with;

- Care of the body. This type of care involves the many products and technologies made available in consumer society. The official stance is that the contemporary body is incomplete without deodorant, hair gel, lotion, perfumes and so on. The body is also viewed as a module for technological additions; glasses, hearing aids, pacemakers and so on (Davis, 2006, p. 239).
- Care for the body. The health care and dependent care industries, such as hospitals, extended-care facilities, in-home care-givers, pharmacies, clinics and so on, involve huge financial commitments being made to the abnormal body, and the ethics involved in the distribution of resources and the shaping of these industries would be a part of Davis' approach to an ethical society. He observes that these industries are largely controlled and dominated by non-disabled people (Davis, 2006, p. 240).
- Care about the body. Davis believes that this is the area he would most emphasize in developing a dismodernist discourse on the body and uses of the body. He states that care of the body begins with attention paid to human and civil rights, and to the oppression of so-called abnormal bodies, and the treatment of the poor with disabilities (Davis, 2006, p. 240).

Davis explains his point that, with a dismodernist ethic, you realize that caring *about* the body subsumes and analyzes care *of* and care *for* the body (Davis' use of italics). He believes that the latter two produce oppressive subjectification, while the former provides an ethic of liberation. For Davis, the ethics of the body provides special insight into the complex and dead end of

identity politics, which emphasizes exclusivity around a specific identity. He believes that disability studies can provide a critique and a politics to discuss how all groups, based on physical traits, are selected for disablement by a larger system of regulation and signification (Davis, 2006, p. 240).

Rather than the idea of the complete, independent subject, endowed with rights (which are in actuality conferred by privilege), the dismodernist subject sees that metanarratives are only “socially created” and accepts them as that, gaining help and relying on legislation, law, and technology. It acknowledges the social and the technological to arrive at functionality. As the quadriplegic is incomplete without the motorized wheelchair and controls manipulated by the mouth or tongue, so the citizen is incomplete without information technology, protective legislation, and globalized forms of securing order and peace. The fracturing of identities based on somatic markers will eventually be seen as a device to distract us from the unity of new ways of regarding humans and their bodies to further social justice and freedom (Davis, 2006, p. 241).

More recently, Garland-Thomson (2011) has developed a feminist materialist concept of disability, extending consideration of how the particularities of embodiment interact with their environment to include both spatial and temporal aspects. Material feminism is concerned with the deconstruction of the material/discursive dichotomy to retain the importance of the lived experience, corporeal practice, and biological substance of the body, as well as the importance of discourses about the body (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008, p. 3, 6). For Garland-Thomson, the concepts of “fitting/misfitting” denote an encounter in which two things come together in either harmony or disjunction (Garland-Thomson, 2011, p. 592). She believes that the utility of the concept of misfit is that it lodges injustice and discrimination in the materiality of the world,

more than social attitudes or representational practices, while recognizing their mutually constituting entanglement (Garland-Thomson, 2011, p. 593). She believes that misfitting serves to theorize disability as a way of being in an environment, as a material arrangement:

By framing the materialization of identity and subjectivity as perpetual, complex encounters between embodied variations and environments, fitting and misfitting can help to reconceptualize the reigning notion of “oppression,” with its suggestion of individually enforced, hierarchically structured subjugation. Misfit does so by stressing the relational rather than the essential, insisting that reality is a product of contextual relations rather than stable, atomistic essences (Garland-Thomson, 2011, p. 602)

Garland-Thomson believes that fitting/misfitting fuses a materialist with a constructivist theory of identity formation; “That is, identity is at once performative and narrative, emerging as particular material bodies interact in particular social locations and moments” (Garland-Thomson, 2011, p. 596). She observes that one of the fundamental premises of disability politics is that social justice and equal access should be achieved by changing the shape of our world, not changing the shape of our bodies (Garland-Thomson, 2011, p. 597). The concepts of fitting and misfitting would aim to make identities more visible in order to transform their meanings “so that they can provide their bearers with a coherent and positive narrative of human particularity from which to launch subjective and political agency...” (Garland-Thomson, 2011, p. 597). In her conclusion, Garland-Thomson (2011, pp. 603-604) asserts that when we attend to processes of fitting and misfitting, we value disability in its broadest sense as a part of human variation. Disability is viewed as a significant human experience that occurs in every society, every family, and most every life.

Garland-Thomson's concept of feminist materialist disability appears, on the surface, to have ideas in common with DePoy and Gilson's (2011) concept of juncture/disjuncture. Disjuncture is described as a disconnected relationship between two entities, while juncture refers to a relationship of connection and goodness of fit (DePoy & Gilson, 2011, p. 192). "Thus advancing beyond the binary debate about the correctness of disability as either embodied or environmental, disjuncture holds that neither element is solely responsible but rather highlights the relationship between the two as the explanatory locus" (DePoy & Gilson, 2011, p. 192).

This relational gaze furthers the pluralistic opportunity for dialog and cooperative thinking and action among diverse fields. Considering disability as a function of both bodies and of environments, therefore, can bring multiple fields of knowledge to bear on healing disjuncture without dismissing the contribution of either the body or the body to the explanatory repertoire. In addition, the term disjuncture does not mean the atypical body but rather looks to a less than satisfactory relationship between individuals and one or more types of environments as the target of change (DePoy & Gilson, 2011, p. 192).

One major difference between DePoy and Gilson's disjuncture theory, and Garland-Thomson's feminist materialist concept of misfitting, is that the former approach is based on systems theory and social interactionism, while the latter incorporates critical feminist theory. DePoy and Gilson believe that systems theories are diverse, and do not locate disability in either interior or exterior explanations, and provide "the richness of interaction to explanations of disability (DePoy & Gilson, 2011, p. 114). Garland-Thomson's approach of misfitting is based on material feminism which expands the idea of the social construction of reality toward a material-discursive understanding of phenomena and matter (Garland-Thomson, 2011, p. 592).

Garland-Thomson cites the work of Karen Barad, who proposes a posthumanist¹ materialist account of performativity².

On an agential realist³ account, materiality is an active factor in materialization. Nature is neither a passive surface waiting for the mark of culture nor the end product of cultural performances...On an agential realist account, discursive practices are not human-based activities, but rather, specific material (re)configurings of the world through which local determinations of boundaries, properties, and meanings are differentially enacted. And matter is not a fixed essence; rather, matter is substance in its intra-active becoming – not a thing but a doing... (Barad, 2008, pp. 145-146).

For Garland-Thomson, Barad's explanation of "intra-active becoming" supports the notion of "misfitting" as an explanatory concept because "when spatial and temporal contexts shift, so does the fit, and with it its meanings and consequences" (Garland-Thomson, 2011, p. 593). Therefore, while the outcome of DePoy and Gilson's disjuncture/juncture is to heal "ill fit" within the various systems that comprise society, Garland-Thomson comments that fitting only occurs when a generic body enters a generic world (Garland-Thomson, 2011, p. 595). Misfitting, according to Garland-Thomson, emphasizes peculiarity by focusing on specific singularities of

¹ A posthumanist perspective calls into question the taken-for-granted differential categories of "human" and "non-human" by examining the practices through which these differential boundaries are stabilized and destabilized (Barad, 2003, p. 808).

² Performativity is a contestation of the excessive power granted to language to determine what is real (Barad, 2008, p. 121).

³ Barad (2008, p. 129) explains that agential realism is an account of techno-scientific and other practices that are based on feminist, anti-racist, post-structural, queer, Marxist, science studies, and scientific insights.

shape, size and function of the person in question, and then, analyzing how those singularities emerge and gain definition through their unstable disjunctive encounter with an environment.

DePoy and Gilson (2011) believe that the tenets of universal human rights, as stated in the UN General Assembly, Resolution 217 A, based on the equality of all humans without qualification, provide the foundation for a democratic conversation without parsing rights into identity categories and creating special populations (DePoy & Gilson, 2011, p. 205). For DePoy and Gilson the vision of juncture as a legitimate response to “ill fit” should be determined by need, rather than bodies and categorizations. They believe that, by moving from need to response without the middlemen of essentialism and identity politics, will help create contexts which will foster socially just solutions of goodness of fit. Garland-Thomson also believes that human rights can further equality but through the recognition of the universal condition of vulnerability. She observes that the first comprehensive human rights treaty of the twenty-first century, which is the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and its Optional Protocol, were adopted in December 2006 (as cited in Garland-Thomson, 2011, p. 600). Garland-Thomson contends that the treaty conceptualizes embodiment as unstable and disability as contextual. The preamble to the treaty states that; “...disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (United Nations, 2006). For Garland-Thomson, this statement acknowledges how the misfit between “persons with impairments” and an unsustaining environment made of “barriers” materializes our inherent vulnerability (Garland-Thomson, 2011, p. 600). Garland-Thomson is also concerned with need, but suggests that;

Understanding identity as a set of variable fits and misfits, a potentially productive fusion of coincidence and disparity between one's particularity and the material status quo, provides a way to convert being to wanting without neutralizing identity. These instances of resourcefulness arising from misfits are not "wounded attachments" not is this a politics of resentment; this is the productive power of misfitting (Garland-Thomson, 2011, p. 604).

The impaired body/the social body – the insights and limitations of a Foucauldian understanding of disability. Goodley (2012, p. 4) comments that over the last decade it has been possible to recognize the emergence of a critical disability studies less centered on a materialist imperative and more open to a host of theoretical developments. He believes that one of the major contributions of postmodern theory has been to emphasize the impaired body as a social body. The work of Michel Foucault is viewed as especially important to understanding disability because he places the body at the center of his work and he is one of the most significant theorists in examining how the body can be constituted with respect to power rather than in solely biological terms (Reeve, 2002). Foucault (1979, as cited by Hughes & Paterson, 1997, p. 332) takes issue with conventional sociology because the body as a focus has been largely absent, or if present, has taken the form of the natural body, devoid of history and culture. Foucault's (2000a, as cited in Reeve, 2002, p. 503) work also explains how the interplay of different relations of power, together with current economic and socio-cultural processes, is responsible for shaping disability identity.

In his book, *The Birth of the Clinic* (1973, as cited in Barnes, 1997, p. 18), French philosopher, Michael Foucault (1926 – 1984) describes how the nineteenth century became synonymous with the emergence of "disability" in its present form. The diffusion of medical

discourse enabled the medical model of disability to become widespread at all levels of society affecting the manner in which governments and institutions treat disabled people (Chadwick, 1996, as cited in Reeve, 2002, p. 497). Foucault observes that medicine became the task of the nation state when economists and physicians collaborated to ensure that the role of medicine was to provide only transitory assistance to the poor, to return individuals to the labour force (producing wealth) and in return, physicians were given sole control over the health system, thereby introducing the disciplinary power of the physician's gaze in maintaining a productive workforce.

Foucault's work, *Discipline and Punish* (1995) examines how exclusion is a result of a normalizing society and the creation of procedures of normalization (techniques and technologies of power) against which to measure the body. He describes how, during the eighteenth century, institutional settings such as the school, the barracks, the hospital and the workshop began to meticulously regulate and supervise the use of the body in carrying out tasks and functions, making the body both an object and target of power. In his chapter titled "Docile Bodies", Foucault describes how during the eighteenth century the art of the human body was born, which was directed not only at the growth of skills, but was based on notions of obedience and usefulness:

Thus discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, 'docile' bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it disassociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an 'aptitude', a 'capacity', which it seeks to increase; while on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjugation (Foucault, 1995, p. 138).

Feminist, post-structural disability theorist Shelley Tremain has articulated a Foucauldian stance on disability in the book, *Foucault and the Government of Disability* (2005). Tremain states that it is the importance of Foucault's work on bio-power that exposes how the vast apparatus of institutions in society (asylums, income support programs, special education programs and so forth) create, classify, codify, manage and control "social anomalies through which some people have been divided from others and *objectified* as (for instance) physically impaired, insane, handicapped, mentally ill, retarded, and deaf" (Tremain, 2005, pp. 5-6). Tremain also examines Foucault's ideas on bio-power and the subject, which she views as inextricably linked to his notions of government and liberalism. She explains that Foucault's notion of government is a broad one that refers to any form of activity that aims to shape, guide, or affect the conduct of some person or persons;

...when relations of power are construed as government, that is, the direction of conduct, governmental practices should be understood to include not only state-generated prohibitions and punishments, and global networks of social, economic, and political stratification (the deleterious effects of which congeal disproportionately along disabling, racialized, and gendered lines), but also normalizing technologies that facilitate the systematic objectivization of subjects as deaf, criminal, mad, and so on...For despite the fact that power appears to be merely repressive, the most effective exercise of power, according to Foucault, consist in guiding the possibilities of conduct and putting in order the possible outcomes. The concealment of these practices, these *limits* of possible conduct, allows the discursive formation in which they circulate to be naturalized and legitimized (Tremain, 2005, p. 8).

Tremain argues that Foucault's conception of power differs from the analysis of power currently utilized in disability theory, particularly within the social model, because the social model represents power as something possessed by a centralized external authority such as the state, a social group, a class, or institution. For Tremain, a Foucauldian analysis of the social model of disability would explain that governmental practices produce the *illusion* that there is a natural antecedent (impairment), which in turn provides the justification for the regulation of government practices (Tremain, 2005, p. 11). Therefore, there is a causal relationship between impairment and disability that the social model tries to deny.

Hughes (2005) points out that there are limits to the application of Foucault's ideas to theories of impairment and disability. Hughes argues that Foucault's notion of the body as the "docile" target of power underestimates the role of the body as an agent of self and social transformation (Hughes, 2005, p. 80). He examines the Marxist analysis of power that has dominated disability studies in the United Kingdom, and distinguishes a Foucauldian point of view on disability from this dominant materialist perspective:

The practical (political) activity that constitutes and sustains the sensuousness and sensibility of bodily being is strikingly absent from Foucault's work. In Foucault's work, the body is a target (of power), an effect, a text upon which to write. This poststructuralist approach to the body tends to transform it into a supracarnal substance. The body is constituted as passive, without agency, the plaything of discourse and text, and a surface ripe for inscription. One might ask: In a disincarnate world such as this would be, how could politics be done? If, as I would argue that Foucault's position with respect to the body suggests, there is no active, creative subject, then politics is reduced to the policing

of subjects. Politics is something that is done to people, rather than something that people do (Hughes, 2005, p. 86).

Hughes argues that phenomenology offers a conception of the body as active and opens up analysis to the world of everyday life and to the experiences of disabled people: “The failure on the part of nondisabled people to recognize impairment in themselves, and to recognize this way of being-in-the-world as one of the privileges of life itself, is one of the tragedies of modern culture that needs to be bemoaned” (Hughes, 2005, p. 89).

Donna Reeve contends that phenomenological approaches have been central to the development of sociology of the body because the world is perceived through the body, and experience is not simply an “inner” phenomenon but is, at the same time, related to involvement in a world that exists independently of someone’s experience of it (Reeve, 2012, p. 82). Reeve speaks of the “dys-appearing⁴ body” as a body that most people are not aware of unless something happens to the body, such as an injury, pain, which brings awareness into the foreground. Reeve cites the work of Leder (1990) to explain how ideology and power relations can influence how and why bodies dys-appear:

...biological dysfunction may inaugurate social dys-appearance, such as is frequently experienced by the handicapped and the disabled. The body is at once a biological organism, a ground of personal identity, and a social construct. *Disruption and healing*

⁴ Reeve explains that Leder (1990, as cited in Reeve, 2012) uses the hyphenated term “dys-appear” deliberately. The *dys* comes from the Greek for ‘bad’, ‘hard’ or ‘ill’ as in ‘dysfunctional’. In Latin, *dys* can mean instead to pull ‘away, apart, asunder’. It is the Latin use that Leder refers to because at times of illness or injury, or change in the body such as puberty, the body returns to the foreground of awareness at the same time as being *apart* from the self: “...one becomes aware of the recalcitrant body as separate from and opposed to the ‘I’...The self that takes note of the body remains a moment of the organism, an *embodied* self” (Leder, 1990, p. 88, as cited in Reeve, 2012, p. 82).

take place on all these levels, transmitted from one to another by intricate chiasms of exchange (Leder, as cited in Reeve, 2012, p. 83).

Leder's (1990) theme of the dys-appearing body was first discussed by Paterson and Hughes (1999) who believe that a phenomenological approach to the impaired body is necessary to refute the assumption that the body is a passive precultural object. They believe that the social model and social constructionism tells us little about the ways that impairment is produced in the everyday world. The authors comment that, unlike the non-impaired body which is aware of itself only when confronted by pain, the impaired body is "permanently stunned into its own recognition" (Paterson & Hughes, 1999, p. 608). "Otherness (and the oppressions that accompany it) is not an objective property of certain kinds of bodies, but rather the product of social processes that produce a hierarchy of identities" (Paterson & Hughes, 1999, p. 609).

A critical realist conception of the body is proposed by Tobin Siebers, Professor of English at the University of Michigan. Siebers maintains that;

...the next step for disability studies is to develop a theory of complex embodiment that values disability as a form of human variation. The theory of complex embodiment raises awareness of the effects of disabling environments on people's lived experience of the body, but it emphasizes as well that some of the factors affecting disability, such as chronic pain, secondary health effects, and aging, derive from the body (Siebers, 2008, p. 25).

Critical realism acknowledges the subjectivist (and pragmatic) point that epistemology cannot be based on pure scientific method because the methodologies of the sciences are many, and empirical evidence is always available for competing views (Morrow & Brown, 1994, p. 77). English philosopher, Roy Bashkar, has been developing the approach since the 1970s, and its

intent is to provide a philosophical grounding for science as well as to provide an alternative to positivist and interpretive/constructionist approaches (Alvesson, 2002, p. 40). According to Roy Bashkar, critical realism makes distinctions between the world and our experience of it, and between several domains: the *real*, the *actual*, and the *empirical* (Bashkar, as cited in Longhofer & Floersch, 2012, pp. 501-502):

- The *real* is that which exists, be it natural or social, it comprises the intransitive entities that exist independent of observation. Theories and discourses produced as a result of study are transitive, and we use theories and discourses to establish explanatory relationships with intransitive objects;
- The *actual* refers to what happens when the powers and liabilities of objects are activated, and what happens when these powers produce change. Events occur whether they are experienced or not, and what happens in the domain of the actual may go unobserved; and
- The *empirical* is the domain of experience and impression, of fact and data, which are viewed as connected to theory. All social phenomena are observed using selected concepts and theories, because data are always influenced and mediated by the theories of the observer.

According to critical realism, it is the task of science to explore the realm of the real and how it relates to the other two domains (Alvesson, 2002, p. 40). While positivism is interested in predictable patterns, critical realism seeks to identify deeper mechanisms which generate empirical phenomena that positivists seek to measure and explain:

Critical realism examines different mechanisms which have implications in terms of different effects and events, the forces and characteristics that mechanisms produce, and

the intricate connections between different structural levels, that contribute to the complexity of causal forces, and that make possible the treatment of these as single, isolated factors. Causality should not be understood in terms of universal, predictable patterns, but rather as contextual and emergent, in changeable societies (Alvesson, 2002, p. 42).

Siebers refers to the work of critical realist Paula Moya, who contends that sex and race, while not definitive of a person's identity, arise from skin, colour, land, and other physical realities that contribute to political knowledge and consciousness. Moya, Associate Professor in the Department of English at Stanford University, defines identity as the "nonessential and evolving product that emerges from the dialectic between how a subject of consciousness identifies herself and how others identify her" (Moya, 2011, p. 80). Moya believes that there is a reality to the world that exceeds human's mental and discursive constructions of it, and the knowledge that is produced is intimately influenced by how we conceptualize the shared social world and who we understand ourselves to be in that world. She contends that scholarly production is structured by the logic of identity and that realists seek ways to understand and to exploit the knowledge generating potential of identities (Moya, 2011, p. 79). She writes that critical realism is interested in the political and epistemic significance of different kinds of identities in order to investigate 'who we are and from where we speak' as this matters for the kind of knowledge produced. Siebers points out categories such as "blackness" and "femaleness" that have become objects of knowledge, ideological critique, and political interpretation (Siebers, 2008, p. 81). However, he believes that disability does not yet have the advantage of political interpretation because the ideology of ability remains unquestioned. The example he gives is that blindness is often used to define one person's body and defines everything that the body is.

There isn't any term for the prejudicial reduction of the body to its disability, although ableism has been used to name this prejudice. "The number-one objective for disability studies, then, is to make disability an object of general knowledge and thereby to awaken political consciousness to the distasteful prejudice called "ableism" (Siebers, 2008, p. 81).

In her chapter titled "Disability Studies: The Old and the New" (2009) Tanya Titchkosky argues that disability is treated as the condition of having a body that is a problem, stripping disability of any social location or social significance (Titchkosky, 2009, p. 45). Sociological study of disability, has become the study of problem conditions: "those who possess a body in normal working condition notice those who do not possess such a body and what 'naturally' obtrudes are disabled persons' deviation from the normative order of normalcy" (Titchkosky, 2009, p. 47). The "disability knowledge" generated by this approach has served to maintain the status quo "while providing exotic details on disabled peoples' lives" (Titchkosky, 2009, p. 48). For Titchkosky the communication of disability knowledge is steeped in dialogue, born of conversations, rather than simply conveyed within texts "as if no researcher, no teacher, and no student is or will ever become disabled" (Titchkosky, 2009, p. 53). Mainstream sociological approaches may treat and interpret the speech and action of disabled people as a series of signs and symptoms, according to Titchkosky, but disability studies provides disabled people with a way to insert new meanings into the meanings already ascribed to them by normative culture (Titchkosky, 2009, p. 56).

Intersectionality – The ways in which disability is wrapped up in other categories of difference. Disability involves consideration of other categories of difference, experiences of marginality and political activism (Goodley, 2012, p. 6). When disability is thought of as a social relationship rather than as a characteristic of individuals with impairments, this perspective

allows all differentiated bodies to be included in an analysis of the dynamics of exclusion and inclusion Meekosha (2006, p.162). “Thus, if gendered, racialized and disabled bodies are all part of a process of exclusion (where all bodies are patterned by each of these parameters); strategies for inclusion must similarly be integrated” (Meekosha, 2006, pp. 162-163). Carol Thomas believes that intersectionality is an important concept for reminding us that homogenized categories, such as women, gay, or disabled people, must be unpacked and dissembled because they disguise the variations in status and power among and between social groups (Thomas, 2012, p. 223). Rosemarie Garland-Thomson believes it is important to focus on examining the patterns of meaning attributed to bodies rather than on specific forms, functions and behaviors:

Feminist disability studies scrutinizes how people with a wide range of physical, mental, and emotional differences are collectively imagined as defective and excluded from an equal place in the social order. Social categories parallel to “disabled” such as “people of color” or “queer,” also embrace a wide range of varying physical characteristics, identities, and subjective experiences, even while they risk flattening significant differences. Such social – rather than biological – labels accurately capture the single, reductive, exclusionary category that conflates and stigmatizes a range of differences according to a subordinating discourse (Garland-Thomson, 2005, p. 1558).

Intersectionality seeks to explore the convergence and divergence of multiple markers of identity (Goodley, 2012, p. 6). An example of how critical race theory was effectively utilized to explore internalized ableism is found in the work of Fiona A. Kumari Campbell. Campbell comments on how internalized racism occurs through cumulative, residual and reoccurring experiences, rather than through a single event. Similarly, internalized ableism occurs because of two exclusionary strategies: first disabled people are distanced from each other through the

individualization of disability, and second, disabled people emulate ableist norms (Campbell, 2008, p. 155).

Internalized ableism means that to assimilate into the norm the referentially disabled individual is required to embrace, indeed to assume, an ‘identity’ other than one’s own – and this subject is repeatedly reminded of this by epistemological formations and individuals with hegemonic subjectifications of their provisional and (real) identity...disabled people often feel compelled to fabricate ‘who’ they are – to adopt postures and comportments that are additional to self (Campbell, 2008, p. 157).

Courses incorporating the concept of diversity tend to focus on celebrating and empowering underrepresented identities, but the underlying assumption being presented by the courses is that even though people are different, they are all basically the same (Davis, 2011, p. 39). Davis believes that it is difficult for able-bodied people to view disability as a part of the diversity paradigm because it is viewed as being helpless and powerless, and subject to a deeper meaning of difference; which could be thought of as medical difference. Even though the idea of diversity is to reject the idea of “normal” ethnicity, there appears to be no problem in deeming disabled people as abnormal. “And let us remember that students of color are referred to as African-Americans, Asian- Americans, and so on, but on the medical side of campus, students with disabilities may often be referred to as...patients” (Davis, 2011, p. 40).

There is now a developing focus, in Canada and Australia, on the double and interacting discrimination of being an Indigenous person and a person with disabilities (Durst, South & Bluehardt, 2006). Discourse around disability issues needs to be understood in the context of understanding cultural oppression experienced by Indigenous people (Shackel, 2008, p. 25). Shackel believes that a “discourse of colonization” provides a key theoretical framework for

understanding past and contemporary relationships between Indigenous persons with disabilities and “the others”, which can help to dismantle unequal power relationships that serve to prevent the right to self-determination. The analytical framework includes:

- Assessing and analyzing the impact of past and contemporary forms of oppression and marginalization;
- Exploring direct and indirect forms of oppression such as state run boarding schools and systemic poverty;
- Understanding past and current structures of power and control that negatively impact Indigenous people;
- Recognizing the need to value Indigenous perspectives and cultural knowledge; and
- Seeking community-based solutions to social issues impacting Indigenous communities.

Goodley concludes that: “Discrimination is an increasingly complex entanglement of disability, gender, sexuality, nation, ethnicity, age and class” (Goodley, 2012, p. 11).

The Self and the Other. Goodley observes that the dominant ableist self is “ready and willing to bring disabled people back in the norm (re\habilitate, educate) or to banish them (cure, segregate) from its ghostly centre” (Goodley, 2012, p. 10). However, for Goodley, the individual remains a key site of everyday life, oppression and perhaps resistance, for *everyone* (emphasis by Goodley). He also believes that a closer reading of psychological theories and the history of psychology reveals a variety of resources that are of use to disability studies (Goodley, 2011, p. 716).

Individual, medical, bio-psychological, traditional, charity and moral models of disability locate social problems in the heads and bodies – and – psyches of (disabled) people. This leads to the commonly held belief that disabling society is not the problem: the disabled

psyche is. In contrast, the psyche can be reconsidered as a complex tightened knot of the person and the social world, the self and other people, the individual and society. At the heart of this is the internalised experience of disablism: oppression is felt psychically, subjectively, and emotionally but is always socially, cultural, politically and economically produced (Goodley, 2011, p. 716).

The British social model of disability has supported a view of disability as social restriction and disadvantage, while personal experiences which operate at the emotional level have been excluded (Reeve, 2002, p. 495). Reeve examines how Foucauldian technologies of power that regulate the body – gaze and self-surveillance – can illuminate the processes behind psycho-emotional disablism (Reeve, 2002, p. 498). The gaze, as a technology of power, operates such that the object of the gaze becomes known to the viewer, and the observer gains expertise and control over those being gazed at (Reeve, 2002, p. 498).

Having an impairment that is immediately visible presents the observer with privileged information and therefore power about that body. This gaze is influenced by the stereotypes and prejudices about disabled people, and so the power of the gaze is intimately linked and nourished by knowledge from within the social domain...the disciplining power of the gaze can leave disabled people feeling ashamed, vulnerable and invalidated, and contributes to the psycho-emotional dimensions of disability (Reeve, 2002, p. 499).

Self-surveillance is a concept that was developed out of Foucault's description of the Panopticon, an ideal prison where each isolated inmate lived under continual inspection from all-seeing, but anonymous eyes of a guard (Foucault, 1977, as cited in Reeve, 2002, p. 500). The experience of living in permanent visibility led to an inmate internalizing the scrutinizing gaze

and modifying his/her behavior via self-surveillance. One example of how this self-surveillance operates to affect the psycho-emotional well-being of disabled people is when non-disabled people criticize the failure of a person to maintain an adequate level of self-care. Another example of self-surveillance occurs when a disabled individual is asked to “self-assess” their own need for state assistance by critically gazing on his/her own body when making a claim. This form of self-surveillance is constrained by how others view disability (Reeve, 2002, p. 500).

Carol Thomas is credited by Reeve for bringing the concept of psycho-emotional disablism into the discussion of social oppression (Reeve, 2012, p. 79). Thomas explains that her concern with psycho-emotional dimensions of disability is a consequence of her “feminist interest in the experiential, the personal or private, the emotional and the intimate” (Thomas, 2004, p. 41). Thomas acknowledges that the concept of psycho-emotional disablism is now in common usage in disability studies (Thomas, 2007, p. 72). The recognition of psycho-emotional disablism in disability studies has allowed for the reformulation of the UPIAS definition of disability:

Disablism is a form of social oppression involving the social imposition of restrictions of activity on people with impairments and the socially engendered undermining of their psycho-emotional well-being (Thomas, 2007, p. 73).

In her more recent work, Reeve explains that disablism can be experienced as two forms of social oppression: structural disablism and psycho-emotional disablism (Reeve, 2012, p. 79). Psycho-emotional disablism can be delineated into two sources; direct and indirect. Direct psycho-emotional disablism is experienced when a stranger reacts to a disabled person by either saying something inappropriate or avoiding the disabled person altogether (Reeve, 2012, p. 80). Reeve acknowledges that there are few culturally agreed upon “rules of engagement” in social interactions between non-disabled and disabled people. Internalized oppression arises from the

disabled individual's relationship with his/herself in which he/she internalizes prejudices about disability. Indirect psycho-emotional disablism may occur when a disabled individual encounters inaccessible public spaces (Reeve, 2012, p. 82). The cumulative negative impact of these experiences may have a negative impact on the person's self-esteem and self-confidence. Hughes (2012) believes that emotions are bodily forms of knowing, and corporeal moments of sensation. He believes that there are three major emotions that form the emotional infrastructure of ableism; fear, pity, and disgust.

These are the aversive and hierarchizing emotions deployed in the bowels of intolerance to depict enemies, outliers, strangers – the embodied portents of defilement. Such sentiments depict an alterity that is evil, sinister, threatening, contemptible, repulsive, and pitiable. All moral the deficits heaped on top of one another make up what the conceited 'we', most certainly is not. But – and here is the rub – the perfect self is fictive and the empirical self that lives in the real world with its ableist myths and abstraction will always have a small window through which – despite denial and disavowal – s/he will always be able to see, to some extent, a refracted reflection of self in the despised other (Hughes, 2012, p. 76).

At first glance, social work, with its ethical emphasis on social justice and self-determination, appears placed to be a valuable ally to the emancipatory causes of the disabled people's movement. However, the role of social work with disabled people has been diminished in many jurisdictions, compounded by the marginalized place of disability within social work curricula (Stainton, Chenoweth & Bigby, 2010, p. 2). Meekosha and Dowse (2007) state that from their teaching experience in social work education, many undergraduate social work students appear to have accepted the individual, medical model of disability and have assumed a rather

patronizing, if not patriarchal, role in working with disabled people. They believe that social work students need to be exposed to the theoretical developments of the disabled people's movement, as represented in the disability studies literature. However, they assert that attitudinal change is not enough, and that structural change is necessary:

The essence of critical disability studies contains both structural critique and frameworks for emancipatory practice and social change. These new paradigms can provide the foundations to develop education strategies, which help to overcome entrenched stereotypical and demeaning approaches to disabled people (Meekosha & Dowse, 2007, p. 178).

It should be observed here that critical disability studies incorporates many elements of critical social theory, but the main use of the term "CDS" was an attempt to move away from preoccupation with binary understandings such as; social versus medical model, British versus American disability studies, and disability versus impairment (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009, p. 50). However, critical disability studies draws from an eclectic variety of social theory to interrogate discourses and cultural meanings, and the theorization of diversity (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009, p. 56). Margaret Shildrick explains the broad range of ideas that inform her own "post conventional" view of critical disability studies:

Its purpose is both to extend into new territory the existing achievements of more modernist paradigms of disability like the social model, and where necessary productively critique the limitations of such models. While CDS should never lose sight of its own history, it must consciously engage with all the theoretical resources available to it, whether from feminism, postmodernism, queer theory, critical race theory or long-

established perspectives like the phenomenology of the body and psychoanalysis (Shildrick, 2012, p. 32).

Shildrick's concept of critical disability studies fits with the idea of disability studies as an "interdisciplinary field". In his book, *Theory Matters* (2003), literary theorist Dr. Vincent B. Leitch argues that disability studies, along with media studies, indigenous studies, gender studies, and queer studies (to name only a few of the sub-fields mentioned in the book) are closely associated with cultural studies. He believes that cultural studies is the postmodern discipline "par excellence" insofar as each subfield is interdisciplinary and contributes to the postmodern disorganization of the modern bureaucratic, departmentalized university (Leitch, 2003, P. ix). The major implication of interdisciplinarity, according to Leitch, is that projects of cultural critique, which are rooted in various critical traditions, invariably promote egalitarian ideas which often are at odds with mainstream values and practices. Leitch asserts that the role of interdisciplinary fields, such as disability studies, is not to unify or totalize, but to respect differences (Leitch, 2003, p. 170). He believes that;

...innumerable local subversions, creative misuses, and interdisciplinary moves continuously loosen the rigidities and holds of the modern disciplinary system. And too, interdisciplinary projects – whether inside, between, or among disciplines – frequently increase permeabilities and deterritorialize fixed cognitive maps (Leitch, 2003, p. 171).

Therefore, it is important to remember that characterizing a particular BSW program as being more consistent with one particular perspective of disability over another is not as important as examining how various theories and models of disability, particularly critical disability perspectives, are being discussed, studied and integrated into social work practice.

Conventional Social Work Theory and Practice Related to Disability

Social work practice, which encompasses the pursuit of rights and social justice, is being resisted by developments which increasingly exclude ethical and political issues in favour of the technical and professional (Simpson, 1995, as cited in Meekosha & Dowse, 2007, p. 174). In the disability services sector social workers struggle to maintain professionalism in a field that is predominantly technical and output driven. Within this managerial system, social workers end up policing disabled people on behalf of the state and society (Meekosha & Dowse, 2007). The use of psychological and physiological explanations of disability has been reinforced by the use of technology, a focus on quantifiable outcomes and the behaviorist nature of evidence-based practice in social work (Oliver & Sapey, 2006; Oliver, Sapey & Thomas, 2012).

Neoliberalism and social work practice. Neoliberalism is described as “an approach to social, economic, and political life that discourages collective or government services, instead encouraging reliance on the private market and individual skill to meet social needs” (Baines, 2011, p. 30). In the 1980s Neo-Marxist theories of imperialism drew attention to the domination of a small group of industrialized countries over the third world (Sutcliff, 1999, as cited in Pease, 2010, p. 39). The term “imperialism” was seen as too ideological and so-called objective terms such as “transnational capital” and “international capital” were often substituted (Amin, 1989, as cited in Pease, 2010, p. 39). Pease explains that a more politicized term, “neoliberalism”, was used by commentators to describe policies that increase the power of wealthy countries over the rest of the world. Although globalization is viewed by some as a positive development while others view it as negative, Mullaly (2007) believes that it is the dominant ideology underpinning globalization that determines the forms and processes of globalization. The dominant view of globalization has been led by the United States and is based on an ideology supporting free

markets, individualism, a minimal welfare state, and meeting corporate interests (Mullaly, 2007, p. 6). There are three key elements to neo-liberal ideology: methodological individualism or the notion that society is reducible to individuals pursuing their own self-interests; rationality, in the sense that individuals normally act rationally in pursuit of their own self-interest; and market supremacy, which is the belief that everyone benefits from market society, in that while some people will be wealthier than others, wealth will also trickle down to the poorer sections of the community (Pratt, 2005, as cited in Ferguson, 2008, p. 26).

Stepney (2009) writes that, in Britain, a “modernizing discourse” within social work has given greater emphasis to opportunity, inclusion, and choice, but within parameters of cost containment and effectiveness (Stepney, 2009, p. 11). This dilemma has created a policy-to-practice paradox, where inclusion has become subordinate to the management of highly differentiated populations (Clarke, 2001, as cited in Stepney, 2009, p. 11). According to Meekosha and Dowse, in Australia welfare reform under a neo-liberal market model, stresses two moral parameters: 1) there is a mutual obligation in which “rights” are dependent on carrying out “responsibilities”; and 2) the market is viewed as the most appropriate environment for providing resources to fulfill life needs.

The consequence is the ‘mutual obligation strategy’ which brings with it major reductions in entitlements to those considered disabled and the shifting of significant numbers of disabled people into the onerous and punitive environment of compulsory job seeking. For social workers this creates additional professional challenges, as disability becomes a much more contested and, paradoxically, a ‘valuable’ category of entitlement (Meekosha & Dowse, 2007, p. 170)

Neoliberalism has also impacted social work education because practice in the field is constrained by neoliberal policies in nearly all areas of Australian social life (Soldatic & Meekosha, 2012, p. 247). The social work field is now too often bogged down with psychologizing and pathologizing clients' behavior rather than situating the people social workers work with within the broad structural constraints (Herz & Johansson, 2011, as cited in Soldatic & Meekosha, 2012, p. 247).

Managerialism is a form of workplace restructuring in which social work is viewed as requiring pro-market, business-like management solutions, rather than non-market initiatives stressing social connections, equality, and public service ethos (see McDonald, 2006; Clarke & Newman, 1997; Fabricant & Burghardt, 1992, as cited in Baines, 2011, p. 32). Mullaly (2007, p. 21) identifies several ways this philosophy has impacted social work:

- People with no background in social work assume managerial positions in and responsibilities for social service organizations;
- Managers with social work backgrounds identify themselves more as professional managers and de-emphasize social work values such as human well-being, equity, and human rights in favour of managerial values of efficiency, effectiveness, and cost containment;
- Many social work positions are now defined as “case managers” with top-down control and authority replacing notions of self-determination, empowerment, and democracy;
- There has been a loss of autonomy with respect to creative, innovative, and empowering social work practice, especially in government bureaucracies;

- There is a belief that social problems can be solved by technical means rather than problems being seen as moral, political, and structural problems that are not amenable to managerial solutions.

In addition to managerialism, standardized work practices and skills are promoted within performance management as “best practices” or “competencies” which break social work behaviors and tasks down to their smallest feature in order to promote economical and cost effective social work practices (Baines, 2011, p. 33). In such a competency-based job market there would be no need for extended professional education for social work students as they would not have to learn about the social and political context of their work, critical and social analysis, social and cultural diversity, or innovative alternatives (Mullaly, 2007, p. 22).

There have been several challenges to neo-liberalism which have emerged in recent years. Ferguson (2008, p. 121) identifies the anti-capitalist (global justice) movement which emerged out of the demonstrations against the proceedings of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle in 1999 as being a catalyst for a global movement against war and occupation in Iraq. Social work has been able to renew itself through contact with, and involvement in, the great social movements of the day, such as the women’s movement, the civil rights movement, and trade union struggles of the late 1960s and early 1970s (Thompson, 2002, as cited in Ferguson, 2008, p. 127). Reclaiming social work, according to Ferguson (2008) involves;

- reclaiming the ethical by resisting and rejecting technical, “evidence-based” models of social work practice that undermine social work’s core value;
- reclaiming relationship and processes that are person-centered, collaborative, client-driven, are based on mutual understanding and agreement, and reflect empathy, warmth and therapeutic genuineness;

- reclaiming the social by including community development, social networking and social support approaches in addition to or in place of individual work;
- reclaiming the political with a rigorous critical analysis of social work's role within the state and society, examining the politics of social work; and
- reclaiming the structural understanding of society in the form of a critical sociology to grasp the totality of service users' lives.

Conventional social work approaches. Since the 1980s the ecological or ecosystems paradigm has shaped social work thought and practice in the United States (Finn & Jacobson, 2003, pp. 59-60) and Canada (Mullaly, 2007, pp. 48-49). The ecological approach borrows from the science of human ecology and relates to the sensitive balance between humans and their environments and the ways in which interactions can be enhanced. Germain and Gitterman (1996) view the individual and his or her community as simultaneously affecting and being affected by the other and understood this to be a reciprocal relationship. Germain and Gitterman's view of the adaptive balance between organisms and the environment is referred to as "goodness of fit". The strategy of social work intervention within this perspective involves identifying sources of discord in the ecosystem as well as sources of strength that can be used to restore harmony and goodness of fit. The conceptual framework provided by the ecological perspective, together with ideas from a strengths perspective and empowerment theory, informs the practice of social workers who work within an assimilationist perspective of disability. The ecological perspective helps social workers to assess multiple interrelated and complex issues related to 'person in environment'. Although a key principle of empowerment is that the social worker must understand the individual in the context of his or her environment, the emphasis is on helping the individual to adapt and cope (Minou Michilin & Juarez-Marazzo, 2001) and the

interventions are designed to help the oppressed person to “fit” better into the dominant culture (Fong & Furuto, 2001). The assistance that social work practitioners provide to clients to increase their personal, interpersonal or political power, along with a focus on developing human strengths, is viewed as a significant strategy for helping people to reclaim greater control over their lives (Germain & Gitterman, 1996, pp. 31-32; Rothman, 2003, p. 193).

Dr. Dennis Saleebey, Emeritus Professor of Social Welfare at the School of Social Welfare at the University of Kansas, is widely acknowledged within social work literature as the leading proponent of the strengths perspective in social work practice. According to Saleebey (1996) the strengths perspective capitalizes on people’s individual capacities, abilities and power to develop their own problem-solving skills and to learn how to deal with stress and adversity. A strengths-based approach is necessary to counter Western culture’s continued obsession with psychopathology, victimization, and abnormality, as well as the number of businesses profiting from the emotional, physical and behavioral maladies of others (Saleebey, 2002, p. 2). Saleebey argues that a strengths-based perspective acknowledges that an individual is capable of overcoming adversity. Resilience can be derived from adversity through a process of continual growth, articulation of capacities, knowledge and insights (Saleebey, 2002, p. 10). Healing can occur when a beneficent relationship is developed between the individual and the larger social and physical environment (Saleebey, 2002, p. 11). This goal of a beneficent relationship is compatible with the ecosystems approach: “Rather than challenging the tenets of the ecological model, the strengths perspective offers an enhanced lens through which the person-environment nexus can be viewed” (Finn & Jacobson, 2003, p. 62).

Graham, Swift and Delaney (2003) observe that ecological perspectives fail to conceptualize power and power relations adequately. The ecological approach aims to find the best fit between

the person and the social system, but does not consider that the problem may lie with the actual system. The ecological approach is based on liberal assumptions of the person as an autonomous individual and assumes a fundamental distinction between the person and society rather than acknowledging the dialectical, mutually constituting relationship between individuals and society (Rossiter, 1996, as cited in Finn & Jacobson, 2003, p. 60). Mullaly (2010) points out that general systems theory and the ecological approach are not even theories because they are descriptive only and offer no explanatory or predictive capacities; “Nor do they accommodate or explain such social work concerns as conflict within the system, power relations or differentials within the system, cultural variables, or larger oppressive social structures” (Mullaly, 2010, pp. 20-21). As Finn and Jacobson (2003) conclude, systems and ecosystems perspectives are premised on the positivist view of the social world as a single, objective, ultimately knowable reality: “They offer no epistemological base through which to consider multiple constructions of social reality and the power of thought, language, and structured social interactions that shape those constructions” (Finn & Jacobson, 2003, pp. 60-61).

A current example of how contemporary social work thought has utilized the ecosystems approach to address disability is found in the work of DePoy and Gilson (2011). The authors refer to the work of Bronfenbrenner (2005) to explain how humans develop within the contexts of four exterior systems ranging across micro (family, home, school, work), meso (community, neighbourhood), exo (mother’s workplace, sister’s school) and macro (an abstract system that guides and shapes systems). The micro system has been expanded to include the individual, language and symbols to which an individual attributes meaning creating a “biopsychsocial” human (DePoy & Gilson, 2011, p. 107). The authors explain that these nested systems are relevant for viewing disability as a set of interactive factors. “While not seeking to elucidate the

direct cause of disability, this microsystem lens explains disability from a logical ecological perspective or one which indicts the reciprocal influence of body and its surrounding, as disabling” (Albrecht, Seelman & Bury, 2001, as cited in DePoy & Gilson, 2011, p.107). The authors explain that a systems approach to understanding disability does not locate disability as interior or exterior explanations, as do the medical model (interior) and the social model (exterior). In applying systems analysis to policy, the authors explain that, in classical macrosystems theory, rational policy and analysis are an outgrowth of careful negotiation of social problems, needs, and resources, “with the expectation that policies will ultimately produce the desired outcome for the people who are targeted as the recipients of policy rulings and benefits” (DePoy & Gilson, 2011, p. 112). The authors view contemporary disability theories as being mathematically complex, requiring computer-generated models for explanation. Therefore, disability is explained as occurring through the complex interplay of diverse values, ethics, resources, and purposes that are dynamic and subject to contextual influences that may not be able to be identified (DePoy & Gilson, 2011, p. 112).

In the book *Studying Disability: Multiple Theories and Responses* (2011), DePoy and Gilson argue that current global human rights policy is plagued by categorical frameworks. The authors support a vision of an ideal community in which;

...legitimate response to *ill fit* is determined by need rather than bodies and backgrounds patina categories. Moving from need to response, without the middlemen of essentialism and identity politics, creates contexts in which action nails its human rights target by implementing socially just solutions of goodness of fit (DePoy & Gilson, 2011, p. 211).

The approach being proposed by DePoy and Gilson is indicative of assimilationist thinking in relation to disability. In their chapter on “Categorical Explanations” the authors explore various

categorical theories in relation to their portrayal of human diversity. They contend that diversity has become a term that is applied to those who are not typical, a euphemism for *not normal* (DePoy & Gilson, 2011, p. 93). DePoy and Gilson believe that diversity theory has reflected segregated approaches to the promotion of civil rights for predefined groups, such as disabled people, on the basis of what they refer to as “diversity patina”, or observable differences. Such approaches have limitations because they view diversity as a characteristic of *otherness*, setting the foundation for separation and scrutiny by those in a position to marginalize (Heard 1997; Ishay, 2008, as cited in DePoy & Gilson, 2011, p. 93). DePoy and Gilson argue that explaining diversity as difference only serves to ascribe diversity to those who lie outside the extremes of the normal curve. They suggest that “flattening the curve” would be a more socially just response:

What we mean by flattening the curve is to use research and response strategies that expand the range of normal so that the greatest number of groups and individuals fit within the typical range to which responses are targeted (DePoy & Gilson, 2011, p. 94).

While assimilation has been promoted as one way to deal with group-based oppression, ignoring group differences may lead to oppressive consequences (Young, 1990, as cited in Mullaly, 2010, pp. 128-129). First, it is the privileged group that sets the standards by which all will be measured. The use of the bell curve and the suggestion that the curve can be “flattened” to include more individuals suggests an imperative placed on disabled people to conform under the rubric of normality (Davis, 2002, p. 101). Second, the notion of a universal humanity devoid of difference allows dominant groups to overlook their own specificity. The notion of an individual equal to other individuals contains an inherent contradiction, according to Lennard

Davis (2002). He asks how it is that someone can be an individual and yet be the same as other individuals.

In order to postulate a government, at least theoretically, in which citizens are individuals equal to other individuals, you need a notion of the average citizen... The problem of how it is possible to be an individual equal to other individuals and the further problem of how to represent such individuals are solved through the concept of the norm and the bell curve... Thus, the concept of the norm permits the idea of individual variation while enforcing a homogeneous standard or average (Davis, 2002, pp. 102-103).

Third, to participate in the assimilationist project involves accepting an identity other than one's own and being reminded by others and by oneself of one's true, but now submerged, identity.

Davis points out that the person with disabilities is only one casualty of the assumption of normalcy, because under normalcy no one is or can be normal. "All have to work hard to make it seem that they conform, and so the person with disabilities is singled out as a dramatic case of not belonging" (Davis, 2002, p. 105). Davis believes that this identification makes it easier for the rest to think they fit the normal paradigm.

Critical theory: The theoretical framework informing anti-oppressive social work practice. Rather than the plurality of theoretical perspectives, models and explanations advocated within conventional social work literature, Mullaly believes that there are really only three major competing explanations for social problems; the personal deficiency explanation, the liberal humanist explanation, and social conflict explanations (Mullaly, 2010, p. 7). A review of the three competing explanations for social problems indicates that the personal deficiency explanation corresponds with the individual pathology view in Rioux's (1997) schema, and would include the medical model. The liberal humanist explanation appears consistent with

Rioux's social pathology schema because the focus is on making subsystems (family, schools, the built environment) more accommodating, and on assisting the individual to become more adaptive to these subsystems. Rioux's framework for understanding disability is based on the order, or functionalist perspective of society, emphasizing equilibrium, balance, continuity and control (Sears & Cairns, 2010). "Order theories imply consensual and adjustment definitions of social health and pathology" (Horton, 1966, p. 704).

Mullaly (2002, 2007, 2010) explains that the conflict perspective is strongly identified with critical theory which attributes social problems to social structures, processes and practices that favour certain groups in society and oppress others along the lines of class, race, gender, age, ability and so on. Conflict theorists view society as comprised of inherently opposing groups with respect to interests, values and expectations. Conflict theorists also believe that social problems arise from exploitive and alienating practices of dominant groups rather than originating in the individual, family or subculture. Social workers with a critical theory perspective point out that, in spite of a social welfare state and social work interventions that have existed for almost a century, social problems have not decreased, but actually appear to be worsening (Mullaly, 2007). Mullaly explains that critical social theory is actually a theory cluster, with some critical theories focusing on a single form of oppression (feminism, critical race theory, queer theory), while others (cultural studies theorists, structural social work theorists) adopt an umbrella approach to include all sources and forms of oppression (Mullaly, 2010, pp. 18-19). Mullaly (2007) has developed a schema for delineating conventional social work approaches from more progressive approaches (see Table 3). Based on Mullaly's typology of social work theories associated with the order and conflict perspectives, as well as Rioux's (1997) framework of approaches to disability, a table of theoretical social work practice

approaches to disability can be similarly arranged from the disability studies literature (see Table 4).

The rationale for choosing an order/conflict classification scheme is given by Mullaly (2007, p. 227) as follows:

1. The framework is used by many social science writers when discussing social theory;
2. It accommodates the notion of paradigm which is at the core of social science; and
3. It makes connections among ideological preferences, mid-range social work theories, and actual social work practice.

Understanding the differences between the order and conflict perspectives of social theory is particularly important for social work because it helps to delineate conventional social work theories and approaches from more progressive theories and approaches. Mullaly explains that the conflict perspective of social problems does not preclude social intervention at the individual, family and subcultural levels, but the difference between the mainstream and conflict social services work is that, instead of dealing with each of these levels separately, the conflict social worker would always search for a connection between people's private troubles and the probable structural source of these troubles (Mullaly, 2010, p. 15). Lundy (2012) utilizes the Order (Regulations/Accommodation) and Conflict (Radical Change/Transformation) framework to situate various social work approaches along a continuum according to the degree to which they support radical change or regulation of society. It does not matter whether or not a theory fits into either the conflict or order model, but the degree to which it adheres to the assumptions of either (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, as cited in Lundy, 2012, p. 85).

Table 3

Selected Conventional and Progressive Social Work Perspectives/Approaches

Conventional (consensus-based)		Progressive (conflict/change-based)
<i>personal change</i>	<i>person-in-environment</i> (personal change and/or limited social change)	<i>fundamental social change/transformation</i>
-psychodynamic	-general systems theory	-feminist social work
-behavioral	-ecosystems(ecological)	-Marxist
-client-centered	-life model	-radical
-psychosocial	-problem-solving	-structural
-clinical	-strengths perspective	-anti-racist
-family therapies		-anti-oppressive
-casework		-critical postmodern
		-post-colonial
		-indigenous (decolonialization)
		-narrative therapy
		-just therapy

Note. Reprinted from *The New Structural Social Work* (p. 48), by Bob Mullaly, 2007, Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press. Copyright ©Oxford University Press Canada 2007. Reprinted with permission.

Table 4

Selected Progressive Social Work Approaches to Disability

Consensus-based (Order)		Change-based (Conflict)
Individual pathology	Social Pathology	Critical Disability Perspectives
<i>personal change</i>	<i>person-in-environment</i>	<i>fundamental social change</i>
-eugenics	-cultural diversity(minority model)	-social model (Marxist)
-medical model	-independent living model	-anti-oppressive
-rehabilitation	-universal design	-critical postmodern
-longitudinal approaches	-social role valorization	-anti-ableist
	- normative model	-feminist
		-disability arts (critical)
		-deconstructionist
		- critical cultural
		- de-colonizing
		- Indigenous

The term “critical theory” has its origins in the work of a group of German scholars, Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse (collectively referred to as the Frankfurt School) in the 1920s, and they used the term *Kritische Theorie* (German) to designate a specific approach to interpreting Marxist theory (Morrow & Brown, 1994, p. 6). Critical theory has evolved over the years to become an umbrella term for a number of social theories concerned with particular issues of power and justice, and the way that the economy, matters of race, class and gender, ideologies, discourses, education, religion, and other social institutions, and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system (Kincheloe & McClaren, 2011, p. 288). Kincheloe and McClaren (2011) have identified ten elements comprising their version of a “reconceptualized critical theory”, based on their 20 years of studying critical theory and conducting critical research:

1. Critical theory analyzes competing power interests between groups and individuals within society – identifying who wins and who loses in specific situations. “Privileged groups, criticalists argue, often have an interest in supporting the status quo to protect their advantages; the dynamics often become a central focus of critical research” (Kincheloe & McClaren, 2011, p. 288);
2. Critical research attempts to expose the forces that prevent individuals and groups from shaping the decisions that crucially affect their lives;
3. Critical theorists understand that there are multiple forms of power including racial, gender, and sexual axes of domination. Although a reconceptualized critical theory rejects the economic determinism of Marxism, it acknowledges that economic factors can never be separated from other axes of oppression;

4. Critical theorists view instrumental/technological rationality as one of the most oppressive features of modern society. Instrumental/technical rationality separates fact from value, losing an understanding of the value choices involved in the production of so-called facts;
5. Critical theorists incorporate a post-structural psychoanalysis to discern the unconscious processes that create resistance to progressive change and induce self-destructive behavior. Critical researchers examine the interplay between various axes of power, identity, libido, rationality and emotion;
6. Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony is central to critical analysis. "Gramsci understood that dominant power in the 20th century is not always exercised simply by physical force but also through social psychological attempts to win people's consent to domination through cultural institutions such as the media, the schools, the family, and the church" (Kincheloe & McClaren, 2011, p. 290). However, hegemony is never completely established and it is always contested by various groups with different agendas;
7. Critical theorists understand that cultural hegemony cannot be separated from ideology. Simplistic explanations of domination that utilize terms such as propaganda to describe how media, political, educational, and other sociocultural productions manipulate citizens to adopt oppressive meanings. "A reconceptualized critical research endorses a much more subtle, ambiguous, and situationally specific form of domination that refuses the propaganda model's assumption that people are passive, easily manipulated victims" (Kincheloe & McClaren, 2011, p. 291).

8. Language is viewed as an unstable social practice whose meaning shifts, depending upon the context in which it is used. Linguistic descriptions are not simply about the world but serve to construct it. Discursive power validates particular research strategies, narrative formats, and modes of representation. Power discourses undermine the multiple meanings of language, establishing one correct reading that implants a particular hegemonic/ideological message.
9. Culture has taken on importance in the effort to understand power and domination. Critical researchers believe that culture is a domain of struggle where the production and transmission of knowledge is contested. Counter-hegemonic research involves linking the production of representations, images, and signs of hyper reality⁵ to power.
10. Critical theorists utilize the concept of cultural pedagogy to refer to the ways that cultural agents produce particular hegemonic ways of seeing. The new cultural educators are electronically wired and possess the financial resources to use mass media.

Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2009) state that, while there has always been an influence from critical theory in disability studies, it has often been “assumed” because of its critique of the status quo. They identify several important areas of contribution from critical theory:

1. The social model was directly based on Marxism, examining the interrelations between the capitalist system of production, class and disability, and an emancipatory perspective within disability studies. Criticism from feminists, cultural studies scholars, and

⁵ Hyper reality is a term utilized by the French sociologist and cultural theorist, Jean Baudrillard, to suggest that reality is increasingly simulated for people, constructed by powerful media and other cultural sources (Agger, 1991, p. 118).

postmodernists have provided a more complex understanding of disability oppression that still employs many of the key ideas first identified in the social model.

2. The influence of postmodernism has enabled a more self-conscious focus on critical theorizing in disability studies, one that is based on diversity and is psychological, cultural, discursive and carnal.
3. Critical disability studies provides a critique of normalizing and quality of life paradigms that have co-opted the language of disability studies to support more diagnostic and individual perspectives.
4. Critical race theory, critical legal theory and critical queer theory have provided CDS with important theoretical, conceptual, and methodological examples to follow. For example, critical legal theory drew on the Frankfurt School and post-structuralism in its critique of dominant ideologies in political studies.

Meekosha and Shuttleworth contend that, by making strategies of critique applied to disability studies explicit, CDS can contribute to important conceptual and empirical scholarship to critical theory development:

How societies divide ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ bodies is central to the production and sustenance of what it means to be human in society. It defines access to nations and communities. It determines choice and participation in civic life. It determines what constitutes ‘rational’ men and women and who should have the right to be part of society and who should not (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009, p. 65).

It is evident from a review of the disability studies literature that any anti-oppressive social work practice approach addressing disability must be complementary to, and supportive of, the theoretical insights advanced within current critical disability studies scholarship (Hiranandani,

2005a; Meekosha & Dowse, 2007; Roulstone, 2012; Soldatic & Meekosha; 2012). As a starting point, social work must acknowledge the influence and important theoretical heritage of the social model of disability which drew on neo-Marxist and Gramscian analyses to reveal the structural foundations of oppression faced by disabled people (Oliver, 2009). Social work theory and practice must also be able to incorporate and engage with the broad scope of various theoretical critiques of the social and individual models of disability that have emerged from feminism, postmodernism, post-structuralism and post-colonialism, to name but a few.

Anti-oppressive social work and structural social work. Anti-oppressive social work practice is innovative, evolving, and contentious (Hick, 2002). Anti-oppressive theory and practice frameworks share values of equity, inclusion, empowerment, and community (Campbell, 2003, p. 122). Anti-oppressive social work practice does not lend itself to a how-to-do-it procedural manual because social problems, social inequality and oppression are highly complex phenomena (Mullaly, 2010, p. 220). However, Mullaly acknowledges that the anti-oppressive social work practice literature is substantial and growing exponentially. In 2002, the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work held their annual conference in which the theme was “Anti-Oppressive Practice and Global Transformation: Challenges for Social Work and Social Welfare”. A Special Edition of the online journal, *Critical Social Work*, presented a collection of papers from the conference exploring how conceptual ideas of anti-oppressive practice contribute to social work practice at the individual, community and societal levels (Hick, 2002). Three recent social work texts addressing oppression and anti-oppressive social work practice, based on critical social theory perspectives, will be discussed in relation to the contribution that each makes in understanding social work practice addressing disablism/ableism.

In his book, *Challenging Oppression and Confronting Privilege* (2010), social work educator and activist, Bob Mullaly describes and discusses the major concepts associated with his oppression/anti-oppression framework. He explains that there is no dominant theory of oppression or dominant approach to anti-oppression (Mullaly, 2010, p. 3). He contends that the unfocused analysis of oppression within social work has resulted in three broad social work practice approaches to address oppression:

1. Helping oppressed persons to cope with their oppression;
2. Attempting to modify/reform the system so that oppressed people can better fit into it;
and
3. Contributing to the total transformation of society.

According to Mullaly, the three approaches are not mutually exclusive, with most social workers adopting the first and/or second approach, while a minority has adopted the third approach. In his text, Mullaly adopts a critical social theory perspective in his treatment of oppression, and he acknowledges the suggestion of Macey and Moxon (1996, as cited in Mullaly, 2010, p. 3) who call for theoretical and analytical rigour in developing anti-oppressive social work practice. Mullaly emphasizes the need for clear theoretical frameworks of explanation in which to locate good social work practice (Mullaly, 2010, p. 32). The particular theoretical framework that Mullaly proposes for challenging oppression is one that is informed by the insights of postmodernism, post-structuralism, feminism, post-colonialism, and cultural studies. Mullaly also includes a chapter dedicated to the exploration of the nature and dynamics of privilege in maintaining systems of domination.

In her edited book on anti-oppressive social work practice, *Doing Anti-Oppressive Practice: Social Justice Social Work* (2011), social work educator and feminist theorist, Donna Baines

describes anti-oppressive (AOP) social work as a set of politicized practices that continually evolve to analyze and address constantly changing social conditions and challenges. She explains that, as part of larger movements for social change, AOP is constantly refining its theory and practice to address new tensions and social problems as well as underlying structural factors (Baines, 2011, p. 4). For Baines, anti-oppressive social work practice is not limited to critical theory, although it does draw on a number of social work theories and approaches found under the critical social theory umbrella. Rather than a single approach, AOP is an umbrella term for a number of social justice-oriented practice approaches to social work, including feminist, Marxist, postmodern, Indigenous, post-structuralist, critical constructivist, anti-colonial, and anti-racist. “These approaches draw on social activism and collective organizing as well as a sense that social services can and should be provided in ways that integrate liberatory understandings of social problems and human behaviour” (Baines, 2011, p. 4). Baines comments that like social problems, AOP is a messy, uneven process that requires ongoing critical reflection, debate, and refinement (Baines, 2011, p. 23).

In his book, *Undoing Privilege: Unearned Advantage in a Divided World* (2010), social work educator Bob Pease explains that his book is not written specifically for social work, although he draws on the social work literature to illuminate aspects of privilege and oppression. His target audience is a broad one, including: students of gender, race, sexuality, and development studies; students of critical psychology; and social activists and practitioners in the human services, community development, social movements and human rights (Pease, 2010, p. xi). Rather than focus on theories of social dominance, which emphasize the importance of locating inequality within the context of institutional and structural arrangements, Pease explores the responsibility of privileged groups for maintaining these social arrangements (Pease, 2010, pp. 3-4). He

acknowledges that there is no shortage of strategies for challenging oppression and cites the work of Mullaly (2002, as cited in Pease, 2010, p. 169) in relation to anti-oppressive practice strategies at the personal, cultural, and structural levels of society. Pease differentiates his approach from many other anti-oppressive practice strategies by stating that oppression and privilege must be addressed by both marginalized and privileged groups. “This means that if the eradication of oppression requires us to transform material conditions, demystify dominant culture, and empower those who are oppressed, then complementary strategies need to be developed to address the reproduction of privilege by those in dominant groups” (Pease, 2010, pp. 169-170).

Only two of the three anti-oppressive frameworks presented above incorporate a discussion of disablism/ableism as sources of oppression and privilege – the frameworks of Mullaly (2010) and Pease (2010). Although Baines does not address anti-oppressive social work practice principles in relation to disability in a direct way, she does include a chapter on anti-oppression community-organizing related to disability activism in Lebanon, contributed by Samantha Webhi. In her chapter, Webhi (2011) argues that the key to applying an anti-oppressive framework to community organizing is related to four interconnected principles; being reflexive about positionality, working with (and not for) a community, recognizing power dynamics, and linking to other struggles (Webhi, 2011, p. 137). In relation to being reflexive, Webhi comments that it was important for her to explore her own status as an able-bodied person in a grassroots organization created and run by people with disabilities, and to realize that this status is fluid. Webhi states that, working with and not for disabled people, shifts conventional perception of disabled people as service recipients towards a perception of disabled people as resourceful allies. An understanding of the power dynamics of community organizing with disabled people

requires an appreciation of the disability community as heterogeneous, and the fact that not all disabled people are politicized by virtue of having a disability (Webhi, 2011, pp. 142-143). The intersectionality of disability also provides an important arena for understanding that all forms of oppression are interconnected, and that alliances with other activist organizations provide an opportunity to make links between disability issues and broader social concerns (Webhi, 2011, p. 144).

Baines makes it clear that the aim of AOP is to develop politicized and socially just social work practices that can be utilized, with adaptation, across a variety of frontline practice contexts and environments. Yet, there is an implicit assumption that social workers have an understanding of the various theoretical perspectives which comprise AOP. In their text book on social work with disabled people, Oliver, Sapey and Thomas suggest that theory should inform practice and that the lack of a coherent “paradigm” for addressing disability has resulted in theory and practice developing separately. “While there is a claim that practice leads to theory there is little, if any, recognition that practice has been based on the underlying assumptions and perspectives of the individual model of disability (Oliver, Sapey & Thomas, 2012, p. 21).

The seminal work of Marie Macey and Eileen Moxon (1996) emphasizes the importance of analyzing oppressive relations within broader sociological theory which takes into account the interplay of political, economic, ideological and historical forces (Macey & Moxon, 1996, p. 301). The oppression/privilege frameworks of Mullaly (2010) and Pease (2010) both provide comprehensive theoretical and conceptual foundations in support of their respective perspectives, including a focus on disablism and ableism. There is also a social work practice approach that has oppression as its focus - structural social work.

Baines describes the roots of anti-oppressive social work practice as having their beginnings in the late 1880s when social workers participated in and led social justice-directed organizations such as the Rank and File Movement, the Settlement House Movement, and the Canadian League for Social Reconstruction (see Hick, 2002; Withorn, 1984; Reynolds, 1963, 1946, as cited in Baines, 2011, p. 8). Baines explains that academic work in the early 1970s and 1980s was generally rooted in Marxist models of class struggle (see Bailey & Brake, 1975, 1980; Corrigan & Leonard, 1978; Galper, 1975, as cited in Baines, 2011, pp. 8-9). During the mid- to-late 1980s class analysis broadened to include other key bases of oppression, particularly race and gender. Early versions of a multiple-oppression analysis emerged as “structural social work”, as epitomized by the work of Maurice Moreau (1993, 1981, 1979, as cited in Baines, 2011, p. 9), and by Mullaly (1993, as cited in Baines, 2011, p. 9).

Structural social work, is primarily a Canadian social work approach, although the term “structural social work” was first used by Middleman and Goldberg in 1974 to identify an approach to social work that located the social environment as the source of social problems (Mullaly, 2007, p. 213). Structural social work was developed at Carleton University in Ottawa by Social Work Professor, Maurice Moreau, with input from Gisele Legault (University of Montreal); Pierre Racine and Michel Bourgon (Universite´ du Quebec); Helen Levine, Mike Brake, Peter Findlay, Roland Lecomte, Allan Moscovitch, and Jim Albert (Carleton University); and Peter Leonard (Warwick and McGill Universities) (Carniol, as cited in Murray & Hick, 2009, p. 4). Structural social work had its genesis in the 1960s and 1970s during a time of economic and political upheaval and heightened consciousness of second-wave feminist, gay and lesbian, environmental, labour, Quebec separatist, and First Nations activism. In response to this changing social, political, economic and ideological context, numerous progressive and conflict-

based sociological theories based in Marxism and feminism emerged to criticize dominant institutions and existing social relations (Moreau, 1988, as cited in Murray & Hick, 2009, p. 4). Although Carleton University and a handful of other schools of social work embraced structural theory it was not until the 1990s that radical approaches to social work experienced a revival. Mullaly (2007, p. 212) comments that the radical/structural literature of the nineties attempted to deal with the major criticisms of the previous radical social work – that it was long on analysis and short on practice.

One major criticism of structural social work is that it has been largely marginalized in the United States. “Structural social workers have been criticized for being too political in their sympathies for a socialist alternative to the dominant order and for being unrealistic about the possibilities of achieving structural change” (Finn & Jacobson, 2003, p. 62). However, Mullaly addresses the skepticism of those who believe that socialism ceases to have relevance as a working model for society by stating that many persons today, inside and outside of social work, still subscribe to socialist values such as social justice, equity, and structured opportunities for achieving personal and social fulfillment (Mullaly, 2007, p. 210). Mullaly also asserts that there is a critical/progressive tradition of “empowerment work” in the United States which converges and interacts with structural social work (B. Mullaly, personal communication, April 05, 2013).

Structural social work theorists believe that it is mainly social structures which oppress by privileging dominant groups over subordinate groups, while anti-oppressive theorists believe that all subordinate groups are oppressed on personal, cultural, and institutional levels by visible and invisible structures, and by conscious and unconscious means (Mullaly, 2010, p. 19). Mullaly believes that the differences between structural social work and anti-oppressive social work are largely artificial and superficial; “... structural social work has evolved from a relatively simple

version of progressive (radical) social work to a critical anti-oppression version of critical social work” (B. Mullaly, personal communication, April 05, 2013).

Structural social work utilizes the concept of the “paradigm”, as a type of cognitive framework from which disciplines or professions can view the world and their place in it (Mullaly, 2007, p. 33). He believes that the concept of a “paradigm”, in which there is a consistent set of social, political, and economic ideas, beliefs, and values, is important because it allows social work students to compare and contrast different views of the nature of problems, or social welfare approaches, and of social work practices emanating from different ideologies. “In other words it should help the student understand that there is no one universal approach to social work practice, nor is there only one explanation of social problems or one ideal type of social welfare system” (Mullaly, 2007, p. 41). Mullaly also believes that the characteristics of paradigms have implications for understanding the dynamics of social change:

First, the fact that one paradigm (e.g., neo-conservatism) usually is dominant over others means that it is the taken-for-granted reality of most people in society – including social workers. Second, only when the dominant paradigm can no longer explain away certain anomalies (such as decreasing levels of well-being for many in an expanding global economy) can a shift of paradigms begin to occur. And third, an acceptance of a new paradigm does not occur without resistance. Understanding these dynamics of change could help social work make a transition in its view of society, in its theory, and in its practice (Mullaly, 2007, p. 42).

Mullaly’s approach utilizing the concept of a paradigm is based on two assumptions: 1) that critical theory and ideological analysis in the modernist tradition can make important contributions in critiquing the dominant paradigm and in conceptualizing a progressive social

work theory and practice; and 2) these analyses must be informed, supplemented, and complemented by the contributions of postmodernism, post-structuralism, feminism, and anti-racism, which by themselves are also insufficient for formulating emancipatory forms of social work theory and practice (Mullaly, 2007, p. 42). Structural social work is based on what Mullaly refers to as a “revitalized socialism” that is informed and reconstituted by feminist, anti-racist, postmodern, and other anti-oppressive critiques (Mullaly, 2007, p. 209).

One of the major critiques of structural social work has been that it fails to teach practical social work skills, but in response to that criticism, Moreau and Leonard (1989, as cited in Murray & Hicks, 2009, p. 14) suggested that many existing conventional social work techniques were acceptable, provided that they did not psychologize or depoliticize problems. They also suggested that over-concern with technical skills reinforces dominant beliefs that social problems, and solutions, lie within the realm of the individual. In developing the structural approach, Maurice Moreau and his colleagues identified two general social work roles: 1) to explore the socio-political and economic context of individual difficulties and to help collectivize personal troubles; and 2) to enter into a helping process that facilitates critical thinking, consciousness-raising, and empowerment (Lundy, 2012, p. 89). Lundy (2012) observes that, although an understanding of the societal context is central to the approach, attention to social structures does not deny the personal element. According to Australian social worker, Jan Fook (1993, as cited in Lundy, 2012, p. 89), the structural element will always interplay with personal factors such as biography, current life events, emotional and psychological characteristics, genetic inheritance, physical health, and so on, creating a unique personal situation.

The major elements of structural social work are identified by Mullaly (2007, p. 249), as follows:

- Social problems are built into the structures (social institutions, social processes, social practices, and social relationships) of society.
- Focusing on the individual as the cause of social problems is blaming the victim. For social problems to be resolved, social structures must change.
- Social inequalities are mainly structural in nature and not the result of innate differences.
- Society functions in ways that discriminate against people along the lines of class, gender, race, and so on.
- The state's institutions, such as the law and educational system, function as instruments of oppression and benefit privileged groups.
- The traditional dichotomy between the individual and society needs to be challenged; individual problems cannot be understood separate from the social context.
- Social structures, ideology and personal consciousness are interrelated – each element or component of society impacts on the others.
- Knowledge is not objective, and the knowledge of the dominant group forms the ruling ideas in society and reflects the interests of the dominant group, at the expense of subordinate groups.
- A social change perspective must be adopted as a response to social problems and oppression.
- Conventional social work perpetuates social problems by focusing on personal change and/or limited social reform rather than fundamental social change.
- Capitalism should be rejected in favour of some kind of reconstituted democratic socialism.

- No single source or form of oppression can claim primacy. All sources and forms of oppression are to be rejected, and no hierarchy of oppression is developed.
- The welfare state in a capitalist society props up capitalism and operates in a way to reproduce all oppressive relations.
- The positive and liberating aspects of modernist critical theory and of critical postmodern theory are both of central importance.
- Emphasizing either ‘individual agency’ or ‘structural forces’ as the focus of social change is overly reductionist. To understand social problems and develop structural approaches, both are necessary.
- The dominant order must be challenged and resisted by developing counter-discourses to victim-blaming, free-market glorification, welfare dependency, etc.
- An anti-oppressive approach to social work should be adopted.

In summation, oppression is the focus of structural social work theory and practice. Although conventional social work practice approaches have utility at the individual level and in advocating social reform, they do not promote and support fundamental change to oppressive social structures. Additionally, although structural social workers believe that all forms of oppression must be rejected and challenged, they view oppression as reflecting the interests of certain dominant groups, at the expense of subordinate groups. Ideology is seen as a significant framework for creating, and also challenging, oppressive relations. Structural social work espouses a democratic socialist ideology that rejects the reform liberalism of the welfare state, and its support of free market capitalism.

Mullaly explains that structural social work is part of a school of social theory known as critical theory: “Critical theory concerns itself with moving from a society characterized by

exploitation, inequality, and oppression to one that is emancipatory and free from domination” (Mullaly, 2007, pp. 214-215). However, there are two competing perspectives on critical theory; a modernist version and a postmodernist version (Mullaly, 2007, p. 216). Structural, feminist, anti-racist, and Marxist epistemologies all identify a key oppressed group or groups who require liberation through the fundamental reorganization of social relations: “This central tenet provides the moral-political project of each of these theories, or ways of knowing right from wrong and how to proceed with liberatory practice” (Baines, 2011, p. 13). Modernist critical theory departs from traditional social theory in a number of important ways:

It is normative in nature and practical in intent; it rejects such scientific elements of positivism as ‘science is the only means of obtaining knowledge’ and that objectively verifiable facts constitute the only legitimate form of knowledge; it does not believe that the subjects who create the knowledge can be distinguished from the objects of that knowledge; and it subscribes to the belief that knowledge and a commitment to emancipation (i.e., theory and practice) cannot be separated (Mullaly, 2007, p. 218).

Postmodernism is not a moral theory for political action but is a theory about ways of knowing, and of how language and discourse exercise power (Baines, 2011, p. 13).

Postmodernism proposes that truth, beauty, morality, and social life have no objective reality beyond how we think, talk, and write about them (Mullaly, 2010, p. 22). Postmodernists understand truth as being fluid, representational, evolving, and refusing categorization (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p. 57). Therefore, social justice claims that are singular in nature cannot be made and the focus becomes one of deconstructing mainstream representations (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p. 58). Postmodern social theory incorporates a variety of perspectives that may be situated along a continuum where at one end it represents a conservative, individualistic, and nihilistic doctrine,

which offers little potential for collectivity, solidarity and social change because every person is viewed as his or her own moral agent (Mullaly, 2010, pp. 23-24). At the other end of the social theory postmodern continuum are those social theorists who have taken postmodern analyses and criticisms of modernity and utilized them to revitalize critical social theory, in a “critical postmodern approach” (Mullaly, 2010, p. 24).

Mullaly argues that both modernism and critical postmodernism have an emancipatory purpose, and both stand against domination and oppression (Mullaly, 2007, p. 223). Structural social work views both modernism and postmodernism as each having strengths and limitations that can be effectively utilized as correctives for the limitations and contradictions of the other (Mullaly, 2007, pp. 223-225):

- Modernist critical theory attends to pervasive structural issues of oppression and domination, recognizing commonalities among all forms of oppressions such as dominate/ subordinate relations, the dynamics and consequences of oppression, and the hegemony of the view of the dominant group;
- Critical postmodernism helps structural theorists to recognize that, although oppression and exploitation may be universal phenomenon, they will be experienced differently by different people living in different places and in different contexts;
- Modernist critical theory emphasizes solidarity among oppressed people and has historically employed meta-narratives, such as calling for working class solidarity against capitalism. Postmodernism has contributed to structural theory’s understanding that a progressive politics of difference, recognizing differences *within* oppressed groups is crucial to avoid oppressive inclusions and exclusions;

- Postmodernism has shown that there is no one universal reality, but many realities. Language is historically, culturally, and socially contextualized and largely reflects the interests and worldviews of dominant groups; and
- Postmodern analysis of language and discourse has shown that the expert knowledge of traditional social work is derived from objective, scientific, and professional sources and has not reflected the lived reality of oppressed persons. Structural social work uses dialogical communication, facilitating the voices of marginalized groups to be heard, and providing social workers with fuller, more accurate information than the traditional, privileged and assumed objective, universal knowledge.

Mullaly bases at least part of his argument for adopting a critical postmodern perspective on the ideas of social work theorist and educator, Peter Leonard, who points out that postmodernism, as politics, is relativist because there is no universal standard by which to judge action/inaction; truth, justice, and moral behaviours are viewed as merely historical and cultural artifacts. “Within this reductionist and relativist perspective, the best we can expect from politics is continuing struggle around the specific interests of particular populations...” (Leonard, 1994, p. 17). He argues that there are two sides to modernity, an emancipatory side focused on human betterment and a dominating side, focused on subordination and exploitation of populations, legitimated in the name of universal claims (Leonard, 1994, p. 18). Leonard believes that a critical modernist perspective develops a critique of modernity that emphasizes common ground between the diversity struggles of feminists, socialists, anti-racists, anti-colonialists, and so on.

Mullaly believes that oppression occurs because of systemic constraints on subordinate groups in society that take the form of unquestioned norms, behaviors, symbols, and the underlying assumptions of institutional rules (Mullaly, 2007, p. 261). He refers to the work of

Foucault (1977) in explaining that, although there may be acts of intentional oppression, most oppression is systemic and unintentional, built into societal institutions and carried out unconsciously in day to day activities. Mullaly also supports the work of Iris Marion Young (1990) who argues that modern forms of oppression are the result of nineteenth and early twentieth century scientific philosophical discourse which explicitly proposed and legitimated formal theories of race, gender, age, and national superiority (Mullaly, 2007, pp. 259).

Oppression occurs at three levels; the personal, the cultural, and the structural or institutional level of society (Mullaly, 2002, 2007, 2010; Thompson, 1993, 2003). Oppression at the personal level serves to reinforce the privileged social position of the dominant group and the disadvantaged position of the subordinate group (Mullaly, 2010, p. 74). When experiencing oppressive behavior, the subordinate group member is left with the choice of either suffering in silence or protesting the behavior and risk being made to feel as though he or she acted inappropriately (Mullaly, 2010, p. 74). The psychological effects of oppression at the personal level can include loss of personal identity, a sense of low self esteem or inferiority, fear, powerlessness, anger, alienation, isolation, guilt or ambivalence (Mullaly, 2010, p. 81). The identity as inferior that is imposed on subordinate groups is often reinforced by the way that the subordinate group members are portrayed in the dominant culture (Mullaly, 2010, p. 74). Social work practice at the personal level focuses on linking personal problems with their structural causes, linking therapeutic insights and conscious deeds that enable oppressed persons to change the view they have of themselves as inferior beings, and linking the frustration of being denied basic individual rights and the collective action needed to attain these rights (Mullaly, 2010, p. 223). Social work practice at the personal level must also include the following practice elements (Mullaly, 2007, pp. 290-319):

- Structural social work practice in the intrapsychic area serves to counteract the damaging effects of oppression, and builds strengths in the individual for developing a community of solidarity with others, and for taking individual and/or collective action against oppression. Consciousness-raising, in the form of political education, is utilized to encourage people to gain insight into their circumstances with a view to changing them. However, consciousness-raising must involve reflection based on the service user's experience and individual consciousness. The political education process takes the form of a dialogue where both the social worker and the service user assume roles of mutual sharing and learning. Emphasis is not placed on the uniqueness or individuality of a service user's situation but on the sameness and common ground of the service users.
- Interpersonal work is the most effective way to have people who are experiencing similar problems develop political awareness, self-define a more genuine identity than the one imposed on them by the dominant group, develop the confidence to assert their new identity, and establish solidarity with others. The relationship between the social worker and service user is one of collaboration, with the latter retaining control of the purpose, pace, and direction of the collaborative effort. Dialogical relationships would be developed with service users wherein all participants are understood to be equals, and power and wisdom are shared.

In their chapter on “Structural social work from a (dis)Ability perspective” (2009) social work educators, Judy E. MacDonald and Gaila Friars provide a structural critique of disability that looks beyond individual pathology. An adaptation of their table of structural practices and related practice principles for social work practice with disabled people at the individual level of intervention has been included for comparative purposes (see Table 5).

Table 5

An Adaptation of MacDonald and Friar's Table of the Structural Approach to Working with People with (dis)Abilities.

Structural Practices	Practice Principles
Empathy skills: understanding of service user's feelings and situation. Expand to social empathy.	Treat all persons with (dis)Abilities with respect; regard helping as a privilege; individual, cultural, and societal analysis.
Empowerment and appropriate entitlement: enhancing service user's power within worker-user relationship and reorganization of rights to services (Moreau & Leonard, 1989).	Validate knowledge base of service user: show recognition of service user's struggle and recognize that they are the expert on their lived experience.
Communication skills: identifying barriers to transitional modes of communication: listening, clarifying, and focusing on alternative communication styles (Carniol, 2003; Dunn et al., 2008).	Listen in the broadest context to communicate with the service user: truly listen and be receptive to the service user, his or her experiences and knowledges to inform intervention.
Advocacy skills: access to better services/resources. Defends social rights, social movements/community connections (Carniol, 2003).	Deconstruct normalcy and advocate for rights-based services: locate experiences of persons with (dis)Abilities within socio-political, economic, and physical context. (Cont'd)

Note. Adapted from "Structural Social Work from a (dis)Ability Perspective" (pp. 150-151) by Judy E. MacDonald & Gaila Friars, 2009. In S. F. Hick, H. I. Peters, T. Corner & T. London (Eds). *Structural Social Work in Action: Examples from Practice*. Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Scholars' Press. Copyright ©Canadian Scholars' Press 2009. Adapted with permission.

Table 5

An Adaptation of MacDonald and Friar's Table of the Structural Approach to Working with People with (dis)Abilities (cont'd).

Structural Practices	Practice Principles
Critique of social system: awareness and analysis of the limitations of our social order in its ability to meet the needs of persons with (dis)Abilities.	Re-define individual problems as societal issues: “social problems are not amenable to individual, family, or subcultural solutions” (Mullaly, 2007: 288).
Analytic and strategy skills: views interventions in a broader social and organizational context (Dominelli, 2002).	Strategize around systemic change: education, health care access, rights-based multi-modality, multi-disciplinary service delivery, and policy changes.
Spiritual sensitivity skills: locates spiritual support for social and economic justice. Holistic ways of knowing and helping (Carniol, 2003).	Use of self: judicious use of self-disclosure and consciousness-raising (cautionary note on minimizing experiences of persons with (dis)Ability).
Assessment skills: to identify (re. service user) (1) how oppressive structures are harmful and (2) immediate and long term needs contributing to personal, structural, communal, and spiritual emancipation (Carniol, 2003)	Rights-based intervention: self-determination re: persons with (dis)Ability; respect for dignity, identification of socially constructed barriers.

Oppression at the cultural level comprises all those thoughts, attitudes and behaviors that depict a negative prejudgment of a particular subordinate group (Mullaly, 2007, p. 262). Mullaly explains that, consistent with critical postmodern thought, the dominant culture attempts to remain dominant through the suppression of difference and multiplicity inherent in a pluralistic society; “In other words, one of the ways the dominant group is able to maintain hierarchical divisions of class, gender, race, age, sexual orientation, and the like is by imposing, and universalizing its own culture while repressing or suppressing other cultures” (Mullaly, 2010, p. 97).

Mullaly explains that stereotyping, and language and discourse are powerful mechanisms of oppression, as well as mechanisms for developing anti-oppressive practices (Mullaly, 2010, pp. 110-118). Cultural stereotypes carry out several important political functions for the dominant group in society; they internalize feelings of inferiority in subordinate group members, reducing resistance; they help to rationalize the need to monitor, control and exploit subordinate groups; when subordinate groups are characterized as “bad” and their cultures “inferior, it helps to reinforce the assumption that the dominant group’s identity as “good” and their culture is “superior”, without examining dominant group privilege and power; and stereotypes aid and abet “victim-blaming” and deflects attention away from structural inequalities (Mullaly, 2010, pp. 113-114). Language is never politically neutral and tends to reflect culture, particularly the dominant culture. Language is also part of a larger framework of thought, meaning, and knowledge referred to as “discourse”. Dominant discourses are powerful as a social control mechanism because they cover up and/or contradict the interests of subordinate groups (Mullaly, 2010, pp. 115-118). Anti-oppressive social work practice at the cultural level seeks to undermine cultural imperialism and includes the following social work practice elements:

- Engaging in a cultural politics that denounces all forms of cultural oppression along with supporting, developing and celebrating alternative cultures that have been suppressed by the dominant culture (Mullaly, 2002, p. 186);
- Resisting blame of service users for resorting to acts of resistance when they are, in fact, protesting exploitative, discriminatory, and unfair treatment. The behavior should be explored with the individual and with other similarly oppressed individuals to assess full meaning (Mullaly, 2002, p. 188);
- Resisting essentialist categorizations of people by adopting a relational understanding of difference in which multiple positionings of people are recognized and examined for their intersections and relation to differential social, economic, and political power (Mullaly, 2007: 283; Meekosha, 2006, p.172);
- Encouraging and supporting organized forms of collective resistance that are based on alternative knowledge claims that confront, challenge and attempt to change dominant discourses (Mullaly, 2002, p. 188);
- Analyzing and deconstructing oppressive discourses, as well as assisting in the development of alternative discourses (Mullaly, 2002, p. 188);
- Supporting members of subordinate groups to define their own identity and for this to occur stereotypes must be exposed, challenged and rendered unacceptable so that it becomes more difficult for the dominant group to present its norms, values, and patterns of thinking as neutral and universal (Mullaly, 2002, p. 189, 192).

Oppression at the structural level refers to the means by which laws, policies, and social processes and practices all work together primarily in favour of the dominant group at the expense of subordinate groups (Mullaly, 2007, p. 262). There are three emancipatory politics that

attempt to overcome oppression at the structural or institutional level: assimilation through a politics of integration; multiculturalism through cultural pluralism; and collective resistance through a politics of difference. The first two approaches are reflected in social work practice at the cultural level with a politics of integration supporting a “transcultural approach” to social work practice. In regard to disability, a politics of integration would be concerned with “normalizing” or “fixing” a disabled person and with helping the disabled person to better fit into the dominant culture (Gilson, DePoy & MacDuffie, 2002; Mackelsprang & Salsgiver, 1996), while multiculturalism supports an approach to social work practice that is based on the recognition and acceptance of cultural diversity or pluralism. Pluralism is the cultural identification of the community of disabled people as a minority group that has been denied its civil rights (Gill, Kewman & Brannon, 2003). Social work practice within a pluralist approach to disability would focus on improving accessibility for disabled persons and on political advocacy for equal rights (Rothman, 2003). Mullaly (2010, p. 272) believes that anti-oppressive social work involves the critique of mainstream social work, such as assimilationist and pluralist approaches which are underpinned by general systems theory and the ecological perspective, as well as assisting oppressed populations to exercise their own agency through personal and collective action.

A “politics of difference”, as elucidated by Iris Marion Young (1990), seeks equality among all socially and culturally differentiated groups (Mullaly, 2007, p. 282). Group differences are viewed as positive and desired rather than as a liability or disadvantage. The politics of group difference also promotes the notion of group solidarity against liberal individualism. Group differences are not viewed as “essential” but are ambiguous, relational, shifting and marked by variation. Young (1990, p. 158) explains that the assimilationist ideal assumes equal social status

for all persons and treats everyone according to the same rules and standards. A politics of difference approach would support a notion of equality in which there would be different treatment for oppressed and disadvantaged groups. “To promote social justice, I argue, social policy should sometimes accord special treatment to groups” (Young, 1990, p. 158). Young also views the politics of difference as promoting the notion of group solidarity against the individualism of liberal humanism (Young, 1990, p. 166). She believes that the assertion of a positive sense of group difference provides a standpoint from which to criticize prevailing institutions and norms (Young, 1990, p. 167). Mullaly (2007, pp. 283-284) summarizes Young’s arguments, as follows:

- A politics of difference would require a dual system of rights: a general system of rights for all, and a more specific system of group-conscious rights and policies. Mullaly comments that we already have a precedent for such a system in the form of civil, political, and human rights for all citizens, along with some affirmative action and employment equity programs for groups who have been historically disadvantaged.
- Young supports the implementation of institutional mechanisms and public resources supporting: the self-organization of subordinate groups whereby group members could achieve collective empowerment and a reflective understanding of their collective experiences and interests;
- Group analysis and the generation of policy proposals in institutional settings where decision-makers would be obliged to demonstrate that they have taken relevant group perspectives into consideration during deliberation.
- Group veto power regarding specific policies and decisions that affect a group directly.

Mullaly (2007, p. 285) comments that, at the macro level of social work practice an understanding of the politics of difference will encourage and support group-specific organizations and groups and the establishment of new ones. He also believes that a politics of difference will encourage social workers to advocate for policies and decision-making mechanisms that give full recognition and representation to the voices of oppressed groups.

While some forms of oppression, such as disablism, may appear distinct, they are not seen as unrelated to other forms, such as gender, age, race and so on. Intersectionality accounts for multiple identities that intersect where a person's ability meets with his or her class, age, race or any other component of a person's social identity (Mullaly, 2010, p. 195).

The intersectional nature of oppression holds significant implications for an anti-oppressive social work practice. It helps the social worker to see that oppression seldom comes in single form. It also helps us to understand that it is simply not a case of identifying and summing up different oppressions that an oppressed person may be experiencing in an effort to obtain an appreciation of his or her total situation. Social workers should also be aware of the ways that different forms of oppression intersect with each other and how these intersections contain oppressive effects themselves. They will then recognize that not all members of a particular oppressed group experience oppression in the same way or with the same severity or intensity (Mullaly, 2010, p. 203).

Mullaly points out that there is heterogeneity within oppressed groups and that any attempt to categorize and homogenize groups of people oversimplifies the complexities and varieties of social reality because it does not acknowledge the incredible diversity inherent within people's gender, abilities, age, class, race, sexuality and other dimensions. However, Mullaly concedes that it is important to understand various forms and sources of oppression. Ableism, for example,

is viewed as the systematic oppression of people with disabilities. This form of oppression is manifest in the combination of personal prejudices, cultural expressions, values, and social forces that marginalize people with disabilities and portray them in a negative light, thus oppressing them (Mullaly, 2010, p. 215). Despite legislation and policies to prevent discrimination and improve accessibility, people with disabilities continue to be oppressed on a personal level (viewed as dependent, charity cases), the cultural level (stereotyping and omitting them from popular culture), and the structural level (discrimination, exclusion and inequality) (Mullaly, 2010, p. 216).

The flip side of the coin of oppression is privilege (Mullaly, 2010; Pease, 2010). Privilege occurs because it benefits the dominant group by protecting a kind of citizenship that is superior to that of oppressed groups (Mullaly, 2010, p. 290). Pease explains that people in privileged groups tend to feel that their lives are normal and against this assumption of normalcy, all other forms of difference are devalued, are viewed as weak, inferior, and subordinate (Pease, 2010, p. 13). Pease also emphasizes that an intersectional analysis makes it clear that almost everyone experiences both privilege and oppression at some time in their life experiences (Pease, 2010, p. 21). Mullaly believes that the unearned privilege of being non-disabled must be examined in relation to how this privilege is enacted interpersonally, culturally, and institutionally (Mullaly, 2010, p. 300).

I believe that Mullaly's (2002, 2007) theoretical framework of structural social work, which is based on critical social theory and incorporates and engages with many of the theoretical developments informing critical disability studies. However, many social work educators who also study and engage with disability theory have commented that it is important for any social work approach to practice to be informed by disabled peoples' own theoretical developments

based on personal insights and experiences (Dupre', 2012; Hiranandani, 2005a; Meekosha & Dowse, 2007; Oliver & Sapey, 2006; Pease, 2010, to cite just a few). Any social work approach to disability must be critically reflexive and open to the new and quickly evolving theoretical developments taking place within disability studies. For example, awareness of the psycho-emotional effects of disablism involves understanding how impairment/impairment effects are intertwined with disablism; "the kind of disablist comments and treatment that someone receives – is often associated with the type of impairment and impairment effects that are visible/known to the other person" (Reeve, 2012, p. 89). While feminist approaches to social work theory and practice have developed analyses of embodiment and its psycho-emotional impact on women, many conventional and progressive approaches to social work have not yet explored or developed this area in relation to social work theory and practice. For these reasons anti-oppressive social work theory, which includes structural social work, holds the most potential for addressing complex and multiple forms of oppression.

Summary

A review of the disability studies literature has found that the theoretical frameworks informing that field included social theories of interactionism, symbolic interactionism, social construction Marxism, feminism, postmodernism, post-structuralism and phenomenology. More recently, the disability studies literature indicates that there is a second wave of theoretical development that is moving quickly beyond the simple theoretical models provided by the social and minority models of disability, towards the development of a critical disability studies referred to as CDS. However, the theoretical heritage of the social model and the minority models of disability are still valued and included within disability discourse as the "starting points" for an approach to addressing societal disablism. There are still some disability activists

and theorists, particularly in Britain, who believe that the full potential of the social model has not yet been realized.

A review of the social work education literature and related research studies indicates that social work education has not yet included many disability theories and perspectives into the core curriculum. Social work texts utilized in core social work courses appear to include both individual and social models of disability when discussing social work practice, but no evidence was found to indicate the inclusion of critical disability perspectives in this discussion.

Generally, disability was underrepresented in discussion of many of the practice approaches found in text books utilized in core social work courses. Social work practice approaches were often incongruent with the model of disability being presented in the text, such as when the social model was being advocated as the appropriate social work response to disability, yet the practice approach was consistent with a personal tragedy approach to working with disabled people. Many of the studies I reviewed were from Britain and the United States, with only a cursory review of several Canadian social work text books that are now out-dated. It was important for this study to fill this gap in the literature.

The literature reviewed for this study revealed that social work, as a profession, is not viewed as being an ally to disabled people and that much of the criticism from the disabled people's movement comes from social work's role in being the gatekeepers for social welfare programs. The advent of neoliberal ideology within social welfare has not only negatively impacted service users, with reduced income support and more targeted (limited) eligibility for services and programs, it has changed the practice of social work to incorporate thinking and practices more in line with business and market approaches than with social work values. The predominance of more rational and technical approaches to social work practice appears to have subsumed the

importance of theory for informing practice. Much of the social work theory that is presented to social work students in texts and in the classroom is underpinned by systems theory and ecological concepts, with little theoretical development beyond these approaches for over 30 years.

Anti-oppressive social work practice theory and practice was found to incorporate a broad range of theory, especially critical social theory, which is able to provide social workers with a philosophical framework for analyzing oppression. Anti-oppressive social work practice can integrate practice approaches from a variety of different theoretical perspectives, depending on the site of practice. Anti-oppressive social work practice includes structural social work theory and practice, which on its own embraces a range of critical theory and approaches, but is primarily informed by a democratic socialist ideological paradigm. My analysis of the literature within the field of disability studies, as well as analysis of the research literature addressing social work education and disability, has indicated that structural social work theory and practice currently holds the most potential for engaging with most of the transformative elements of critical disability studies, and with disabled people. It was important for this study to examine and identify social work theory and practice approaches addressing disability in relation to the prevalence of these particular approaches within Canadian social work texts and classrooms.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

In their article titled “Qualitative Research Designs: Selection and Implementation”, Creswell, Hanson, Clark and Morales (2007) describe case study research as an analytic approach that involves a detailed description of the case and the setting of the case within contextual conditions. They cite the work of Yin (2003) who believes that case study methodology should be employed when a researcher wants to include contextual conditions that are pertinent to the phenomenon of study. They define case study as:

...a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material and documents and reports) and reports case description and case-based themes (Creswell et al., 2007, p. 245).

Tellis (1997) states that case studies are designed to bring out details from the viewpoints of participants by using multiple sources of data. He posits that case studies are also multi-perspective analyses, meaning that the researcher considers not just the voices and perspectives of the participants, but also of relevant groups of actors, and the interaction among them. Case study research can use multiple data collection methods to explore and understand a case. In a nursing research article titled “Case Study: A Bridge Across the Paradigms”, Luck, Jackson and Usher (2006) argue that case study research has a broad application and epistemological, ontological and methodological flexibility. The methodological flexibility stems from the ability of a case study to provide a structural framework for research, but openness for accepting any methods appropriate to the investigation. The researchers also argue that, in addition to

flexibility of method, case study acknowledges the importance of context and the particular characteristics of the case; culture, geography, resources and so forth, and enables a detailed evaluation that is embedded in the particular contextual characteristics and issues (Luck, Jackson & Usher, 2006). Because of the flexibility of a case study design and its focus on contextual characteristics and issues, this study of three Bachelor of Social Work programs and their core curricula and specialized courses addressing disability utilized a multicase study design, as described by Robert E. Stake in his book, *Multiple Case Study Analysis* (2006).

Stake (2006) describes a multicase study as a way of studying many cases, parts or members in diverse settings. A single case study is an exploration of a “bounded system” over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context (Creswell, 1998). In a multicase study the researcher seeks to understand the whole, a “quintain” as it operates in different situations: “The quintain is something we want to understand more thoroughly, and we choose to study it through its cases, by means of a multicase study” (Stake, 2006, p. vi). In this study, the quintain was the social work education (core curricula and specialized courses) offered to social work students in relation to theories and approaches to disability.

Stake (2006) believes that in multicase study research, the single case is of interest because it belongs to a collection of other cases and the individual cases share a common characteristic or condition. Stake (2006) observes that there are three main criteria for selecting cases:

- The case must be relevant to the quintain;
- Cases should be diverse across contexts; and
- Cases should provide good opportunities to learn about complexity and contexts.

Stake explains that an important reason for doing a multicase study is to examine how the phenomenon performs in different environments: “This often means that cases in both typical and atypical settings should be selected” (Stake, 2006, p. 23). Stake clarifies that when the purpose of the case study is to go beyond the case, is known as an “instrumental” case study. He states that with a multicase study and its strong interest in the quintain, the interest in the cases will be primarily instrumental. The purpose of this study was to examine common and diverse aspects of education about disability at three separate BSW programs in Canada to see what inferences may be made from analysis of social work texts, in relation to perspectives about disability, and the way that these perspectives on disability are discussed in classroom settings.

Yin (2004) believes that multiple-case designs have distinct advantages and disadvantages over single-case study designs. The evidence from multiple cases is considered more compelling and therefore the overall study is considered more robust. Yin states that every case chosen in a multiple case study must serve a purpose within the overall scope of the inquiry. Therefore, Yin believes that the researcher must follow replication logic. The logic underlying the use of multiple cases, according to Yin, is that each case must be carefully selected so that it either predicts similar results, or predicts contrasting results, but for predictable reasons. For the purpose of this multicase study, the selection of three BSW programs was based on a logic that predicted contrasting results, or a theoretical replication (Yin, 2004, p. 47). Specific procedures with respect to the multicase design are outlined in Figure 1. Purposive sampling was used to select three BSW programs that have a commitment to the values of diversity and inclusiveness, and in August 2010, Letters of Introduction (Appendix B) were sent to the following programs:

- The University of St. Thomas School of Social Work has a post-degree BSW program that has the objective to provide graduates with a generic practice framework; with major emphasis on understanding the structural roots of social problems. The literature review has already argued that structural social work theory is consistent with critical disability perspectives. One would expect that St. Thomas' BSW program would teach social work practice approaches to disability from a stance that rejects the medical model in favour of paradigms emerging from critical disability studies.
- Dalhousie University School of Social Work has a commitment to building a socially just society, one that upholds and validates the values of equality, diversity and inclusiveness. The BSW degree program embraces a critical anti-oppressive approach to social work practice and many of the elective courses explore the differential impacts of race, gender, age, sexual orientation and ability. However, the School is located within the Faculty of Health Professions and one might predict that when social work is perceived to be a health profession the curriculum may be influenced by an individual pathology approach to disability.
- The University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work BSW program has a mission statement to provide inclusive educational programs that promote respect for human rights and dignity, individual worth and well-being, diversity, social inclusion, and the principles of social justice. The Faculty also shares the Fort Garry campus with a graduate level Disability Studies program, and has an elective course specifically developed to address disability in theory and practice. The BSW program also emphasizes the need for professional and psychosocial treatment in bringing about social change, which is clearly in the realm of individual pathology. However, the influence of a

Disability Studies program may be indicated by an approach that falls midway between the medical model approach anticipated to be found at Dalhousie University School of Social Work and the structural approach to disability espoused by St. Thomas University School of Social Work.

My prediction was that social work education on disability within each of these BSW programs would represent different points on a range of disability perspectives between order and conflict perspectives of disability; with the Dalhousie School of Social Work positioned closest to the individual pathology perspective, St. Thomas University School of Social Work positioned closest to critical disability perspectives, and the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work BSW program positioned somewhere in the mid-range between the two theories representing social pathology perspectives of disability.

Specific Procedures

Yin (2004) describes the development of a case study research design as having five important components: a study's questions, its propositions, its units of analysis, the logic linking the data to the propositions and the criteria for interpreting the findings. A diagrammatic overview of specific procedures is provided in Figure 1.

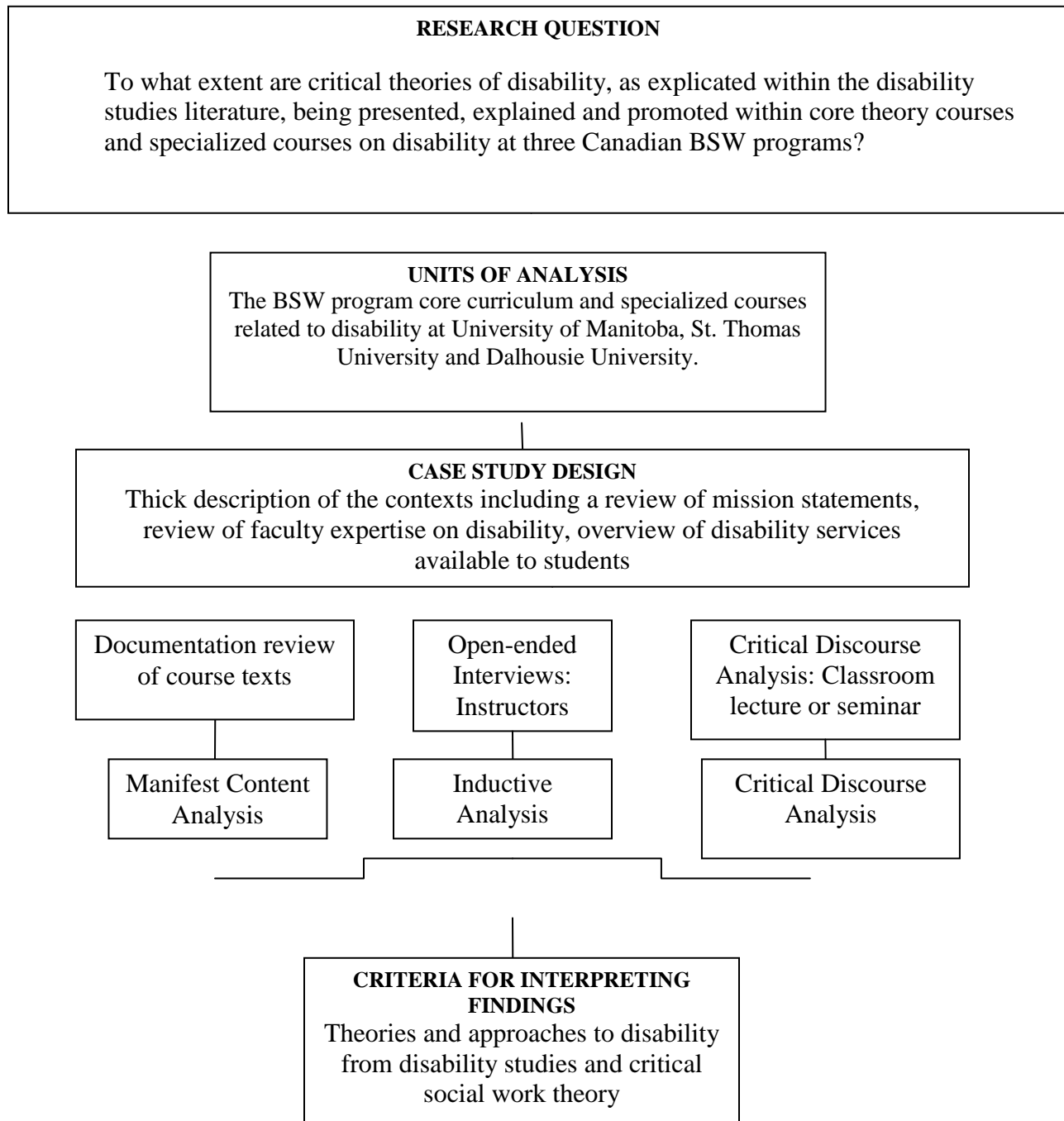


Figure 1: Specific Procedures Flowchart for Multicase Study of Three BSW Programs

Data Collection

Stake (2006) comments that each case must be located within its own situation or context; a case may be singular but have multiple contexts that influence the quintain. Each BSW program has a unique mission statement and different core and specialized course requirements for a BSW degree. Each program is situated within a university campus with various policies and services provided to disabled persons. For example, the BSW program located on the Fort Garry campus of the University of Manitoba is located on the same campus as a graduate program in disability studies. This study explored the diversity of the contexts at the three university campuses, as well as highlighted areas of commonality identified by reviewing the mission statements for each BSW program, and by examining the respective university calendars and websites for descriptions of core and specialized courses needed for graduation.

Field placements for students were not included as a part of the multicase study. Field placements for students are usually provided to individual students and are based on the availability of placements in the area of a student's interest. It is beyond the scope of this research study to examine the individual experiences of students at each placement, in relation to disability. However, disability services were available on campus for use by instructors, staff and students at each university, and those services are described and explored in relation to disability theory.

A variety of data collection approaches was utilized in this multicase research study: manifest content analysis of social work texts and course outlines utilized to instruct students about disability; interviews with key informants (instructors of core and specialized courses addressing disability); and critical discourse analysis of transcripts from classroom lectures and discussions related to disability and oppression. In a previous research study utilizing manifest

and latent content analysis, Wachholz and Mullaly (2000) examined introductory social work textbooks to systematically study the extent to which the contributions of feminist, anti-racist and radical social work scholarship were incorporated into the mainstream social work literature. A similar strategy was used in this study to examine selected core course outlines and texts, and course outlines and texts from specialized courses addressing disability, from each of the three BSW programs. The purpose of this inquiry was to systematically examine the various forms of text to discover the perspectives of disability represented within the social work education literature. A manifest content analysis was also conducted on the texts to identify the social work approaches most commonly associated with the theories and models of disability described in the texts.

The intent of the manifest content analysis was to count the number of mentions of particular perspectives of disability; in accordance with indicators developed from the disability studies literature (see Tables 1 and 2). It was not the intention of the researcher to complete a latent content analysis of the way that disability, and disabled people, were portrayed and treated in the texts. However, it was possible to distinguish between the texts which addressed perspectives on disability in a critical way, rather than in a comparative way. If the purpose of the text, as explained in the abstract, foreword or introduction of a book, or chapter of a book, was to present arguments against a particular perspective of disability and in favour a different perspective of disability it was characterized as being “critical”. If the text presented several different perspectives of disability indicating the merits and limitations of each approach, it was characterized as being “comparative”. This delineation became important in determining the treatment of the individual pathology perspective counted in the texts. If a course had a high frequency of mentions of the individual pathology perspective it did not mean that the course

was promoting an individual pathology perspective of disability. Only those mentions of individual pathology perspectives of disability that were **not** treated in a comparative or in a critical way were viewed as significant. The same approach was not taken with social pathology perspectives and critical disability perspectives because disability studies encompass both theoretical frameworks. The absence of a latent content analysis, in combination with the manifest content analysis, proved to be a limitation in relation to discernment of how certain concepts were being treated within the texts. For example, while several social work practice approaches may have been mentioned in a text, including anti-oppressive social work practice, I was unable to state whether or not certain approaches were being presented as more progressive/conventional than others by the author(s).

Modified inductive analysis of the transcripts from interviews with key informants was employed to identify the ideas and perspectives of disability held by instructors of the courses sampled in the study. Findings from critical discourse analyses of transcripts from lectures or seminar classes addressing social work practice and disability were also used to examine the way in which ideas about disability, gleaned from the texts and interviews with key informants, were presented and discussed in the classroom.

Validity

Stake (2006) explains that researchers deal with different impressions, their own as well as others, but need to have a way to assure that most of the meaning gained from their interpretation of data is the meaning that was intended by the writer or respondent. Stake asserts that each finding requires at least three confirmations and assurances that key meanings are not being overlooked: “Each important interpretation needs assurance that is supported by the data gathered and not too easily misinterpreted by readers of the report” (Stake, 2006, p. 33). Yin

(2004) believes that the quality of any empirical social research is based on a set of four tests; construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability. To this end, various strategies of validity were employed:

1. Construct validity was increased by accessing multiple sources of evidence for each case and by creating a chain of evidence: data from course outlines and texts from three core theory courses and specialized courses addressing disability were gathered and analyzed utilizing manifest content analysis; themes related to theories of disability were identified from interviews of key informants, who were also instructors for the courses sampled in the manifest content analysis; and critical discourse analyses were conducted on the transcriptions from lectures or seminars addressing disability, or oppression, for one of the courses sampled in the study at each site of the case.
2. Internal validity was addressed by comparing the findings of the data analyses from the manifest content analysis, modified inductive analysis of transcriptions from interviews, and critical discourse analysis of a lecture, within each case. The findings in relation to approach to disability were expected to be consistent across the three analyses.
3. External validity was addressed through the utilization of theoretical replication logic in which findings from each case were compared across the three sites and were predicted to fall at different points along a range of social theory. Thick, rich description of each site of the case was also included so that the reader will be able to make judgments about the potential of fit with other contexts (Tracy, 2010).
4. Reliability was enhanced through the use of the use of standardized data collection and analysis techniques, developed into a case study protocol, based on recommendations by Stake (2006), Krippendorff (2004), Fairclough (2003) and Patton (2002). Care was taken

to organize and present the data from each case in a logical and meaningful way. The cross-case analysis was completed using a series of worksheets developed by Stake (2006) for the purpose of generating assertions through a “case-quintain” dialectic.

Treatment of the Data

Cross case analysis involved close reading of each of the reports of the case in relation to themes developed from the research questions. Stake (2006) suggests that all of the cases be read at one time to develop an understanding of the project as a whole. He also recommends the use of a number of worksheets that were developed specifically for cross-case analysis. These worksheets were used in a sequentially phased analysis that Stake (2006) terms the Quintain-Case dialectic in which attention to local situations and to the phenomenon as a whole vie with each other for attention: “The main activity of cross-case analysis is reading the case reports and applying their Findings of situated experience to the research questions of the Quintain” (Stake, 2006, p. 47):

Manifest Content Analysis

Content analysis, as a research technique, has a long history dating back to the 18th century in Scandinavia (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Carney (1979) describes how content analysis was utilized as far back as 1744 in the analysis of religious texts and concepts. However, Carney indicates that the technique actually came out of the studies of newspapers in schools of journalism. During World War II, content analysis was used to study propaganda for military intelligence purposes, but a major development in the approach occurred in the fifties and sixties with the publication of Berelson’s handbook, *Content Analysis in Communication Research* (1952, as cited in Carney, 1979). Today, content analysis is commonly used in the fields of sociology, anthropology, social anthropology, political science and psychology. Carney explains

that content analysis is usually integrated with other research techniques, employed for one stage of the inquiry, or within the framework of a larger investigation.

This multicase study of the education of social work students at three BSW programs, in relation to disability, employs an approach to content analysis informed primarily by the work of Klaus Krippendorff (2004), who classifies three kinds of definitions of content analysis, as follows:

1. Definitions that take content to be *inherent* in a text;
2. Definitions that take content to be *a property of the source* of a text; and
3. Definitions that take content to *emerge in the process of a researcher analyzing a text* relative to a particular context.

Krippendorff explains that his definition of content analysis is of the third kind because it focuses on the process of content analysis and does not ignore the contributions that analysts make to what counts as content. Texts, according to Krippendorff, are not only meaningful to analysts, but are interpreted by and meaningful to the reader, and therefore, content analysis must move beyond analyzing the physicality of text. Content analysis of categories of social work theories, perspectives of disability, and social work approaches addressing disability within social work course outlines and texts, allowed certain inferences to be made about the range of theories and approaches being presented to social work students addressing disability and ableism.

Krippendorff (2004) states that researchers may enter content analyses from different starting points. This content analysis was “problem-driven”, meaning that it was driven by epistemic questions and the belief that a systematic reading of available texts will provide the answers.

This content analysis involved examination of social work texts, course outlines and recommended readings from core courses and specialized courses related to disability. The specific research question answered by the content analysis was:

- Are social work practice approaches to disability, as represented in the various types of texts, concerned more with theories of individual pathology, social pathology or with critical disability theory?

Sample and units of analysis. This study examined social work text books and course outlines used in selected core courses and specialized courses related to disability. A theoretical sampling strategy was used to select those courses which may have the most relevance for gaining an understanding of the theories and approaches to oppression, such as ableism and disability, being taught to social work students in the classroom. The selection of the textbooks for the study was made using the following criteria:

- The text was a text book identified by the university calendar, and or the course outline as being required reading for a core course in the BSW program;
- The text was identified in the calendar, or course outline, for use in a specialized course on social work and disability;
- The text was recommended reading for understanding disability, as identified by the course syllabus or outline;
- The text was in use during the 2010 – 2011 university year.
- Course outlines for the courses sampled as part of the study were included in the analysis.

Courses were chosen from the second, third and fourth years of study because those courses tended to move beyond general theory towards connecting theory with direct social work

practice. A mix of theoretical core courses and specialized courses addressing disability were chosen for the study:

- At St. Thomas University School of Social Work, the BSW program is a post-degree BSW that is comprised of four semesters of study. A selection of core courses was made as follows: Semester 1, SW 5036, Theory for Practice 1, Semester II, SW 5046, Theory for Practice II, and SW 5123, Social Work Practice in Diverse Contexts. There were not any courses specific to disability listed in the university calendar.
- At Dalhousie University School of Social Work twelve core courses and two electives are required for graduation from the BSW program, as described in the 2010 – 2011 University Calendar. Texts were chosen from a sample of core courses and electives, as follows: SLWK 2222, Advancing Social Justice; SLWK 3030, Theoretical Foundations of Social Work Practice; and SLWK 4380, Disability Policy and Service.
- The University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work has several plans for completing the BSW program. This study examined the plan requiring four years of study, University 1 plus three years in Social Work. Courses of interest were: SWRK 3140, Introduction to Social Work Practice; SWRK 4210, Feminist Perspectives on Social Work Practice; and the elective of SWRK 4200, Field Focus of Social Work Practice – Disability.

Recording units and coding. The recording units for the manifest content analysis of social work texts are theoretical approaches to disability, as well as critical and mainstream social work practice approaches addressing disability. The theoretical and practice frameworks have been discussed in the literature review for this study and they were utilized to count the frequency of

mentions of critical and mainstream perspectives on disability within the texts. A manifest coding sheet was developed that delineated the units of analysis (core and specialized social work texts addressing disability, and conventional and progressive social work practice approaches to disability), and the recording units (elements related to critical or mainstream disability perspectives). Coding instructions and coding forms for the manifest content analyses are described in Appendix C.

Descriptive statistics in the form of numeric frequency tables were used to report the observed frequencies for the following categorical variables:

- Social work practice models addressing disability represented in the texts: (1) individual and personal rehabilitation approaches (psycho-dynamic, behavioral, client-centered, psycho-social, clinical, family therapy, casework); (2) person-in-environment approaches (life model, independent living, problem-solving, social role valorization, strengths perspectives, identity politics or minority model); (3) progressive approaches (Marxist, feminist, Indigenous, postcolonial, anti-racist, structural, anti-ableist); and
- Disability perspectives as developed from the disability studies literature: individual pathology, social pathology and critical disability perspectives.

As part of the multicas e, cross case analysis, a 3 X 3 contingency table was completed for the data to test the following hypothesis:

- H_0 : There is not any association between social work practice approaches to disability, identified in course outlines and texts, and particular university BSW programs.
- H_a : There is an association between social work practice approaches to disability, identified in course outlines and texts, and particular university BSW programs.

The Chi Square Test of Independence tested the null and alternative hypothesis. The computed χ^2 needed to exceed the critical value for a 0.05 probability level for the null hypothesis to be rejected. It was the expectation of this researcher that the null hypothesis would be rejected, as follows:

- The St. Thomas University School of Social Work would be situated on a range of theory addressing disability more towards critical disability perspectives because of its emphasis on structural social work approaches to oppression.
- The Dalhousie University School of Social Work BSW program would be situated on the range of theory addressing disability towards the individual pathology perspective.
- The University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work BSW program would be situated on a range of theory addressing disability more towards the person in environment or social pathology perspective.

Interviews of Key Informants

Silverman (2006) cites the work of Bridget Byrne (2004, as cited in Silverman, 2006, p. 114) to assert that qualitative interviewing is useful as a research method for accessing people's attitudes and values – things that cannot be observed. Patton (2002, p. 341) states that the purpose of interviewing is to allow the researcher and reader to enter another person's perspective. He recommends several interview approaches, including the "standardized open-ended interview" approach which was used in this study. The standardized open-ended interview ensures that each instructor was asked the same questions, in the same way, and in the same order. The benefit of this interview approach is that it allows the researcher to ask highly focused questions in a brief period of time. Patton believes that the weakness of this approach to interviewing is that it does not allow the interviewer the opportunity to pursue topics and issues

that were not anticipated when the interview questions were developed. Therefore, a general comments section was added to the interview protocol so that instructors would have an opportunity to cover anything that they believed was not included in the interview questions, but that they wanted me to know in relation to their approach to the course material.

Interviews were requested with the lecturers of the courses sampled in the manifest content analysis. It was my intention to conduct three interviews from each BSW program and letters of invitation were sent out to nine instructors between August and November of 2010 (see example at Appendix D). There were seven instructors who agreed to participate in the study; three from St. Thomas University School of Social Work, two from the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work and two from the Dalhousie University School of Social Work. The interviews focused on asking instructors how they chose the particular texts for the course they were instructing and asked them to identify aspects of social work practice with disability that they identified as being most important to understanding disability. Three of the interviews were conducted over the telephone and four were conducted in person. The Interview Protocol is provided in Appendix E.

All of the interviews were audio taped and transcribed for data analysis. Telephone interviews were recorded by placing the interviewee on speaker telephone. Transcripts of the interviews were made, verbatim, so that the positionality and voice of the participant was respected as much as possible. There were two instances of taping where the voice of the interviewee was very difficult to hear and accurately transcribe, and in both cases the recorder picked up electronic feedback which dominated the recording. The interviews were included, but much of what was said just could not be heard or transcribed.

Analysis of the data from the transcribed interviews was based on a method known as modified analytic induction. Analytic induction is a method of data analysis described by Florian Znaniecki (1934, as cited by Ratcliff, 1994). There are several steps to the process of analytic induction: 1) a phenomenon is defined in a tentative way; 2) a hypothesis is developed about it; 3) a single instance is considered to determine if the hypothesis can be confirmed; 4) if the hypothesis fails to be confirmed, either the phenomenon is redefined or the hypothesis is revised so as to include the instance examined; 5) additional cases are examined and, if the new hypothesis is repeatedly confirmed, some degree of certainty about the hypothesis results; and 6) each negative case requires that the hypothesis be reformulated until there are no exceptions. It is the nature of the divergence that provides information on how the hypothesis needs to be revised. Therefore, it is deviant cases that are specifically sought out so that the theory in development can be maximally generalized to all relevant samples.

Glaser and Strauss (1967, as cited in Ratcliff, 1994) contend that analytic induction involves generating theory as well as testing theory in a provisional manner, whereas grounded theory emphasizes generating theory. Patton (2002, p. 493) explains that, over time, researchers using analytic induction have eliminated emphasis on discovering universal generalizations and instead, a modified version of analytic induction has been utilized as a strategy for comparative case analysis that includes examining pre-conceived hypotheses prior to data analysis. The hypotheses are based on research and theory and the hypotheses are revised to fit emerging interpretations of the data over the course of the analysis. With this approach, researchers actively seek to disconfirm emerging hypotheses through negative case analysis.

Patton (2002, p. 455) believes that modified inductive analysis should begin with an inventory of key concepts and phrases, terms and practices that are special to the people being studied. The

categories used in this analysis of interview transcripts have been developed from my reading of the disability studies literature and they reflect, as much as possible, current views of disability as debated and discussed within the disabled people's movement. A review of the treatment of disability within social work literature has provided this researcher with the opportunity to view the disability literature from a critical social work perspective and it has assisted me in examining approaches to disability taught to social work students, through texts and lectures, through the lens of someone who has been exposed to a critical disability studies perspective. Patton (2002, p. 457) refers to this "sense of reference" as sensitizing concepts that bring focus to inductive analysis.

The initial hypothesis used in the modified analytic induction analysis of the interview data was:

- For each case, anti-oppressive social work practice approaches will be consistent with the theoretical framework of critical disability studies.

Each transcript within the case was open-coded to identify issues that were speculated to have a bearing across interviews, to look for any distinctions made by the interviewee, and to look for contradictions made by the interviewee. The next step was to organize the interview data into themes to discover the disability perspective(s) being expressed in the responses to interview questions. I assumed that, if the hypothesis was correct, the responses from the interviews should generally fall within the range of theories and views categorized as critical disability perspectives, as described in Table 2. However, the initial hypothesis required modification to accommodate responses that fell outside the range of theory that is part of critical disability perspectives. As Patton (2002) argues, the test of success is not a comprehensive explanation but the degree to which changes in hypotheses explain the phenomenon with few exceptions.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Instructors and students are not merely the “receivers” of knowledge from texts. Foucault (1972, 1980) understood that knowledge is not discovered but is a product of discourse and power relations. As Strega (2005, p. 218) explains, it is ... “a discursive struggle over which perspective or understanding emerges as the one that counts and has the power to organize relations”. Luke (1995, p. 3) believes that a broader social analysis is necessary to discover how particular perspectives, methods and “truths” are made available, selected, and framed for education. Luke contends that schools and other significant institutions are constructed by discourse and discursive relations. He offers that Foucault’s work:

...shifts our view from a perspective on text and discourse as constructed artifact explicable by reference to essential characteristics of its producers and productive contexts to the study of how texts are constructive of social formations, communities, and individuals’ social identities (Luke, 1995, p. 9).

Fairclough (2003, pp. 202-203) states that the aim of critical social research is better understanding of how societies work and produce both beneficial and detrimental effects, and how the detrimental effects can be mitigated if not eliminated. Fairclough comments that a new discourse may come into an institution without being enacted or inculcated. It may also be enacted, yet never fully inculcated. He believes that we have to consider the conditions for, and the constraints upon the dialectics of discourse in particular cases. Fairclough (2003, 209-210) provides a framework or method for performing critical discourse analysis that informed the critical discourse analysis conducted as part of this study, as follows:

1. Focus on a social problem with a semiotic aspect.
2. Identify obstacles to it being tackled through analysis of:

- a. the network of practices within which it is located;
- b. the relationship of semiosis to other elements within which it is located;
- c. the discourse (the semiosis) itself;
 - i. structural analysis: the order of discourse
 - ii. textual/interactional analysis – both interdiscursive analysis, and linguistic analysis

The objective is to understand how the problem arises and how it is rooted in the way social life is organized, by focusing on the obstacles to its resolution.

3. Consider whether the network of practices in a sense ‘needs’ the problem. The point is to ask whether those who benefit most from the social life have an interest in the problem not being resolved.
4. Reflect critically on the analysis. Critically examine your stance as a researcher.

Remlinger (2005) conducted a critical discourse analysis to examine the spoken and written texts of class sessions, over a six year period (1991 – 1997), at two public universities in the Upper Midwest of the United States. The purpose of the study was to examine the constitution of gender ideologies in the classroom. Specifically, the study demonstrated how students create, reinforce and challenge beliefs, values and attitudes about what it means to be women, men, straight, lesbian and gay as students negotiate meanings and uses of the classroom floor. A similar strategy was taken in this study to develop an understanding of the role of language in constituting ideology; particularly the beliefs, values and attitudes of instructors and students in regard to disability. Semantic analysis of the textual form of classroom lectures and discussions provided an indication of how cultural meanings are constructed, challenged and maintained.

Critical discourse analysis was completed on transcripts of audio-taped sessions made of selected lectures and seminars in which disability was discussed in terms of social work theory and practice approaches with disabled persons. One lecture or seminar was chosen from each BSW program, based on the sample courses analyzed in the manifest content analysis of texts, as follows:

- St. Thomas University School of Social Work – SCWK 5123, Social Work Practice in Diverse Contexts.
- Dalhousie University School of Social Work – SLWK 4380, Disability Policy and Service.
- University of Manitoba Faculty of Social Work– SWRK 4200, Field Focus of Social Work Practice 1, Disability.

This selection of courses had to be revised due to availability of the course selected for audio taping. I initially approached the School of Social Work at Dalhousie University in August 2010 to participate in the study. The School was undergoing accreditation at that time and did not respond to my invitation until November. I was not able to approach instructors for permission to audio tape selected classes until the middle of November which meant that I missed the opportunity to audio tape the Disability Policy and Service class. The elective class addressing disability would not be held again until 2012. After consultation with the members of my Committee, I approached the instructor of SLWK 2222, Advancing Social Justice who agreed to allow me the opportunity to approach the class to participate in the study.

At St. Thomas University School of Social Work I made the decision to audio tape the course, SCWK 5046, Social Work Theory II after speaking with the instructor for the Social Work Practice in Diverse Contexts course. The instructor informed me that the Social Work

Practice in Diverse Contexts was primarily concerned with mid-range and practice theories meant to develop competency in generic skills. A review of the course outline for the Social Work Practice in Diverse Contexts revealed that there were not any classes scheduled to address disability or ableism. The instructor suggested that I consider audio taping a class from the Social Work Theory II course, which focused on the critical exploration of theory and social work practice. I was able to receive permission to audio tape a class from the second theory course addressing “Political Theories – Introduction to Critical Theory Development and Radical Casework”.

The aim of the critical discourse analysis was to determine whether or not the theories and practice approaches to social work found to be prevalent within the social work texts, and analyzed as part of the manifest content analysis, were also prevalent within classroom presentations and discussions; and then to examine how the scholarly discourse on disability fit with contemporary disability studies perspectives. It should be noted that the research approach used in the critical discourse analysis was “overt” based on informing subjects and obtaining their consent. Permission was sought from the instructor of the course to be able to approach students in the selected class for permission to audio tape. On the day of the class I had prepared a script to read to students explaining that participation was voluntary and that I would only audio tape the class if all students who were present signed the Informed Consent Form, agreeing to participate (see Appendix G). The Informed Consent Form explained the purpose of the research and I provided students with the opportunity to ask questions before proceeding with the audio taping. All of the students in the three courses selected for audio taping agreed to participate in the study.

Hammersley (2003, p. 759) cautions that audio recordings are not the same as the social interactions that they record: “They are selective. Much went on before they started and after they stopped.” Hammersley also points out that the researcher, by conducting the research, is engaged in constituting the social order that he/she is claiming to document. This caution proved to be prophetic in the three cases where I was present for the audio taping of a class. Despite my efforts to remain unobtrusive, I was asked by the instructor of one class to participate as a judge in a “Canada reads” exercise, and in another class I was asked to participate in a small role play with the instructor. In a third class I believe that my presence, which had been announced to the students the previous week, may have influenced the students to include examples of oppression based on disability in their discussions. Disability was not a topic that was specifically addressed in the course or in course material on the day of my audio taping.

Summary

All of the BSW programs selected for the study have mission statements that promote values of diversity, inclusiveness, and in at least two of the programs there is an elective course addressing disability and social work practice. However, the BSW programs are also subject to situational factors which serve to influence the theoretical framework and practice approaches at each site of the case. The multicase study design was chosen because it provided an opportunity to examine each BSW program in terms of mission statement and philosophy, expertise of the faculty in relation to disability, and availability of disability services. Understanding the situational context of each site of the case provided an important framework for examining the way that disability was addressed at each BSW program, as revealed by the various analyses.

Chapter Four

Case Study of St. Thomas University School of Social Work

The School of Social Work at St. Thomas University has a post-degree BSW program that has the objective to provide graduates with a generic practice framework, with major emphasis on understanding the structural roots of social problems. The literature review has already argued that structural social work theory is congruent with critical disability theory. One would expect that the St. Thomas University School of Social Work BSW program would teach social work practice approaches to disability from a stance that rejects the medical model in favour of paradigms emerging from critical disability studies.

The main research questions addressed in this case study are:

- What dominant ideas inform the theoretical lenses on disability within social work texts, course outlines, and instruction in core and specialized courses related to disability at the St. Thomas University School of Social Work?
- How consistent are current social work perspectives on disability, found in social work texts in core and specialized courses on disability, with the dominant theoretical perspectives advocated within the critical disability studies literature?

Historical and Geographical Context

St. Thomas College was founded by the Most Reverend Thomas F. Barry, Bishop of Chatham, N.B. with the purpose to provide education for boys at the secondary and junior college levels. It became a degree granting institution on March 9, 1934, and in 1960 an act of the provincial legislature changed the name to St. Thomas University. By 1962 a royal commission on higher education in New Brunswick recommended that St. Thomas University

enter into a federation agreement with the University of New Brunswick and that it should collocate with the latter institution in Fredericton. According to the agreement, St. Thomas is able to grant its own degrees in arts and education, as well as retain control over content and curriculum (St. Thomas University, 2011, History, paras. 5-6).

St. Thomas University is a liberal arts institution, with roots in the faith and tradition of the Roman Catholic Church, supporting the belief that women and men of divergent backgrounds and abilities should have the opportunity to learn and practice critical thought and to realize their academic potential. The Mission Statement asserts that: “We strive to preserve the tradition of academic freedom. We seek to provide a learning and working atmosphere that is free of discrimination, injustice, and violence, and that is responsive, understanding, open and fair” (St. Thomas University, 2011, Mission, para. 6).

A physical tour of the university, utilizing a disability lens, reveals a beautifully landscaped campus shared with the University of New Brunswick. St. Thomas University (STU) is at the top of a steep, winding drive that runs throughout the campus, with buildings overlooking the Saint John River and the city of Fredericton. I observed that the steep incline of the hill running between the two campuses may pose a significant barrier to students using mobility aids, especially during winter months. Several new buildings have been added to the STU campus in recent years, including Brian Mulroney Hall which was dedicated in August 2002, and is the main building housing the School of Social Work. The majority of social work classes are held in this building and if a student, a member of staff, or a faculty member, uses a wheelchair for mobility, he/she will not be able to access the building through the main door because of the number of steps and the lack of an access ramp. A wheelchair accessible door is located at the back of the building where parking for students with disabilities is also located.

The interior of Brian Mulroney Hall has four levels and all are accessible by staircase or a small elevator which opens on two sides. Bathrooms are designed to be accessible to wheelchairs but they are very compact spaces for a person in a wheelchair to negotiate and the doors into the bathrooms have not been equipped with automated openers, instead utilizing lever type door handles. Classrooms are large and accessible, meaning that they are easily negotiated by people who use mobility aids, but they are not equipped with adaptive technology unless it is requested for a specific student registered with the Accessibility Services Centre. In general, the physical tour reveals that the campus, and most buildings, at St. Thomas University were not designed to accommodate the wide range of physical needs that may be required to support students and faculty with physical disabilities.

St. Thomas University Policies Relating to Disability

Section Six of *St. Thomas University Policies* (St. Thomas University Calendar 2010 – 2011, Policy on Students with Disabilities, p. 289), explains that, while students with disabilities are welcome, St. Thomas University has limited resources and must work with existing staff, resources and budgets in attempting to meet each student's specialized learning needs. Students are expected to substantiate their special learning needs through the provision of professional reports. The Coordinator for Services for Student Accessibility maintains a "Register of Students with Disabilities" for all students who have self-identified as having specialized learning needs. In collaboration with each student, the Coordinator calls for a meeting of the professors for the courses that the student is registered in for the purpose of discussing the student's special learning needs and the University's ability to meet those needs. A record of the meeting, and of the understanding reached at the meeting, is maintained and distributed to all of the stakeholders.

The Accessibility Centre is staffed by a coordinator who is located centrally on campus. One of the roles of the coordinator is to distribute an information pamphlet to instructors on the ways that they can address specific disabilities and/or situations in the classroom. The pamphlet explains that students with special needs are among the fastest growing population groups at St. Thomas University, and that the university is both legally and morally obliged to provide accommodation services.

An accommodation is something that is designed to help the student to develop his or her knowledge in spite of and “around” existing learning or other existing disabilities.

Accommodations are basic tools to which special needs students need access to reach their highest potential. When we provide an accommodation, the main aim is not to remedy or treat the disability. The purpose of accommodation is simply to allow the students to perform at their best level of achievement, while limiting the detrimental effects of their disability (St. Thomas University Accessibility Services, n.d. Handbook for Professors on Students with Disabilities and Specialized Learning Needs in the Classroom, p. 1).

The approach to disability taken by the university with respect to accommodation appears to be one that has elements of an individual pathology approach, despite the promotion of accommodation. As Oliver and Sapey (2006, p. 30) explain, the individual model of disability focuses on the problems that individuals encounter in attempting to use their own environment, whereas the social model sees disability as being created by the way that an environment, in this example a university campus, is inaccessible to meet the needs of physically disabled individuals. In walking around the campus at St. Thomas University I observed that there have been few adaptations to the buildings, or to the grounds, of the university to accommodate

disabled people who require mobility aids such as a wheelchair, or a walker. There is a need to change how we address disability, from an approach assisting a disabled person to adjust to or cope with his or her environment, to one of providing a physical environment that is accessible to all:

Disability was not an outcome of bodily pathology, but of social organization: it was socially produced by systematic patterns of exclusion that were – quite literally, built into the social fabric. The built environment, for example, was built for non-disabled people and the norms of construction are such that those with impairments may, and often do, find themselves excluded from a whole range of social spaces that non-disabled people take for granted (Hughes & Paterson, 1997, p. 328).

The language used to describe the effects of disability, as being “detrimental,” as well as the student’s need to develop his or her knowledge “in spite” of existing disability has a negative connotation that has implications for the way that disability, and disabled people, are perceived by others. In an article examining the social constructions of race, gender, sexual orientation, and disability, Gordon and Rosenblum (2001) examine how some groups in society, and in particular disabled people, are denied the attributes that are valued by the dominant culture.

Finally, people with impairments – just like those in stigmatized race, sex, and sexual orientation categories – are presumed to lack or be unable to realize the values and attributes the culture esteems. They are not expected to be dominant, active, independent, competitive, adventurous, sexual, self-controlled, healthy, intelligent, attractive, or competent. Like those in other stigmatized categories, they risk being seen as *nothing but a problem* – because they are assumed to suffer from problems and are expected to be a

problem “for the rest of us” (Rosenblum & Travis, as cited in Gordon & Rosenblum, 2001, p. 14).

The sentence in the Accessibility Centre’s explanation of accommodation could just have easily been reframed to state: “The purpose of accommodation is to allow the students to perform at their best level of achievement.”

Students are required to discuss accommodation needs in advance of registering for a course but are not obligated to disclose the nature of the disability. General suggestions for instructors are made in the pamphlet:

- Make text book/course materials available in advance to provide time for translation to other formats;
- Expect peer note-takers or tape recorders in the classroom;
- Provide assistance interpreting graphics or pictures;
- Avoid being overly solicitous and wait until the student asks for help;
- Speak directly to the student and not to the interpreter or peer companion; and
- Expect some students to need extended time consideration when completing assignments and exams.

The Accessibility Centre pamphlet outlines special arrangements that may be necessary depending on impairment. There are general guidelines for students who are blind or have visual impairments, for the deaf/hard of hearing student, for the student with mobility impairment, for helping the student with a learning or attention-related disability, and for students with chronic or temporary medical conditions or psychiatric disabilities. It is of interest to note that disabilities related to mental health conditions are not mentioned in the pamphlet.

The Coordinator for Student Accessibility at St. Thomas University informed me that the Accessibility Services Centre was established in January 2005 (M. Nedashkivska, personal communication, November 02, 2011). During the academic year of 2010 – 2011, the period of particular interest to this study, there were 137 students registered with the Centre. The Centre has one Coordinator, Marina, and an administrative assistant, although there is a plan to hire a part time examination scheduler. The Centre prefers to recruit mature students who are in their 3rd or 4th year of study as transcribers, note-takers and peer tutors. Tutor-coaching services are provided and paid for through Canada Study Grants. Peer tutors work up to 4 hours a week with the students registered with the Centre, compared with the 2 hours a week that can be provided through regular student services. The Centre is able to provide technical aids for close captioning and the UNB Accessibility Centre located at the UNB Library will assist students and instructors with accessing more specialized supports for the classroom. Currently, the Hard of Hearing Association provides sign language interpretation in the classroom for live lectures. Available adaptive computer technology includes Kurzweil 1000 for people with low vision, Kurzweil 3000 for people with learning difficulties such as dyslexia and attention deficit disorder, Dragon to assist people with dictating speech into a typed format, and Inspiration to assist students with visual thinking and strategizing.

St. Thomas University School of Social Work

The social work program at St. Thomas University emphasizes understanding the structural roots of social problems in Canadian society; “the cause of much of the suffering and inequality in society is seen to be rooted in our social and economic order, and not in the individual, family, or the subculture” (St. Thomas University School of Social Work, 2011, Programmes). It is the only English-language professional social work program in New Brunswick. The founding

Director of the Department of Social Work was Dr. Robert Mullaly, the author of several academic social work texts on structural social work and on challenging oppression. The main objective of the post-degree Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree is to provide graduates with a generic practice framework. The post-degree BSW is described as an intensive, 60 credit hours, 15 month program that builds on the student's previous undergraduate education. Enrolment is limited to 45 students and candidates are assessed on a combination of academic criteria and professional suitability. The program is accredited by the Canadian Association for Social Work Education. There is also a Mi'kmaq/Maliseet Bachelor of Social Work Program offered jointly by Dalhousie University School of Social Work and St. Thomas University School of Social Work, and that program is located in Sackville, New Brunswick. The post-degree BSW program at the Fredericton campus was the only program included in this study because it is a mainstream academic program and has similar program objectives and approaches to social work education curricula as the other two BSW programs.

The BSW program at St. Thomas University School of Social Work supports an affirmative action policy which may be applied to candidates who meet the minimum entrance requirements and who are members of groups that have been traditionally disadvantaged; black persons, Indigenous people, physically disabled persons and family members who have had to rely on social service agencies for the basic necessities of life (St. Thomas University, 2011, Bachelor of Social Work Affirmative Action Policy). It should be observed that the policy does not include people with psychiatric or mental health disabilities as one of its target groups for affirmative action.

In the article, "Best Practices in Promoting Disability Inclusion Within Canadian Schools of Social Work" (Dunn et al., 2008), the authors contend that schools of social work need to adopt a

principle of educational equity, rather than address disadvantage solely through affirmative action policies at admission. According to the authors of the article, schools of social work should have an admission process in which students with disabilities are assigned extra merit by; assigning extra points to the admission score; direct admission given to students meeting minimum standards, or a quota system. In addition, the authors believe that students with disabilities should be represented on the School's admission committee, and take an active part in making decisions pertaining to offers of admission (Dunn et al., 2008, p. 3). One of the other limits to an affirmative action policy at admission is that students with disabilities need to apply to the social work program before the policy can be implemented. Education equity, as explained in the article, would also mean establishing a program of recruitment for students with disabilities, although the authors comment that recruiting students with disabilities will be ineffective if the resources and supports for accommodations are not adequate or if the university is physically inaccessible (Dunn et al., 2008, p. 2).

I was informed by the Chair of the School, Dr. John Coates, that effective May 17th, 2012 a new Equity Policy was approved by the senate in relation to admission to the social work program (J. Coates, personal communication, May 18, 2012). The Equity Admissions Policy replaces the Affirmative Action Policy. The new policy states, that rather than identify specific groups, it will apply to any applicant who has experienced marginalization, underrepresentation, or discrimination. Applicants must complete an Educational Equity Statement stating that they have experienced structural barriers because of their self-identification with a specific group, or because of labels imposed on them by society. The equity statement will then be assessed by the members of the School of Social Work, and applicants may be awarded up to 5 points on the scoring system used to select successful applicants.

The admission requirements for the St. Thomas University School of Social Work BSW Program are as follows (St. Thomas University, 2011, Bachelor of Social Work Overview);

- A Bachelor's degree with a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 or a minimum GPA of 3.0 on the most recent 60 credit hours. Applicants with a Bachelor's degree who do not make the grade point average requirement may be considered for admission two years after graduation if the applicant achieves a grade point average of at least 3.0 based on course work completed after graduation (a minimum of 15 credit hours in courses taken at the second year level or higher);
- A minimum of 60 credit hours in liberal arts;
- An empirical research methods course acceptable to the School of Social Work;
- A critical awareness of the interaction among the individual and the social, political, and economic aspects of society and a demonstrated recognition that for structural social workers the main focus for change is the structure of society rather than the individual;
- Evidence of familiarity with, and commitment to, the profession of social work, as well as the capacity to learn from experience.

Mission Statement and Philosophy

The Mission Statement of the BSW Program at St. Thomas University is consistent with the practical and philosophical mission of the larger university; "...There is an intrinsic understanding of the diversity of people attempting to work collaboratively in the education endeavor as well as an acceptance of the conflictual nature of growth and change..." (St. Thomas University, 2011, School of Social Work Student Handbook, p. 8). The mission statement also asserts that it is the primary objective of the School to facilitate student development to a beginning level of practice competence within a structural social work perspective. This,

according to the handbook, is achieved by fostering critical thinking and critical self-reflection, and by teaching students the values, ethics, knowledge and skills required to promote social justice in practice. Students, as prospective social workers, are also given responsibility to assist people in achieving human potential and to work for the social and material conditions which would enable this growth. According to the student handbook this understanding is framed within a context that seeks ecological justice and lifelong learning.

The St. Thomas University School of Social Work strives to create a community-oriented environment based on inclusion and mutual respect; “Giving voice to all members of the community is intrinsic to the recognition of diversity and necessary to sustain the partnership required to support an empowering learning and teaching experience and to foster the development of structural social work theory and practice” (St. Thomas University, 2011, School of Social Work Student Handbook, p. 8). This Mission Statement is supported by a number of philosophical principles;

- Development of a community based on the values of mutual respect, open-mindedness, acceptance, compassion, flexibility, and creativity are essential to a learning environment that is empowering for all those who participate in the BSW community;
- The School is committed to resolving issues through constructive and creative problem solving; Conflict is viewed as normal and confusion and uncertainty are part of the natural learning process; challenges that foster healing and reconciliation on a personal and collective basis; and
- Learning is a collaborative, social process.

Faculty

The *School Of Social Work Student Handbook 2011 – 2012* (St. Thomas University, 2011) lists eight faculty members; a professor who is also the Director, three associate professors, three assistant professors and one field education coordinator. A review of the faculty credentials, also described in the handbook, indicates a diverse range of knowledge and experience in the research areas of; trauma and youth homelessness, spirituality and social work, ecological concerns within social work, social action and social movements, cross-cultural and community-based approaches, political engagement of social workers, alternative approaches to addictions, issues related to First Nations populations, and women's issues in relation to trauma and violence. Disability is not listed as a research interest for any faculty member, although one assistant professor and one associate professor have social work practice experience in the area of community-based mental health.

BSW Degree Requirements

The successful completion of the BSW degree requires the student to have two field practicum courses totaling 700 hours. This field experience is under the supervision of a professional social worker and in consideration of this requirement, there are two Field Instruction Courses (SCWK 5059 and 5083), which introduce values and ethics of the profession, and theories relevant to social work practice with individuals, groups and communities. The program requirements are outlined as follows (St. Thomas University, 2011, School of Social Work Student Handbook, p. 12):

Semester I Fall Schedule (August to December)

SCWK 5006 Preparation for Professional Social Work Practice	3.0 credit hours
SCWK 5013 Group Work Theory and Design (Module 1)	1.5 credit hours
SCWK 5023 The Profession of Social Work in Context	3.0 credit hours
SCWK 5036 Theory for Social Work Practice I	6.0 credit hours
SCWK 5116 Generalist Social Work Practice Skills	3.0 credit hours
SCWK 5213 Fundamentals for Community Organizing	3.0 credit hours

Semester II Winter Schedule (January to March)

SCWK 5006 Preparation for Professional Social Work Practice	3.0 credit hours
SCWK 5013 Group Work Theory and Design (Module 2)	1.5 credit hours
SCWK 5046 Theory for Social Work Practice II	6.0 credit hours
SCWK 5116 Generalist Social Work Practice Skills	3.0 credit hours
SCWK 5223 Organizing for Action with Diverse Groups	3.0 credit hours
SCWK 5313 Social Policy in the Canadian Context	3.0 credit hours

Semester III Spring Schedule (April to June)

SCWK 5059 Field Instruction I (450 hours)	9.0 credit hours
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Semester IV Fall Schedule (September to December)

SCWK 5083 Field Instruction II (250 hours)	3.0 credit hours
SCWK 5323 Social Policy – Current and Global	3.0 credit hours
Two elective courses	6.0 credit hours
Total Credits	60 credit hours

A review of the curriculum reveals that there is not any course offered at St. Thomas University School of Social Work that specifically addresses disability or social work practice from a disability perspective.

Findings

Several site visits to the St. Thomas University School of Social Work were carried out between the fall of 2010 and spring/summer of 2011. The methodology utilized for data collection included a manifest content analysis of course outlines, texts and required readings from three core theory courses; a modified inductive analysis of transcripts from interviews with three key informants (instructors) from the courses; and a critical discourse analysis of a transcript made from audio-taping a classroom discussion on theories informing anti-oppressive social work practice.

Manifest Content Analysis

This study utilized manifest content analysis to count the number of mentions of perspectives of disability; individual pathology, social pathology and critical disability theories, in course outlines, required readings and assigned text books for three core courses. Particular attention

was paid to identifying social work practice approaches to disability and their association with particular theoretical perspectives, as mentioned in the texts. The research question guiding the manifest content analysis was:

- Are social work practice approaches to disability, as represented in various texts, concerned more with theories of individual pathology, social pathology or with critical disability theory?

As outlined in the research methodology, the course outline for SCWK 5036, “Theory for Social Work Practice I”, was requested because it was described in the calendar as being mandatory for all BSW students. The course was offered during the fall term of 2010 for a period of 14 weeks. The course outline states that the text book assigned for the course was *The New Structural Social Work* (Mullaly, 2007). The focus of the course was to assist social work students to develop a critical analysis of social welfare programs, social services, and social work interventions, primarily within the Canadian context. Emphasis was placed on structural social work as the theoretical framework for the course, although additional anti-oppressive perspectives were introduced, including; African-centered worldviews, Green socialism, feminist, postmodern, and Indigenous perspectives, and spirituality.

The course outline was requested for SCWK 4123, “Social Work in Diverse Contexts”, which was designed to prepare students for their initial field practice experience, especially in relation to practice theory and skill development related to crisis intervention, working with families, issues of gender, sexual orientation, and culture. The course outline stated that an orientation to the values and characteristics of anti-oppressive practice would assist students with understanding the basic principles, and the generic skills, of an empowerment approach to

practice. The course was offered during the winter term of 2011, and ran for a period of 11 weeks. There was not any assigned text for the course, but there was a package of readings provided to the students by the instructor.

The course outline for SCWK 5046, “Social Work Theory II”, indicated that it was the second core theory course of the BSW program, and that the course provided students with an opportunity to build on the theoretical foundations of the first theory course. The focus of the course was to assist students to link social work theory with practice so that they would be able to articulate their own approach to social work practice, and be able to integrate professional social work values into their personal belief systems. The course presented recent and critical developments in knowledge and theory, along with a variety of theories intended to enhance structural social work practice. The course ran during the winter term of 2011, twice a week for a period of 11 weeks. A package of readings for the course was purchased by students and each week the students had at least two required readings, and several supplementary readings, to complete prior to class.

A review of the course content section in each of the three course outlines sampled for the case study at the St. Thomas University School of Social Work BSW program found two classes in the course, “Theory for Social Work Practice I”, which addressed disability. One class addressed oppression in language, critical anti-racist practice, and the construction of heterosexuality as “normal”. The class viewed a video “A psychiatric problem” (CBC television, October 16, 1959), available from; www.archives.cbc.ca/politics/rights_freedoms/clips/3222. A second class examined structural social work practice elements with service users, including people with disabilities and discussed a journal reading; “Towards a Critical theory of Disability in Social Work” (Hiranandani, 2005a).

The findings of the manifest content analysis are provided in Table 6. In total, 70 texts were reviewed for the purpose of the manifest content analysis with only 22 texts found to contain disability related content. A range of disability perspectives was found in the 22 texts, with only two mentions of the individual pathology perspective found in the course, “Social Work in Diverse Contexts”, having any relevance for an analysis of social work practice approaches to disability. Mentions of individual pathology perspectives found in the texts were generally included as part of a discussion advocating for the adoption of social pathology and critical disability perspectives, and should not be considered indicative of the approach to disability taken in any of the courses.

- Theory for Social Work Practice I (SCWK 5036) had 47 mentions of disability perspectives: 8 (17%) individual pathology; 7 (15%) social pathology; and 32 (68%) critical disability perspectives.
- Social Work in Diverse Contexts (SCWK 5123) had 5 mentions of disability perspectives: 3 (60%) individual pathology; and 2 (40%) social pathology perspectives.
- Theory for Social Work II (SCWK 5046) had 29 mentions of disability perspectives: 27 (93%) social pathology; and 2 (7%) critical disability perspectives.

Table 6

Frequency of Mentions of Perspectives of Disability – St. Thomas University School of Social Work BSW Texts

<u>Course</u>	<u>Individual Pathology</u>	<u>Social Pathology</u>	<u>Critical Disability Perspectives</u>	<u>Totals</u>
5036	8 (17%)	7 (15%)	32 (68%)	47
5123	3 (60%)	2 (40%)	0	5
5046	0	27 (93%)	2	29
Totals	11 (14%)	36 (44%)	34 (42%)	81

Number of texts; $n = 70$

Number of texts with disability related content = 22

Discussion of findings from the manifest content analysis. The course, “Theory for Social Work Practice I”, did not have any references to disability or ableism in the course outline, but had a high percentage of critical disability perspectives (68%) in course content compared with the other two courses, primarily because of a reading titled: “Toward a Critical Theory of Disability in Social Work” (Hiranandani, 2005a). The article speaks to the dominance of the individual pathology approach to disability within social work and advocates for an interdisciplinary approach to disability drawn from the humanities, social sciences and disability studies. The reading identifies and explains many of the theoretical approaches to disability prevalent within the disability studies literature such as; the social model of disability, Marxist analyses, a political economy perspective, Foucault’s analysis of disciplinary power, discourses of normalcy and measurement, feminist theory, and disability art and culture. This reading also accounts for 5 mentions of the individual pathology perspective, which the article critiques for focusing on individual dysfunction, rather than linking disability to social, cultural and political milieu (Hiranandani, 2005a). The following excerpts from the reading are examples of Marxism, and of Foucault’s postmodern perspective, which were categorized and counted as critical disability perspectives:

The development of capitalism led to economic changes in the organization of labour, leading to profound implications for social relations, family life, and attitudes...industrial capitalism excluded disabled people from equal participation in the labour force (Priestley, 1999, as cited in Hiranandani, 2005a, p. 7); and

Value-laden normalizing gaze of biological sciences became a device for the scaling and measuring of physical and mental capacities against standardized norms. A critical analysis of the discourse of normality and measurement, therefore, would serve to illuminate and expose power inequities (Hiranandani, 2005, p. 7).

The Hiranandani article provides an overview of many of the important social theories informing critical disability studies. However, the article concludes that the alternative frameworks presented in the paper may form the foundations of a dynamic critical theory of disability, but the article makes no suggestion, other than interdisciplinary collaboration, as to what a critical theory framework addressing disability in social work would look like, or whether or not there are theoretical frameworks already in existence that could be utilized for this purpose. In fairness to the author of the article, the paper does call for a re-visioning of disability and it is clearly meant to challenge social work's conventional understanding about disability.

The first theory course (SCWK 5036) utilized a course textbook in addition to readings; *The New Structural Social Work* (Mullaly, 2007). This text examines oppression at the individual, cultural, and institutional levels of society from a critical social theory perspective referred to as a "structural theory approach". Examples of this perspective and its approach to disability were found in the text, as follows:

Classism and patriarchy are not the only oppressions concerning radical social workers; racism, ageism, heterosexism, imperialism, and ableism are increasingly viewed as structurally oppressive forces (Mullaly, 2007, p. 214); and

The essence of socialist ideology, radical social work, critical theory, and the change perspective is that inequality: (1) is a natural, inherent (i.e. structural) part of capitalism; (2) falls along such lines as class, gender, race, sexual orientation, age, ability, and geographical location (Mullaly, 2007, p. 244).

It has already been argued in the literature review to this study that Mullaly's (2007) theoretical framework of social work appears to be congruent with the approaches to disability advocated within the critical disability studies literature. However, it cannot be assumed that the use of Mullaly's text alone indicates that the St. Thomas University School of Social Work has adopted a critical disability perspective. As British disability social work educators, Michael Oliver and Bob Sapey caution; "Anti-disablist social work cannot be taught from textbooks alone, as the hegemony of the individual model prevents even those who are aware of oppression from developing a full understanding of what is involved (Oliver & Sapey, 2006, p. 183).

The first theory course also had the sole reading presenting an Indigenous perspective on disability in relation to health. The reading "The Occasional Evil of Angels: Learning from the Experiences of Indigenous Peoples and Social Work" (Blackstock, 2009) does not address disability in a direct way, but a discussion of "Jordan's Principle" speaks to the experience of Indigenous children who have health problems. Blackstock explains the case of Jordan, a First Nation boy with a complex medical condition, who died in hospital without ever setting foot in his home community because of a jurisdictional and bureaucratic stalemate over responsibility for funding his complex health care needs.

"Social Work in Diverse Contexts" (SCWK 5123), a course designed to teach social work students to generalize both knowledge and practice skills to diverse populations, had only five

mentions of disability perspectives. Several readings in this course discussed social work practice interventions with loss and complicated grief, and they presented disability as a condition of vulnerability and dependence, which is clearly indicative of an individual pathology perspective. An example of text that I categorized as representative of this individual pathology perspective is provided, as follows:

Symbolic losses, discussed in Chapter 1, may include loss of the family life when divorce occurs, the loss of the type of future one imagined for a child if the child is born with, or acquires, a disabling condition... (Walsh-Burke, 2006, p. 47).

There is an assumption that a child born with or acquiring a disability will not meet someone's expectations or hopes for an imagined future for him/her and that this person will need social work intervention to help adjust to this loss. This assumption is consistent with a personal tragedy view of disability in which theorists imagine what it would be like to become disabled, assume it would be a tragedy, and then decide that such an occurrence would require psychological mechanisms of adjustment (Oliver & Sapey, 2006, p. 25). Recent developments within social work education addressing disability have focused on drawing on disabled people's accounts of their own experiences (Cameron & Tossell, 2012, p. 243). Social work has a responsibility to promote understanding of impairment as difference, which must be expected and respected on its own terms. "Impairment is not some tragic, exceptional aberration, but is an ordinary part of human experience" (Cameron & Tossell, 2012, p. 243).

In the course, *Social Work in Diverse Contexts*, there were two references to disability from a social pathology perspective:

By contrast, the consumer rights discourse that underpins some contemporary service users' advocacy agencies, particularly in mental health and disability fields, repositions clients as experts...(Healy, 2005, p. 9); and

Social workers strive to identify, document, and advocate for the elimination and prevention of domination or exploitation of, and against, any person, group, or class, on the basis of age, abilities... (CASW Guidelines for Ethical Practice, as cited in Miller, 2007, p. 49).

The first quotation, from Healy (2005), was categorized as a mention of the social pathology perspective because the consumer rights movement was part of the impetus for the Independent Living Movement, a social movement which grew out of the self-advocacy of disabled individuals, but over time assumed many aspects of mainstream organization and service delivery. Barnes and Mercer (2003, p. 116) comment that the American Independent Living Movement (ILM) was primarily based on the ideological cornerstones of American society; market capitalism, consumer sovereignty, self-reliance, and economic and political freedom. They argue that the ILM advocated distinctive approaches to traditional rehabilitative services in terms of aims, methods of delivery and personal care, in contrast to professionally dominated modes. They found that Centres for Independent Living (CILs), while in the vanguard of disability politics during the 1970s, had become more neutral service providers by the 1990s. However, today Barnes (2012, p. 15) acknowledges that CILs have provided a range of innovative services designed to empower people with impairments for a lifestyle of their own choosing within, rather than apart from, their local community.

The second quotation, from the Canadian Association of Social Workers, was also categorized as representative of the social pathology perspective because the approach of advocacy appears more consistent with a rights-based perspective, as delineated by Rioux (1997). Rioux views the human rights approach to disability as one in which human diversity is supported and disadvantaged individuals are empowered through legislation and social policy. However, Canadian social policy analyst, Michael J. Prince (2004a) comments that disability policy in Canada has traditionally been, and remains largely today, a dimension of health, education, social services, and income security fields. He argues that disability policy constructs a discourse consistent with Foucault's concept of bio-power through the creation of these structures and practices; "...that is, to the strategic organization of power and knowledge to manage health problems and needs, among other issues..." (Prince, 2004, p. 63). Prince believes that the discourse embodied within government structures and policies link health issues and conditions to the wider interests of the general population in which the prevailing culture rests largely on political economy and medical science (Prince, 2004, p. 77). The consequence for disabled people is that there has been an incomplete realization of human rights, and a lack of choices to individuals and families in enjoying a decent and dignified life.

The course, "Social Work Theory II" (SCWK 5046), is the second half of the core theory requirement for the BSW degree at the St. Thomas University School of Social Work. There were twenty three readings required for the course and eight of those readings referenced disability, with the majority of mentions representing social pathology perspectives (93%). Examples of this perspective, taken from the course texts, are provided as follows:

Theories that pathologize oppressed populations place a primary focus on deficit, illness and problems ...In contrast, theories that are consistent with the strengths perspective portray people as being most likely to grow and develop when their strengths, rather than their problems are, recognized and supported (Robbins, Chatterjee & Canda, 1999, p. 381); and

...a generalist approach to direct practice assessment includes particular sensitivity to issues of diversity (e.g. gender, race, culture, class, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion) and oppression (Coady & Lehmann, 2008, p. 7).

An ecological systems perspective, combined with a strengths-based case management approach that uses the principle of empowerment, is a departure from the medical model and is a step towards the minority model of disability according to Mackelprang and Salsgiver (1996, p. 11). The ecological, or ecosystems paradigm, challenges understandings of social problems based on a medical or personal deficiency model, and looks beyond the individual person when designing solutions (Finn & Jacobson, 2003, p.60). However, the emphasis on the “fit” of individuals within a social context tends to support, rather than question, the dominant social order. Although it is recognized that strengths perspectives, along with empowerment and resiliency perspectives, have assumed that disabled people have strengths, capacities, knowledge, and resources, it has not had the transformational power to change social and individual attitudes about disability (Hiranandani, 2005b).

The second quotation, from Coady and Lehmann (2008), supporting a generalist approach to direct practice assessment including sensitivity to issues of diversity, was categorized as being consistent with a social pathology perspective. Both critical social work theorists and disability

studies theorists raise the concern that sensitivity to issues of diversity does not address the inequality of power relations between white people and people of colour, or between non-disabled people and disabled people. Pease (2010) observes that the diversity approach assumes that it is only non-white people that have a culture and race; “The focus is often on cultural and ethnic differences at the expense of structural and political issues” (Pease, 2010, p. 112).

Australian social work educator and critical disability studies theorist, Helen Meekosha, calls for social workers to move beyond the boundaries between gender, race, ethnicity, class and disability because they are all social constructions of exclusion (Meekosha, 2006, p. 172). She believes that acknowledging difference means that social workers and disability activists must be cognizant of differential social, economic and political power and should interrogate the process of boundary-making.

There were two readings in the second social work theory course which made mention of disability from a critical theory perspective, and one of the two examples of this perspective references assumptions of normalcy:

Again, a physical disability is not necessarily a personal problem, but it is defined as one since most of our categories of normality assume a physically intact body (Fook, 1993, p. 78).

Hughes and Paterson (1997) argue that the body is at the heart of contemporary political and theoretical debate within disability studies. They contend that Foucault conceived of the body as the object of knowledge and a target for the exercise of power (Hughes & Paterson, 1997, p. 332). In particular, Foucault argued that the new science of medicine, which emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, assumed a “normalizing” gaze of the human body, and the

normalizing gaze of the biological sciences became a device for scaling and measuring physical and mental capacities against standardized norms (Hiranandani, 2005b, p. 77). Davis (2006) writes that the concept of normalcy actually creates the problem of disability. He contends that the concept of the “norm” is utilized to represent the non-disabled majority of the population; “The norm pins down that majority of the population that falls under the arch of the standard bell-shaped curve” (Davis, 2006, p. 6). When the concept of the norm is operative, then disabled people will be thought of as deviants. Garland-Thomson utilizes a feminist post-structural analysis to point out the parallels between social meanings attributed to female bodies and those assigned to disabled bodies because both are cast as deviant and inferior, both are excluded from full participation in public life, and both are defined in opposition to a norm that is assumed to possess natural physical superiority (Garland-Thomson, 2006, p. 7). Social work practice from a critical disability perspective would focus on the construction of normalcy, and the ways in which power and the normative image resonate in culture (Hiranandani, 2005b, p. 78).

Summary of findings from the manifest content analysis of texts. Only 31% (22 out of 70 texts) of the total number of texts reviewed in the three core theory courses at St. Thomas University School of Social Work had content related to disability, and only one text directly addressed disability and social work practice. The “Theory for Social Work Practice I” course utilized a textbook which addressed ableism under the broad theoretical framework of structural social work theory and oppression. Disabled people were included as one group of a larger population of oppressed people who experience multiple forms of oppression based on experiences of exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence (Mullaly, 2007, pp. 264-269).

The social work course on developing practice skills with diverse client groups “Social Work in Diverse Contexts” (SCWK 5123) had very little disability-related content when compared to the other two theory courses. Out of five mentions of disability in the course, two mentions emphasized the need for social workers to assist people with the vulnerability and loss associated with disability, an approach characteristic of the individual pathology perspective. It is not known how this topic was addressed during a class discussion of the reading. The first core theory course (SCWK 5036) had proportionately higher mentions of critical disability perspectives than the second core theory course (SCWK 5046), primarily due to one reading describing alternative views on disability, which included many of the critical disability perspectives found in the disability studies literature. The second theory course had higher mentions of social pathology perspectives than the other two courses, and the mentions were related to direct social work practice theories promoting consumer rights, advocacy, strengths perspectives, sensitivity to diversity, humanitarianism, and social role valorization.

The research question guiding the manifest content analysis of texts from the three core theory courses at the St. Thomas University School of Social Work BSW Program asked if the social work practice approaches to disability would be more consistent with theories of individual pathology, social pathology, or with critical disability perspectives. Although there were few texts with disability-related content, those making reference to areas of social work practice were primarily categorized as being social pathology perspectives consistent with a rights-based approach to disability. It should also be noted that in the course called “Social Work in Diverse Contexts”, there were two mentions of the individual pathology perspective of disability in relation to direct social work practice.

Interviews with Key Informants

Three instructors at the St. Thomas University School of Social Work agreed to participate in interviews. A standardized open-ended interview was used to ask the instructors questions about the texts that had been chosen for their respective courses, and the theoretical perspectives that they planned to cover in relation to disability and oppression. The questions used in the interviews are outlined in the Interview Protocol at Appendix E, and while every attempt was made to follow the standardized interview format, there were times when it was necessary to ask more probing questions. For example, if an instructor was simply following a course outline from a previous instructor, I added a question on what the current instructor would like to change about the course outline if there was an opportunity to re-design it. This additional question provided some insight into the theoretical perspective of the individual instructor in relation to disability and oppression. One of the interview tapes had several sections where the interviewee spoke too low for the microphone to pick up all of the responses to my questions. However, the interview was included because there was enough transcribed content to be considered significant to the analysis.

The first question of the interview protocol asked the instructor how he/she came to be involved in teaching the course selected in the purposive sample. This opening question was designed to elicit information on whether or not the instructor had a special interest in the course material, if they had designed the course curriculum, or if they had inherited the course curriculum from another instructor. All three of the instructors commented that the courses they taught were foundational courses that were offered each year in the BSW program. One instructor explained that the course outline did not reflect his/her personal choice of reading material, but that he/she had asked to teach the course out of his/her own interest in the diverse

contexts of social work practice. Instructors were also asked about the texts that they chose to help social work students understand various perspectives on disability and oppression. Two instructors used the same text book; *The New Structural Social Work* (Mullaly, 2007), in combination with assigned readings. One instructor used a package of readings covering a wide range of social work practice approaches with different populations. One instructor included a journal article on disability as required reading in his/her course outline, but commented to me that there was a dearth of articles related to disability and social work, especially from a critical theory perspective.

Once the interview tapes were transcribed, modified analytic induction was used to analyze the transcripts and to test my initial proposition:

- For each case, anti-oppressive social work practice approaches will be consistent with the theoretical framework of critical disability studies.

I believed that the anti-oppressive social work theory and practice skills being taught at St. Thomas University School of Social Work would be found to be consistent with the theoretical framework of critical disability studies, since the School endorses a structural theory approach to addressing inequity and social issues. The literature review to this study presented the argument that Mullaly's (2007) structural theory framework of progressive social work is congruent with critical disability perspectives advocated within the disability studies literature.

The findings from the modified inductive analysis were summarized into the four top-level categories or themes developed from coding segments of text into categories related to theory and practice approaches to disability and oppression at the School: 1) theoretical approach to ableism; 2) structural social work practice elements and disability; 3) the role of pedagogy in

educating students about ableism and other forms of oppression; and 4) the importance of the positionality of the instructor.

Theoretical approach to ableism. All three of the instructors emphasized that they taught anti-oppression perspectives consistent with critical theory and structural social work theory;

...we deal with, as an introductory course, the concept of oppression itself and how it's part of structural social work analysis, critical theory analysis...I use Iris Young's article on the five faces of oppression, that kind of thing, and then within that pull in examples; sexism, racism, ableism, heterosexism, all those kinds of ways that oppression is structured.

In terms of other theories taught at the St. Thomas University School of Social Work, instructors included postmodern perspectives, recognizing the importance of diversity and individual experience. As one instructor stated:

To be taking a strategy, a postmodern approach to social work, to get them to realize that we all have a different story and that I can't know what your story is and you can't know what my story is so we need to start off by listening...

Social constructionism was another theoretical perspective which was represented in the transcripts from the interviews:

It's [oppression] socially constructed, that's probably the most important thing. That is, it's culturally defined and socially determined. Other societies will have variations on that.

Structural social work practice elements and disability. The instructors emphasized that the curriculum was designed to assist students to link structural theory with practice in working with oppressed people and groups:

It's the notion of action and the notion of citizenship. Social workers are good at critically self-reflecting, and then I feel that structural social workers must consider themselves as citizens. We are responsible for ourselves, our clients, our agencies...a broader sense of socio-political...We have started a social action placement here...If people practice something while they are learning they are more apt to practice it when they are working.

One instructor had assigned a reading on disability for a class on structural social work practice elements and working with disabled service users:

The Hiranandani article is an overview of perspectives of disability. That's the article that I use for social work and the foundational theory course and this, technically, would be my perspective; the critical theory of disability.

The use of personal experiences of oppression, contributed by students, was a common theme across the three interviews:

...we as practitioners are inherently complicit in oppressive practice and so one of the most critical and valuable skills is reflexivity, so exploring the self and presence of the self; assumptions, biases, blinders, hegemonic practice, in an effort to continually evaluate practice and impact on vulnerable, marginalized and oppressed folks.

The role of pedagogy in educating students about ableism and other forms of oppression. Pedagogy emerged as an important link between theory and practice for assisting

students to understand how oppression operates at the intrapsychic, interpersonal and cultural levels of experience. The *School of Social Work Student Handbook* 2011 – 2012, distributed on the St. Thomas University School of Social Work website, describes pedagogical competence as taking approaches to teaching that are embedded in values of acceptance, self-determination, respect for diversity, inclusivity and accountability. One of the activities that instructors are asked to engage in is responding to communication patterns that involve power imbalances, including ableism. One instructor explained:

...it's a way of working and being present in practice. Someone like Willie Ermine, and I've been told by practice in the _____ that what I described in my practice working with women who are healing from sexual abuse, is that the healing process is about co-creating a space, which Willie Ermine described as ethical space and that to me is what I would like to work towards bringing into the classroom, an ethical space where it's an exploration of values as well as practice.

The importance of the positionality of the instructor. The stance or positionality of the instructor plays an important role in determining the type of examples that are presented for discussion and critical analysis during a course. For two of the instructors, a feminist analysis of oppression using gender-focused examples was an approach with which they were most comfortable:

I realize more and more that I am tending to work with gender an awful lot, I have been using my own examples of gender analysis to illustrate points. I would like to illustrate points from other forms of oppression, but I pick gender because I understand it out of my own oppression.

The third instructor who was interviewed tended to use examples related to racism;

Because I look like an Indigenous person, when I first started talking about racism I was taking a much more strident approach in presenting the critical material that I found. And since most of the students are not culturally diverse I found that I was making them uncomfortable talking about it.

Findings from the modified inductive analysis of interview transcriptions. All three instructors at the St. Thomas University School of Social Work stressed the importance of integrating structural social work theory into anti-oppressive social work practice. Anti-oppressive social work practice, from a structural theory perspective, involves understanding the various ways that individuals and groups experience oppression through processes of exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence (Mullaly, 2007, 2010; Young, 1990), and at least one instructor commented that this was the theoretical approach to oppression taken in his/her course. One instructor commented that postmodern theories provided students with an analysis incorporating diversity and individual experience, while another stated that the social construction of oppression was the “most important thing”. All three of the instructors expressed the belief that students would be able to generalize structural social work with oppressed groups from a discussion of readings and sharing of personal experiences with oppression. Only one instructor included a reading on social work and disability in his/her course, and although all of the instructors said that students were encouraged to talk about their own experiences of oppression, those discussions may not have included experience with disability and ableism.

Mullaly (2007, p. 284) comments that oppression must be understood as a systemic situation produced and reproduced in everyday social processes and practices, which is why it is important to have students examine oppressive processes and practices within their own lives. Mullaly also explains that an understanding of personal and individual oppression, and various types of internalized oppression, may assist social workers to better understand the person's situation and to assist her or him in sorting through helpful and counterproductive responses to his/her oppression (Mullaly, 2007, p. 285). However, if students are not exposed to disability and ableism at a personal level, they may not be able to recognize or understand how the beliefs of the dominant, able-bodied, culture socially constructs the identity of "disabled person" as different and inferior.

At the macro level of practice, Mullaly (2007, p. 285) believes that structural social workers should encourage and support group-specific organizations as an important mechanism for oppressed people to discover themselves, to reclaim their identity, to create a sense of solidarity and community, and to develop a group-specific voice and perspective. Therefore, it would be crucial for social work students to be exposed to, and familiar with, the various organizations, groups and social movements formed by disabled people, for disabled people. Yet, there was not any indication from the interviews or from the course outlines from the three courses that representatives from groups or organizations for disabled people had been invited to be guest presenters in any class.

One instructor mentioned taking a "social construction" approach to understanding oppression, including ableism. According to Gilson and DePoy (2002), the constructionist model of disability is one in which individuals are perceived to be disabled because of marginalization, oppression and hostile environments. Social work targets for change would include "negative

attitudes, discrimination, oppression, limitations in civil rights, devaluation, and limited access to resources, privilege, and community life experienced by individuals and groups stigmatized on the basis of anomalous physical, behavioral, psychological, cognitive, or sensory conditions” (Gilson & DePoy, 2002, p. 160). However, from a structural social work perspective, the problem with the constructionist approach is that it does not focus on the social condition perceived as a social problem “but on the processes through which social phenomena and social problems are constructed and interpreted” (Mullaly, 2010, p. 5). It is the social conditions created and perpetuated by ableism that are the targets for change for structural social work:

...only an understanding of oppression as a systemic situation that is produced and reproduced in everyday social processes and practices – and an awareness that oppression carries out several important social functions for the dominant group – will lead to structural solutions. Otherwise, social work will continue to treat oppression as a technical problem (e.g., as a lack of ‘goodness of fit’ between the individual and society) amenable to technical solutions rather than as a moral and political (i.e. structural) problem that it is” (Mullaly, 2007, p. 284).

The hypothesis that the anti-oppressive social work theory and practice skills being taught at St. Thomas University School of Social Work would be consistent with the theoretical framework of critical disability studies is more complex than simply linking particular theoretical approaches to practice. The modified inductive analysis of interview transcripts reveals that the classroom is a dynamic learning environment in which pedagogy and the stance of the instructor are important influences on the topics that are presented, emphasized, and discussed during a course. Despite the congruence of structural social work theory and practice with critical disability perspectives, the absence of learning objectives and planned classroom discussion

specifically addressing the personal, cultural and structural elements of ableism means that the dominant cultural discourse of individual pathology may remain relatively unchallenged.

Critical Discourse Analysis of a Transcription from an Audio-taped Classroom Session

Critical discourse analysis was applied to a transcript of an audio-taped classroom lecture in which disability and oppression were discussed in relation to social work theory and practice. At St. Thomas University School of Social Work I was able to observe and audio-tape a second semester theory class of three hours duration, in which the focus was critical theory development and radical casework. The aim of the critical discourse analysis was to determine whether or not the theories and practice approaches to social work found to be prevalent in the social work texts analyzed in the manifest content analysis were also prevalent in classroom presentations and discussions; and then to examine how the scholarly discourse on disability fits with contemporary disability perspectives.

The classroom was spacious and seating was arranged so that students were situated in a large semi-circle oriented towards a lectern, a whiteboard and Powerpoint screen. There were 18 students in attendance on the day of audio-taping. The instructor had prepared the class in advance for my presence by explaining to the students that I was conducting a research study on the way that disability is addressed within social work education. I explained that I would be present in the class and would making notes and audio-taping, but I would not be participating in any discussions. I provided an overview of the project (see Appendix G) and I requested their informed consent to proceed with the taping by leaving the consent form with the students, and by asking a student to collect the forms once each student had a chance to read and sign the document, which I reviewed outside of the classroom. All of the students who were present that

day agreed to participate in the study. The students did not ask any questions about the project, but I did observe that the students included disability in their discussion about oppression, which may have been an unintended effect of my presence. In preparation for the class students were asked to review two required readings:

- Baines, D. (2007). Bridging the practice-activism divide in mainstream social work: Advocacy, organizing and social movements. In D. Baines (Ed.), *Doing Anti-oppressive Practice: Building Transformative Politicized Social Work*; and
- Fook, J. (1993). Assessment/Goals/Strategies and techniques. In *Radical Casework: A Theory of Practice*.

The instructor explained to students that he/ she had a number of activities planned for the class for the purpose of examining oppression and anti-oppressive social work practices. The agenda included; a check in, a go around question, a Powerpoint presentation, a break, a small group and large group discussion. The “check in session” was designed to see how students were feeling because it was an afternoon class, midweek, just prior to the commencement of scheduled break in the academic year. Several students said that they were excited to have the following week off, but many also said they were stressed and exhausted by the amount of academic work that needed to be completed in that time period. Once everyone had a chance to respond to the “check in” the instructor asked the students to participate in the “go around” exercise.

The first classroom exercise involved asking students to think about what oppression and anti-oppressive social work practice meant to them. The process of asking for student input was referred to as “go around” which meant that each student participated, one after the other, in order of seating. As students provided examples of oppression the instructor filled in the area around a diagram, drawn by the instructor on a whiteboard. The diagram was labeled “Service

Discourses & Practice Purposes” and it consisted of a simple horizontal line with various theoretical approaches posited along the bottom of the line, from left to right, as follows: Problem solving (task centered); Systems Theories (generalist, eco-systems, life model); Strengths (resilience); Anti-oppressive; and Post Modern. At the commencement of the class there was not any indication from the instructor that the diagram represented a continuum or range of theoretical approaches to oppression. The intent of the diagram was not clear to me, but the instructor asked students to brainstorm and to provide examples of experiences of oppression, which the instructor consolidated into one or two descriptive words and placed around the diagram. The instructor explained: “I’m just going to write words all over the [white]board around this pretty diagram that I put on there, which we may or may not talk about, but if it comes up I can use it.” The instructor then asked the students: “Consider oppression and anti-oppressive practice, what does that mean to you?” The first student to offer an example commented that: “I was thinking about judgmental attitudes towards mental illness.” The instructor then wrote the terms “mental illness” on the white board, above the diagram.

Many examples of oppression and oppressive practices were described by students during the “go around” exercise. The second student to participate in the exercise spoke of watching a documentary about two adults with Down syndrome who were married and wanting to start a family:

Discussion 1: Who determines what is abnormal or normal?

Student 1: I think it’s [oppression] subtle. I was watching this documentary about two Down syndrome adults who are married and acting like every other couple but they are coming up against stereotypes that are held against mentally ill patients, that they don’t

have the capacity to understand their sexuality or they don't have the right to it. And it happens through practices that are historically-based, such as castration at birth or tubes tied, of the girl. So I think it's something subtly placed based on historical values and stuff like that.

Instructor: So every day practices is what you are saying. That the way we didn't question at the time that you would sterilize people to prevent them from having babies.

Student 1: Yeah, and now it's translating into our values that these people don't have any sexuality.

Student 2: Right, they don't have a right to or someone would cringe at the thought of someone with a mental illness or a mentally ill...

Instructor: Or someone with a developmental challenge of some type.

Student 1: Yeah. Like the fact that they may masturbate, or want to have sex, or want to have a relationship, or want to have children...

Instructor: So what is normal and what is abnormal? That is determined by someone else; thank you (instructor writes the words normal/abnormal on the board near the diagram).

The next student to provide an example of oppression spoke of the government's treatment of First Nations populations in relation to the 1960's scoop, and the residential school system. The student commented that child welfare programs for First Nations communities were underfunded compared to the rest of the population. Following this observation, another student spoke of the lack of accessible health care services in relation to getting voicemail at the doctor's office rather

than being able to speak with someone directly. Another student commented about the lack of opportunities available to disabled people, as follows:

Discussion 2: The need for a “level playing field” for disabled people.

Student: Well a lot of people who are disabled are just not given various opportunities of adequate education, probably because of barriers, physical barriers, or other subtle barriers, or don't have access because of attitudes for work, travel, places where you access services, physical barriers. Stereotypical roles and expectations. For example, not having a level playing field, a lot of people with disabilities need more time to complete a task than people without disabilities. Technologies or assistance or different things are needed to level the playing field for a chance of success.

Instructor: So equity and equality. Looking at the context of need and availability.

Student: Health, education and access to technology, as well as physical barriers. A lot of people who aren't mainstream because of age, disability, and all kinds of things might be oppressed in different ways.

Instructor: So that goes back to what is considered normal and what is considered abnormal, or acceptable. The acceptable Canadian is someone who is blah, blah, blah...

Student: It affects all aspects of their lives like jobs and all sorts of things...um, stereotypical. I was watching a documentary about an activist who passed away. A major activist in the United States who was a paraplegic, she was paralyzed and needed daily assistance, and she was a lesbian who adopted a child. She had a full life, but a lot of

people would look at that situation, where she was paralyzed from the neck down, and would say that they would rather be dead. So people's attitudes can be oppressive.

Another student then spoke of poverty and socioeconomic status. This comment was made in relation to power inequity in situations of employment, when people at the top of employment hierarchies may oppress people of lower economic and job status. The student who previously spoke about the death of the disabled activist then offered another example of oppression related to disability:

Discussion 3: Structural violence against disabled people.

Student: I have one more, denial of services to a lot of people, and this is actually way past oppression because a lot of people who are disabled or who have children who are disabled, they can have someone withhold treatment. There was a case of a doctor out in Alberta who denied a disabled person antibiotics, and they died.

Instructor: That's denial of services and extreme oppression.

The discussion then moved to general discussion of a variety of experiences of oppression, as follows;

- An example of discrimination based on gender, where a student complained that she was expected to clean floors and toilets at the gym where she worked, while the male employees did not have the same responsibilities.
- Another student spoke of the lack of mental health services for youth, in particular the lack of residential services.

- The next student spoke about the reading from Donna Baines and the need for both individuation and collectivity, in relation to the roles and needs of women living in a rural village setting.
- The discussion then transitioned to ageism, based on how professionals such as doctors assume that young people such as students don't understand their own health issues.
- Another student commented that official bilingualism in New Brunswick was discriminatory for both French and English speaking people because the education system does not adequately train people to speak in both official languages.
- The last student to speak described the need for safe and affordable housing for low income and immigrant families.

After this discussion ended the instructor terminated the exercise to speak about the assigned readings. The instructor began by explaining where anti-oppressive practice fits on the range of practice theories:

Discussion 4: Structural theory or postmodern social constructionism?

Instructor: ...anti-oppressive practice comes out of critical social tradition, a tradition on critical thought. Yeah, so I'm trying to keep it clear. Pull me in if I get going because a lot of my research has expanded these kinds of thought as opposed to bringing them in and so I am going to count on you bringing me down to the ground, okay? And I don't think it's that challenging so...critical thought states or is grounded in the assumption that macro social structures shape social relations at every level of social life. And critical thinking or critical thought includes Marxist, radical, structural, feminist, anti-racist, anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory social work approaches. So that's where anti-

oppressive practice fits in, it fits into a critical approach and so one of the fundamental beliefs of the critical approach is that the interests of the haves and have nots are opposed and irreconcilable. And so in these terms social workers are presented as powerful and service users are presented as relatively powerless in terms of institutional power...

So coming from critical social work to anti-oppressive practice, anti-oppressive practice draws from sociological discourses, particularly critical social concepts that emerged out of the consumer rights movement, which understands things from the perspective of the service user experiencing the challenges. It highlights the structural context, which I know you are familiar with, and urges social workers to facilitate the service user's critical consciousness of and responses to problems. So, in other words, invite them into reflecting and learning about the broader picture about why it is the problem they are experiencing is affected by the structural. So, but there is a way to distinguish anti-oppressive practice from structural and the suggestion that Healy makes is that it moves further from the structural approach, as well as other critical practices, she suggests that anti-oppressive practice insists that the personal and cultural basis of oppression must be integrated within a structural analysis of oppression.

The instructor's explanation of the role of culture in anti-oppressive social work practice appeared to create confusion for some students, as the following discussion illustrates.

Discussion 5: So culture can't be used to justify oppression?

Student: So culture can't be used to justify oppression?

Instructor: And to perpetuate it. Did you say it can or it can't?

Student: Can culture be used to justify oppression?

Instructor: To justify it? What do people think?

Student: I think it is because there are a lot of things that people do that are explained as a cultural practice. A lot of immigrants who come to Canada and the woman has to walk three steps behind the man...somebody says that it's part of the culture.

Instructor: People agree?

Student: If someone says that the woman has to walk several steps behind the man we say it's cultural practice, we have to respect that. It may be offensive, but it's not necessarily oppression unless...

Instructor: Are you saying we need to respect that?

Student: No, I'm saying that people will dismiss that as being wrong but it may not be necessarily wrong. That not allowing people to reach their full potential, like not allowing girls to attend university, or only saving money for son's education may be a cultural bias on me, but for a woman to stand three spaces behind a man puts the woman and the man in a power relation.

Instructor: So culture plays into oppression somehow...Culture plays into oppressive practices, there's a lot of questions around that and I don't think we will go down that road, it's a whole other conversation. The fact is that oppression occurs as a result of culture. If you think about residential schools, it's cultural and certainly a form of oppression.

The discussion then moved to crisis intervention and anti-oppressive practice, but once again included questioning of the role of culture in oppression.

Discussion 6: Who defines oppression, the people being oppressed or people from the outside?

Instructor: So the question was, does culture have to enter into it? (“it” referring to crisis intervention).

Student: Yes, I guess I’m trying to get at the idea of who defines oppression, the people being oppressed or people from the outside saying you’re being oppressed. So Mormon women, I can look and say oh, you’re oppressed because you have to wear these dresses and the men can wear whatever they want. But the women may say that they aren’t oppressed, they may say “I love my life”.

Instructor: I’m glad I wrote this picture (referring to the diagram labeled “Services Discourses and Practice Purposes”) cause I think that comes to, I don’t want to talk about which theory comes under what heading but this talks about service discourses and practice purposes so that you can understand what you are doing and why, and so this is what comes from Healy again. There are problem solving discourses, there is systems theory which is another service discourse, there is a strengths perspective, although it’s kind of evolutionary although it’s not linear, and then she talks about anti-oppressive practice and I’ll talk about this a bit more. Anyway she leads to postmodern practices, and the distinction that anti-oppressive practice, anyway, you are right, there is a truth, a right and a wrong, whereas if you move to postmodern practices its constructed, there is not one right or one wrong, it’s not in opposition to. But they are still saying that culture

enters into it here, so from a structural perspective which is looking at the social structures, they are saying also consider the culture, consider the personal...I need to look at my own culture, I need to look at my own practice and my own belief systems and how they might oppress.

The discussion then focused on delineating traditional casework from radical casework, referring to the reading from Fook, and an exploration of postmodern theory and anti-oppressive social work practice:

Discussion 7: A definition of oppression starts with the service user.

Student 1: So if I don't believe that unequal power is bad I can't believe in anti-oppressive practice? So what if I believe in inequitable power and some circumstances where it's okay to have more power? And in other cases there shouldn't?

Student 2: I think we are shifting into postmodern. I'm a pomo.

Instructor: I don't know, I have yet to figure it out myself. It's a good question and at the crux philosophically.

Student 1: My question was more philosophical, so like if you buy into the fact that everyone should have equal power then is it possible to influence other cultures in that philosophy without introducing your own cultural bias?

Instructor: That's a whole other question. These are tricky questions. I'm going to go back... essentially, for who determines oppression, each person has knowledge of day to day experiences of domination and subordination. You begin where the client is at so if I

don't see what's happening within my relationship as being oppressive then that's where I'm coming from and try not to insert biases into that.

Student 1: I think that's part of the issue, but the social work practitioner is part of it. Who is there to raise consciousness? So is it up to the social work practitioner to help someone understand that there is an imbalance of power?

Instructor: I don't, I can't answer the question about whether unequal power is right or wrong. But the assumption is that all forms of oppression are harmful. So who defines oppression? The intent of that is that it starts with the service user. It starts with the service user, the person experiencing the problem and there is an inherent contradiction and that's why the postmodern approach looks at who determines the problem.

The students and instructor then discussed anti-oppressive social work strategies when working within the system (meaning institutional social welfare systems). Students acknowledged that there was an ethical responsibility to both the service user and to the employer and that these competing interests posed a challenge to anti-oppressive social work practice. The students were separated into small groups for a discussion of three case examples and how they would intervene, strategically, to assist clients in the different problem scenarios. Students were given fifteen minutes to complete the small group exercise and then the class reformed into a large group for a discussion of the results. There were not any case examples involving disabled persons or disability. The class ended after each student group had a chance to present the social work approach that would be taken to help the following clients/situations: a single female, and parent, who needed assistance with meeting basic needs; black students needing advocacy to obtain social housing; a senior wanting to stay in her own home, but the

home was deemed “unsafe” due to lack of accessibility; and the rural/urban divide and how that affects the resources available to clients and community members.

Findings from the critical discourse analysis. The aim of the critical discourse analysis was to determine whether or not the theories and practice approaches to social work found to be prevalent in the manifest content analysis were also prevalent in classroom presentations and discussions; and then to examine how the classroom discourse addressing disability fit with contemporary disability perspectives. It was my expectation that, because St. Thomas University School of Social Work espouses a structural theory approach to all forms of oppression, the critical discourse analysis of the classroom discourse on disability would be congruent with critical disability perspectives. The manifest content analysis revealed that critical disability perspectives (42%) and social pathology perspectives (44%) were close to being equally represented in course texts, although the proportion of texts having disability-related content was fairly low. However, a high proportion of the mentions of critical disability perspectives were located in one reading, in one course, and therefore it cannot be assumed that critical disability perspectives were represented in the overall course material of the three courses.

Discussion 1: Who determines what is abnormal or normal? The “go around” exercise in which students provided personal examples of oppressive conditions or circumstances had several situations related to disability. In the first example, two students spoke of the stereotyping of people with mental illness (although the example was about a couple with Down syndrome which is not considered a mental illness). The focus of the discussion was the fact that the couple was not being treated by professionals and people in the community in the same way that “normal” couples are treated, in relation to the couple’s wish to have children. The instructor summarized the students’ discussion: “So what is normal and what is abnormal? That is

determined by someone else.” There was an opportunity, here, to examine how disabled people are subjected to a whole host of culturally ambivalent responses from others, “ranging from altruism and help to hostility and rejection” (Goodley, 2011, p. 722). Goodley explains that the individualization of disability, which locates the “deficits” of disability within the disabled subject, strengthens the cultural gaze upon the “burden” of disability. Goodley provides the example of a disabled child as the quintessential dependent subject requiring both nurturing and paternalism.

Yet, the response to this dependency is always an ambivalent one; captured in the whispers of strangers...The sight or perception of dependency is desired and mourned as well as denounced and denied. The disabled subject becomes split then between desire and rejection: appealing and appalling. When denounced, the disabled subject becomes framed as the antithetical other to the desired ableist norm so cherished by contemporary society (Goodley, 2011, p. 722).

Goodley believes that the splitting of the disabled subject may explain the contradictory ways in which the caring roles of non-disabled parents, friends, volunteers and professionals are valued or devalued. He finds that care providers are either devalued for their association with dependency (‘How can you work with such people?’), or valued in ways that border on canonization (‘You must have the patience of a Saint’) (p. 723).

Discussion 2: The need for a “level playing field” for disabled people. The next example of oppression provided by a student speaks to the lack of educational and employment opportunities available to disabled people due to attitudinal and physical barriers. The student suggests that a “level playing field” needs to be created for disabled people through accessibility

aids and assistive technology. What is interesting about the exchange is that the student explains that people who are “not mainstream” because of age, disability and so on, may be oppressed. The use of the phrase “not mainstream” is an important indicator that disabled people are considered as being “outside of the norm” or different from most people in society. The use of the phrase “not mainstream” in combination with the suggestion that “a level playing field” needs to be created for disabled people so that they can compete with the mainstream population, appears indicative of an assimilationist approach to disability. Iris Marion Young (1990) explains that the ideal of assimilation presents a clear and unambiguous standard of equality and justice:

According to such a standard, any group-related differentiation or discrimination is suspect. Whenever laws or rules, the division of labor, or other social practices allocate benefits differently according to group membership, this is a sign of injustice. The principle of justice is simple: treat everyone according to the same principles, rules, and standards (Young, 1990, p. 158).

Mullaly (2010, p. 129) explains that, because conventional social work has historically operated within a liberal humanist paradigm that de-emphasizes difference, social work interventions have traditionally helped people to cope with and adjust, or assimilate, to the dominant culture. Disability activists and theorists with a critical disability perspective argue that historically, assimilation has not worked for disabled people in areas such as employment, and others:

For example, the Government is promoting disabled people’s inclusion in the paid labour market with policies to revise the benefits system, and make radical changes in the operation of the labour market. All these sound like social model solutions to the high unemployment rate amongst disabled people. However, when the government talks about

mechanisms to implement these changes, it focuses on two things: a small number of special schemes, and job coaches for individual disabled people. So while the government accepts that the problems are external to disabled people, its solutions target individual disabled people (Oliver, 2004, p. 21).

Discussion 3: Structural violence and disability. The student who provided the example of the disabled person who was denied medical treatment and as a consequence died, provided an excellent teaching opportunity on the structural violence that can be an outcome of extreme oppression. The instructor commented; “That’s denial of service and extreme oppression” but there was not any discussion on what “extreme oppression” actually meant. For Mullaly (2010) social or structural inequality is part of academic discourse that reduces the political charge of structural violence experienced by subordinate groups: “It is part of a socially sanctioned process whereby people are tortured, maimed, and killed in ways that are unseen and unpunished...When violence is systemic – that is, when it happens to someone because he or she is a member of a particular social group – then it is a form of oppression” (Mullaly, 2010, p. 151).

The student’s contribution to the discussion on oppression could clearly be viewed as an example of structural violence against a disabled person. The instructor could have taken the opportunity to link the structural violence against disabled people to the structural violence that occurs to First Nations peoples, since the oppression of First Nations peoples was also brought up by several students during the “go around” discussion. Mullaly (2010, p. 153) states that First Nations people suffer the most from social inequalities of all oppressed groups and therefore experience the most structural violence. In a “First Nations Regional Longitudinal Health Survey, 2002-03”, nearly one-quarter (22.9%) of Indigenous adults living on reserve reported that they had at least one disability, with adults aged 60 years and older reported the highest

prevalence of disability (49.7%), (Health Canada, 2009). Social work research has confirmed that Indigenous people with disabilities have been confronted with repressive policies that have perpetuated limited access to resources and services: “Aboriginal people with disabilities are undoubtedly affected two-fold: first, as a result of their ethnicity and, second, because of their disability” (Durst et al., 2006, p. 38).

The hidden process of racialization in the delivery of health care in Canada was the focus of another Canadian study which found that the discourse of egalitarianism and individualism plays a powerful ideological function in masking structural inequalities (Tang & Browne, 2008). The “liberal egalitarian ideal of ‘treating everyone the same’ makes the assumption that ‘race’ and other socially constructed differences do not exist” (Tang & Browne, 2008, p. 118). The researchers found that Aboriginal people seeking health care were subject to racializing assumptions, and Aboriginal men, in particular, were subject to surveillance in health care settings. The researchers found that power and social control were exercised by health care providers in the way that they controlled the “spatiality” of the hospital and other clinical spaces, by exercising the power of eviction. Everyday health interactions revealed that certain patients were “disciplined” by being ignored, and that even mundane allocation decisions, such as providing taxi vouchers, snacks, and so on, have had the effect of embodying inequity when subject to racialized assumptions.

We must question how, through these measures of ‘control’, health care providers, and the systems they work within, comply with processes that legitimize and perpetuate inequities through the reifying rhetoric that ‘everyone is being treated the same’ – or conversely, that people ought not to be treated differently – as if social inequities do not exist (Tang & Browne, 2008, p. 124).

A two year exploratory study examined the challenges identified by Indigenous persons with physical disabilities (Durst et al., 2006, p. 35). The researchers also wanted to discover the perspectives of disabled Indigenous people regarding independence and barriers to social inclusion. The results of the study reflected the participant's thoughts and perspectives. All of the participants in the study had been forced to leave their home reserve in order to receive services. Many had moved to the city alone and were not familiar with an urban setting (Durst et al., 2006, p. 36). Participants did not know how to obtain services, and services they could access were often inadequate to their needs. Indigenous people with disabilities commented that they were often shuffled from one agency to the next due to jurisdictional disputes between various levels of government.

After reviewing the literature and the findings, the researchers concluded that Indigenous peoples with disabilities encounter numerous barriers in their daily living; "These barriers, many of which have been long-standing and socially ingrained, continue to keep the population with disabilities marginalized and isolated from the rest of society" (Durst et al., 2006, p. 42). Several salient findings are summarized for the reader below:

- Restricted or limited access to services and resources has contributed to high unemployment rates, low educational attainment, poor health, and high rates of diabetes.
- Persons with disabilities have been forced to become long-term recipients of social assistance programs, with the associated stigma.
- Indigenous peoples often have to choose between living on reserve with limited resources, services, and opportunities, but where they have culture, family and community, and moving to urban centres in the quest for services. Unfortunately, widespread barriers restrict access to resources, economic opportunity and social

integration. They face the double and interacting discrimination of being an Indigenous person and a person with disabilities.

In exploring internalized ableism using critical race theory, Fiona A. Kumari Campbell (2008) writes that racism is not aberrant, but is a natural part of American life. She believes that there are several points of convergence between racism and ableism:

Because racism is an ingrained feature of our landscape, it looks ordinary and natural to persons in the culture. Formal equal opportunity – rules and laws that insist on treating blacks and whites (for example) alike – can thus remedy only the most shocking and extreme forms of injustice....It can do little about the business-as-usual forms of racism that people of color confront everyday and that account for much misery, alienation, and despair (Delgado & Stefanic, 2000, as cited in Campbell, 2008, p. 152).

Campbell observes that, the ‘business-as-usual’ forms of ableism are “so refracted into the metabolism of western societies that ableism, as a site of social theorization (even within critical disability studies) represents the last frontier of enquiry still preoccupied with the arcane distinction between ‘impairment’ and ‘disability’ in the government of disability (Campbell, 2008, p. 152).

Discussion 4: Structural approach or social constructionism. The class began with instructor drawing a diagram on the whiteboard in which various social work practice discourses were arranged on a horizontal line, with Problem Solving on the extreme left of the line and Post Modern located on the extreme right hand side of the line. It was interesting to observe that structural social work practice was not indicated on the diagram. Although the instructor did not explain that the positioning of practice discourses was done in any deliberate manner the

instructor later suggested that an anti-oppressive social work practice approach moves beyond a structural analysis:

Instructor: So, but there is a way to distinguish anti-oppressive practice from structural and the suggestion that Healy makes is that it moves further from the structural approach, as well as other critical practices, she suggests that anti-oppressive practice insists that the personal and cultural basis of oppression must be integrated within a structural analysis of oppression.

I believe that the instructor is making reference to a reading by Karen Healy, “Theories for Social Work Practice: Approaches to Knowledge Development and Use” (2005) which was required reading for the second class, according to the course outline: “Addressing theory in context”. The reading by Healy also contains the drawing that the instructor replicated on the whiteboard. In the text Healy focuses on five contemporary theories of social work practice; problem solving, systems perspectives, the strengths perspective, anti-oppressive social work, and postmodern, post-structural and postcolonial approaches. These practice theories were chosen by Healy (2005, pp. 103-104) based on four criteria:

1. Relevance to the contemporary institutional contexts of health and welfare services.
2. Relevance to the purpose of social work as it is constructed through the value base and within contemporary practice contexts.
3. Relevance of the theories to the formal knowledge base of social work.
4. Extending the boundaries of the social work theory base to include postmodern concepts.

In choosing theories for practice, Healy suggests that social work practice is constantly being constructed and negotiated; therefore, decisions about theory use can only be made in specific

institutional contexts (Healy, 2005, pp. 104-105). This approach appears to be consistent with Baines' (2011) anti-oppressive social work practice framework, which is based on a number of different approaches to social work, including three of the practice approaches mentioned by Healy, postmodernism, post-structuralism and post-colonialism. Baines explains that her approach to anti-oppressive social work practice also focuses on direct social work practice (Baines, 2011, p. 4). However, where Baines' anti-oppressive social work practice approach differs from Healy's approach is in Baines' belief that anti-oppressive social work practice must be based on social-justice oriented theory and practice, and not just related to practice context. In fact, Baines believes that contemporary practice contexts are heavily influenced by managerialism and New Public Management (Baines, 2011, p. 32). She believes that business approaches, rather than care-based approaches to social work make it difficult, but not impossible, to do AOP and other forms of justice-oriented social work practice (p. 33). Healy's social work practice framework contains elements of mainstream social work practice approaches; problem solving, systems perspectives, the strengths perspective. Baines differentiates mainstream social work practice from AOP:

...mainstream social work draws on a number of theories that see social and economic systems as politically neutral (Payne, 2000) and that fail to recognize the serious inequities in our society or the way that these injustices are embedded in the profit-model of patriarchal, racialized, homophobic, colonial capitalism. Though many social workers mix mainstream, AOP, and other perspectives in their everyday work, the term "mainstream" ...refers to approaches that may, to some extent, ease people's suffering or difficulties, but that depoliticize social problems and fail to see the larger dynamics

shaping social work practice or to imagine alternative solutions that can be undertaken with and for our clients (Baines, 2011, p. 19).

Discussion 5: So culture can't be used to justify oppression? The desire to understand the role of culture in anti-oppressive social work practice was a constant theme in the remaining classroom discussion. The main question appeared to be one of who defines whether a cultural practice, such as a woman walking three steps behind a man, is oppressive or not? In his chapter titled "Oppression: An Overview", Mullaly (2010, p. 41) explains that oppression should never be based on a singular group characteristic because monocausal explanations simplify the complexities and varieties of social reality inherent to people's differing positions with regard to gender, class, age, ability and so on. He gives the example that women may be oppressed as women but there is a great deal of diversity among women that will result in more or less oppression. Later in his book, Mullaly (2010, p. 237) comments that anti-oppressive social work practice necessitates a reconceptualization of power and self-determination based on Foucault's (as cited in Mullaly, 2010) notion that power is a result of interactions between individuals, groups, and institutions. Mullaly clarifies that, as anti-oppressive social workers we cannot give power to individuals, but they must claim it for themselves. The instructor's response to the student; "It starts with the service user, the person experiencing the problem", would be consistent with a Foucauldian understanding of power and resistance.

Towards the end of the class the instructor makes several statements related to culture and oppression:

Instructor: So culture plays into oppression somehow...Culture plays into oppressive practices, there's a lot of questions around that and I don't think we will go down that road, it's a whole other conversation. The fact is that oppression occurs as a result of

culture. If you think about residential schools, it's cultural and certainly a form of oppression; and

Instructor: But they (Healy and Fook) are still saying that culture enters into here, so from a structural perspective which is looking at the social structures, they are saying also consider the culture, consider the personal...I need to look at my own culture, I need to look at my own practice and my own belief systems and how they might oppress.

These statements reflect the importance of the role of culture in perpetuating oppressive dominant/subordinate relations and the need for social workers to be critically self-reflective in imposing their own cultural assumptions in social work practice. The instructor also makes it clear that the discussion of culture and oppression "is a whole other conversation". However, Mullaly (2010, p. 95) and others, contend that social work has always treated culture as the "poor cousin" in social work theory and practice, and that culture is often overlooked as a site for resistance and anti-oppressive practice. Mullaly (2010, p. 121) contends that current social work discourse on culture actually contributes to social relations of domination and subordination through adherence to concepts such as "cultural sensitivity" and "cultural competency". He observes that many social work programs require students to take courses that examine cultural diversity, oppression, ethnicity, and race. As a case in point, St. Thomas University School of Social Work has a BSW course, "Social Work in Diverse Contexts", in which students explore issues of gender, sexual orientation, and culture. However, cultural awareness and sensitivity are based on the notion that culture is a particular context, tradition, or a set of ideas, while a more critical view of culture recognizes that it is an "everyday practice by which the ruling hegemony is carried out" (Mullaly, 2010, p. 124). Pease (2011, p. 156) believes that dominant cultural norms privilege the able-bodied and constructs disabled people as victims of personal tragedy.

Feminist disability theorist, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2009) explains how meanings get attached to bodies through cultural construction. She scrutinizes the disabled figure as the paradigm of what culture calls deviant to expose the assumptions that support seemingly neutral norms (Garland-Thomson, 2009, p. 63). She argues that, rather than the accepted notion of disability as an absolute, inferior state and a personal misfortune, disability is a representation, a cultural interpretation of physical configuration (p. 64). According to Garland-Thomson (2009), disability is not so much a property of bodies as a product of cultural rules about what bodies should be or do:

More-over, such culturally generated and perpetuated standards as ‘beauty,’ ‘independence,’ ‘fitness,’ ‘competence,’ and ‘normalcy’ exclude and disable many human bodies while validating and affirming others...Consequently, the meanings attributed to extraordinary bodies reside not in inherent physical flaws, but in social relationships in which one group is legitimated by possessing valued physical characteristics and maintains its ascendancy and its self-identity by systematically imposing the role of cultural or corporeal inferiority on others (Garland-Thomson, 2009, p. 64).

A discussion of disability culture was not evident in the examples given by the students or the instructor in the classroom discussion of oppression. Yet, the need to understand the role of culture in maintaining oppression has important implications for disabled people (Dupre’, 2012). Postmodern, post structural and feminist critiques of traditional ableist culture expose and deconstruct hegemonic interpretations of history, disabling imagery and language that are the hallmarks of cultural imperialism. Cultural discourses and practices associated with disability culture, such as those represented in the disability arts movement, would be affirmed and

supported as a positive assertion of group identity and for providing a standpoint from which disabled people are able to challenge prevailing norms. Course work addressing culture from a critical theory perspective must form part of the social work curriculum if social work practice is to address the oppression of disabled people, and others, in a meaningful way (Dupre', 2012, p. 180).

Discussion 6: Who defines oppression, the people being oppressed or people from the outside? In responding to the student's question the instructor again refers to Healy's work. Healy (2005) advocates for a reflective approach to social work practice in which decision-making involves perceptions and feelings as well as material facts (Healy, 2005, p. 100). In contrast to the evidence-based tradition, a reflective approach to knowledge development would include "knowing in action" and "reflection in action". Healy explains the term "knowing in action" as the process of developing knowledge in practice, rather than applying pre-existing theories to it. "Reflection in action" refers to a process in refining knowledge in action so as to promote new ways of responding to the problem encountered in practice. In each case the repertoire of processes must be adapted to respond to the specific characteristics of the service user and institutional contexts. Therefore, given this reflexive approach, the fact that the Mormon women are expected to wear long dresses as part of their culture would not be the problem; the fact that the social worker viewed the wearing of the dresses as a potential problem would be a cause for critical reflection on why that became an issue for the social worker. The social worker might speak with the Mormon woman to find out the significance of wearing long dresses and what it means to Mormon women (knowing in action), and then may think about how the information could be used to inform practice with other Mormon women or with other women with cultural differences based on appearance and/or religion (reflection in action).

Interpretive theorists treat all narratives as having truth value since they represent people's attempts to describe and make sense of their lives (Mullaly, 2010, p. 171). In his chapter on "Theorizing Disability" (2001) author Gareth Williams writes that narratives are epistemic concentrates of experience in time and place. He points out that theorizing disability is not just about abstractly conceptualizing the relationships between impairments and situations, "it is about how those relationships work for people in dynamic and complex personal and social processes" (Williams, 2001, p. 132). Williams comments that this interpretive work can shed light on the human condition, but he cautions that, if the process of living with chronic illness or impairment becomes too "idiosyncratically idiographic" it could lead away from the society in which the anguish of experience is embedded and shaped. As a consequence, the processes through which the response to chronic illness and disability emerges become less and less social and collective and more and more rooted in the psychological, cognitive, and existential world of the individual" (Williams, 2001, p. 132). Additionally, people's narratives tend to reflect the definitions and discourses of reality that are given to them, and the definitions and discourses usually reflect the interests of dominant groups (Mullaly, 2010, p. 171).

Healy (2005) explains that all of the theoretical approaches she promotes are based on the idea of a partnership between service users and service providers, "Partnership approaches are consistent with the core social work values of promoting client self-determination and equity" (Healy, 2005, p. 104). This approach appears to fit well with the self-advocacy of both the Independent Living Movement and the social model of disability. However, the social model in Britain was founded on a view of oppression as social and collective, not individual:

In contrast, within much work in disability studies, the prime mover, in causal terms, is most certainly not the "clinical condition" or the individual in a state of tragic adaptive

“failure” but the oppressive society in which disabled people live. If disability is seen as a personal tragedy, disabled people are treated as victims of circumstance. If disability is defined as social oppression, disabled people can be seen as the collective victims of an uncaring, discriminatory society (Williams, 2001, p. 134).

The explanation of social work practice and oppression in the classroom appeared to focus on a reading by Healy’s (2005) and her approach of critical reflexivity. Healy describes her book on social work practice as written from a postmodern perspective, although she explains that postmodernism is not positioned as an overarching discourse because “a key contribution of postmodern perspectives is to diversify that which we or others, such as colleagues and service users, hold as the ‘truth’ about core concepts...” (Healy, 2005, p. 194). A review of Healy’s chapter on “Postmodern Approaches in Practice” indicates that her concepts of postmodernism are consistent with the theoretical works of Lyotard (1984) and Foucault (1973, 1991, and 1997).

Foucault’s work urges us to be cautious in our claims to ‘help’, ‘empower’ and ‘emancipate’ as he shows that these practices can be associated with the ‘will to power’ over others. For example, in the process of raising others’ consciousness about the original causes of their oppression, we are also imposing our truth about the nature of their experience (Healy, 2005, p. 196).

Healy goes on to explain that postmodernists focus on understanding local details and complexities, such as the diverse experiences of people within a community, rather than constructing a single narrative about an event or population (Healy, 2005, p. 196). She also cites the work of Lyotard (1984) and his incredulity towards metanarratives in the quest to create overarching explanations of the social world.

The tension between postmodern and modernist perspectives, such as Marxism, is also found within the disability studies literature. Foucauldian postmodernism is well-represented within disability theory and postmodernism is part of a critical disability perspective because of its emphasis on identity as being socially and culturally constructed, its analysis of power as being both local and institutional, and its consideration of diversity and difference. However, while the contributions of postmodern thought to understanding disability have been significant, there are many disability theorists and activists, particularly those with a materialist analysis, who point out the limitations of postmodern theories. Williams (2001, p. 134) believes that finding out what disability is like from the point of view of someone with an impairment, through the phenomenological or interactionist exploration of the construction of reality, becomes another ideological justification for the oppression of disabled people. Narratives of the self may also involve an element of denial or failure to come to terms with externally imposed definitions and acceptance of “external disempowering agendas” (Shakespeare, 1996, p. 100).

Reeve (2002) argues that there are important manifestations of the psycho-emotional dimensions of disability; the way that disabled people respond to physical barriers and social exclusion, and the emotional responses to the reactions of other people. She believes that this type of “emotional disablism” is often referred to as internalized oppression (Reeve, 2002, p. 495). Thomas (2004) also believes that the psycho-emotional dimensions of disability are important to understanding how the disability experience operates on the inside of the person, particularly the impacts and effects of social behaviors between “impaired” and “non-impaired”. She believes that delving into “personal or private” matters has been mistakenly rejected by many in disability studies because it supposedly diverts attention away from disabling social barriers (Thomas, 2004, p. 41). She argues that postmodern and post structural perspectives are

important for examining how discourses bring categories of “disability” and “impairment” into being so that they can be critically deconstructed. Additionally, they allow people to see the mutually constitutive nature of meanings in social interactions: “in talking about you as a disabled person I not only perform the act of constructing who you are, I am also performing the construction of myself as ‘normal’ (Thomas, 2004, p. 42).

More recently, Reeves (2012) has described disablism as being comprised of two forms of oppression; structural disablism and psycho-emotional disablism. She explains that structural barriers are those which operate from outside the individual such as inaccessible environments, physical and social forms of exclusion, discrimination and the usual forms of social oppression implied by a social model definition of disability (Reeve, 2012, p. 79). Reeve identifies two sources of psycho-emotional disablism: Direct psycho-emotional disablism arises from the relationships that the disabled person has with other people or themselves and is the most important form of psycho-emotional disablism; and indirect psycho-emotional disablism, which emerges alongside the experience of structural disablism. She believes that direct psycho-emotional disablism is experienced when a stranger reacts to the disabled person by either saying something inappropriate or avoiding the disabled person altogether.

Being subject to these kinds of comments from strangers can be difficult to deal with and can undermine psycho-emotional well-being. But it is not just the encounter itself that is disabling, there is also the ‘existential insecurity’ associated with the uncertainty of not knowing how the next stranger will react (Reeve, 2012, p. 80).

Indirect psycho-emotional disablism can arise from the experience of structural disablism, such as the experience of being faced with an inaccessible building, which can evoke an emotional

response of anger or hurt at being excluded. The act of exclusion operates at both a material and psycho-emotional level because of the message being given to disabled people that reminds them that ‘you are out of place’, ‘you are different’ (Kitchin, 1998, as cited in Reeve, 2012, p. 82).

Summary of findings from the critical discourse analysis of a transcript from an audio-taped classroom discussion. Although the St. Thomas University School of Social Work espouses a structural theory approach to oppression, including ableism, there was not any indication that structural theory was being used to inform the social work practice of the students in the class of the second core theory course. The audio-taped class on social work practice theories was singular in its omission of any mention of structural social work theory in relation to the social work practice theories listed on the whiteboard. The majority of social work practice approaches represented by the diagram on the whiteboard were: systems theory; problem-solving; the ecological approach; and the strengths perspective, which are all consistent with social work practice in a reform liberal paradigm.

In relation to how the scholarly discourse fit with contemporary disability studies perspectives, the students tended to view disability from an assimilationist perspective, believing that disabled people wish to “fit” into mainstream society and that the role of social work is to advocate for disabled individuals to have access to services and resources that would make them more successful in competing for opportunities for education and employment. Although there were several discussions in relation to culture and oppression, the examples provided by the instructor and students did not involve disability or disabled people. The individual situations of some disabled people were discussed in terms of discrimination and oppression at the individual or personal level but, there was not any indication that students understood that disability was culturally and socially constructed. Based on these findings, I would argue that the discourse was

consistent with Rioux's "functional approach" to disability, which is within the individual pathology framework. The underlying assumption of the functional approach to disability is that the deficit stems from an individual condition or pathology, but the functional incapacity can be ameliorated through enabling strategies such as career counseling, education and training, technological aids and so on.

Summary of Findings in Relation to Main Research Questions

The main research questions addressed in this case study are:

- What dominant ideas inform the theoretical lenses on disability within social work texts, course outlines, and instruction in core and specialized courses related to disability at St. Thomas University School of Social Work?
- How consistent are current social work perspectives on disability, found in social work texts in core and specialized courses on disability, with the dominant theoretical perspectives advocated within the critical disability studies literature?

A review of the findings from the manifest content analysis of texts, the analytic inductive analysis of interview transcripts from key informants, and the critical discourse analysis of a transcript from an audio-taped class, have provided insight into the contradictory treatment of disability within social work education at St. Thomas University School of Social Work. The manifest content analysis of social work texts from the three courses found both social pathology perspectives and critical disability perspectives, but it was one journal article in one course providing the majority of the mentions of critical disability perspectives. There were also two significant mentions of individual pathology perspectives in the course on social work practice in diverse contexts. These two mentions portrayed disability as a "loss" and disabled people as

victims of tragic circumstances. The modified inductive analysis of interview transcripts from the three instructors revealed that the classroom is a dynamic learning environment where pedagogy and stance of instructor are important influences on how topics are presented, emphasized, and discussed during a course. If the instructor, because of personal experience with oppression, chooses to privilege particular analyses such as gender or race, then other forms of oppression may remain unexplored and unchallenged. The critical discourse analysis of the transcript from an audio-taped classroom session dealing with oppression and social work practice found that students were not able, as the three instructors had assumed, to generalize structural social work theory to anti-oppressive social work practice addressing disability. Disability is viewed by social work students as a personal problem or deficiency, albeit one requiring systemic changes in terms of improved accessibility and opportunities for disabled individuals.

Although the three core courses in the BSW program at St. Thomas University School of Social Work are premised on progressive approaches to social work theory and practice, the way that disability is addressed, or not addressed, tends to reflect the dominant liberal paradigm within social work education. This paradigm does not challenge the assumption that disability is an individual, personal problem or deficiency. The findings indicated that social work practice approaches to disability are primarily concerned a strengths perspective and advocacy in relation to human and civil rights. The focus for social change is on enhancing the adaptation between the disabled individual and various systems in society. This perspective is consistent with the social pathology perspective wherein the assumption is that disability is not inherent to the individual independent of social structure, and priority is given to reforming political, social and built environments (Rioux, 1997).

Chapter Five

Case Study of the Dalhousie School of Social Work BSW Program

The Dalhousie University School of Social Work has a commitment to building a socially just society, one that upholds and validates the values of equality, diversity and inclusiveness. The BSW degree program embraces a critical anti-oppressive stance to social work practice and many of the elective courses explore the differential impacts of race, gender, age, sexual orientation and ability. However, the School is located within the Faculty of Health Professions and one might question if the curriculum is influenced by an individual pathology approach to disability when social work is perceived to be a health profession.

The main research questions addressed in this case study are:

- What dominant ideas inform the theoretical lenses on disability within social work texts, course outlines, and instruction in core and specialized courses related to disability at Dalhousie School of Social Work?
- How consistent are current social work perspectives on disability found in core and specialized courses on disability with the dominant perspectives advocated within the critical disability studies literature?

Historical and Geographical Context

Dalhousie University is located in the downtown area of Halifax, Nova Scotia. It was founded in 1818 by the 9th Earl of Dalhousie who was, at that time, the Governor of Nova Scotia (Dalhousie University, n.d., History & Traditions, para. 1). Unlike St. Thomas University in Fredericton which was founded by a religious order of the Roman Catholic faith, Dalhousie University was established on principles of religious tolerance, open to all people regardless of

class or creed. The University is spread over three campuses with the largest, Studley Campus, serving as the main campus for undergraduate studies in the arts, social sciences, sciences, and social work. Many BSW classes are held in the relatively new Mona Campbell Building located on LeMarchant Street, although some classes are also held in the Marion McCain Arts and Social Sciences Building located on University Avenue.

My visit to the Studley Campus revealed that the university buildings are within easy walking distance of each other, but that parking is very limited. A residential area borders on the north side of the Mona Campbell Building, and there are few designated parking spots for people with disabilities located near to the building. If disabled members of the faculty, staff or student body wish to access a privately designated parking spot they have to provide Campus Security with a copy of a disability parking sticker that was issued by the province. A private parking spot costs over \$500.00 per year for non-disabled faculty, staff and students, but disabled faculty, staff and students are able to purchase private parking for the cost of regular permits (faculty and staff pay \$249.84 per academic year, and students pay \$224.70). Unfortunately, non-disabled people still park in places where they are not authorized to do so, and disabled people often must find parking at one of the “blue spots” designated for general disability parking available at sites located around the perimeter of the campus. There is excellent public bus service because of the proximity of the campus to downtown Halifax. Some metro buses are designated as accessible and there is an Access-a-bus service but it must be booked a week in advance.

The Mona Campbell Building, located at the corner of Coburg Road and LeMarchant Street houses the College of Sustainability, the College of Education, the School of Social Work, the Ocean Tracking Network and Research Laboratories for the Faculty of Computer Science (Dalhousie University Media Centre, 2010, Mona Campbell Building). A tour of the Mona

Campbell Building, which was launched in 2010 as the “greenest” building on campus, demonstrates principles of accessible design. The large glass entrance door is at ground level and is automated for people with mobility needs. Entering the building you find yourself in a large, bright atrium area with a central staircase leading to three different floors. There is also a spacious elevator which has been modified to accommodate people with vision and hearing impairment needs. The main classroom for the School of Social Work and the offices for the Faculty of Social Work are located on the third floor. Bathrooms are located next to the main classroom used by the Faculty of Social Work and are designed so that a door is not necessary for entry. All of the toilets flush using a photocell technology and the taps in the sinks operate automatically based on movement.

Dalhousie University Accommodation Policy for Students

Dalhousie University has developed an “Accommodation Policy for Students” which was approved by the University Senate on October 26, 2009, and amended on June 13, 2011. The policy is premised by a “Statement on Prohibited Discrimination” which states that the University operates in accordance with the provincial *Human Rights Act* (1989). The *Act* prohibits discrimination in activities including the provision of and access to services and facilities, accommodation, publications and employment. The policy provides a definition of discrimination taken from the *Act*:

Discrimination is a distinction, whether intentional or not, based on a characteristic, or a perceived characteristic...that has the effect of imposing burdens, obligations or disadvantages on an individual or class of individuals not imposed on others or which withholds or limits access to opportunities, benefits and advantages available to other

individuals or classes of individuals in society (Dalhousie University, Accommodation Policy for Students, 2011, p. 1).

The *Act* prohibits discrimination based on grounds or characteristics including race, gender, age, physical disability and mental disability. The policy states that the University is obligated to make every reasonable effort short of undue hardship to “take substantial, timely and meaningful measures to eliminate or reduce the discriminatory effects of the learning and community environment, including facilities, policies, procedures, and practices (Dalhousie University, 2011, Accommodation Policy for Students, p. 1). Disability is defined by the Office of Student Accessibility and Accommodation as;

...a functional limitation caused by a long term or recurring physical, sensory, mental, psychiatric or learning impairment that restricts the ability of a person to perform the daily activities necessary to participate in learning or daily living at Dalhousie University (Dalhousie University, 2010, Disabilities).

The Student Accommodation Office and the Human Rights and Employment Equity Office are resources available to students seeking accommodation. There are two different types of accommodation covered under the scope of the policy: 1) academic accommodation in relation to a student’s participation in an academic program or particular class; and 2) non-academic accommodation in relation to University activities and services not considered to be academic accommodation. Each of the University’s eleven faculties is required to have a senior academic administrator or a Faculty, School or Department committee responsible for academic accommodation requests.

The “Accommodation Policy for Students” states that it is the student’s responsibility to make a request for accommodation, and that the request must be made reasonably in advance of the event or process. The University will also consider a request for accommodation made by a third party, such as a physician, caregiver advocate, or other representative, as long as the student has provided prior written consent. In making a request for accommodation the student must provide supporting documentation suggesting how the accommodation may be achieved, and include medical information relevant to the accommodation request.

Decisions concerning accommodation requests are a two-step process in which the requests are screened in relation to one of the prohibited grounds of discrimination. If the request is in relation to one of the prohibited grounds, the Student Accommodation Office considers all of the relevant factors in assessing if the accommodation can be made without imposing undue hardship to the University. Relevant factors include:

- Linkage – whether the proposed accommodation will have the practical effect of eliminating or reducing the identified barrier;
- Safety – whether the proposed accommodation would pose a safety risk to faculty, staff or other students or to the student seeking accommodation;
- Financial Cost – what are the costs and would such costs be prohibitive;
- Size and nature of the program or service – how disruptive would the proposed accommodation be, considering the number of students, faculty and staff and the nature and inter-relationships of their roles;
- Impact on academic requirements – whether the proposed accommodation will substantially undermine the academic requirements of the program; and

- Alternatives – where a requested accommodation appears to create an undue hardship based on the above factors is there an alternative accommodation available?

Decisions concerning accommodation requests must be made and communicated within ten working days of receiving the request plus supporting documentation. Requests can also be expedited if circumstances warrant. The Student Accommodation Office notifies the student of the decision, as well as those necessary for the implementation of the decision such as the course instructor, and the Student Accommodation Liaison. The policy outlines an appeals process for situations where the student is not satisfied with the way the request was handled or with the type of accommodation provided. An Accommodation Appeals Committee comprised of three employees and two student members hears the appeal, and makes a decision which is deemed final.

Classroom accommodations may include; note taking in the classroom, verbalizing visually presented information, alternate formatting of instruction materials, assistive listening devices, assistive technology, sign language interpretation, minimized penalties for spelling and grammar, and breaks for prayer. Students with permanent disabilities are encouraged to apply for government grants to pay for the note taking, or the Office of Student Accessibility and Accommodation will pay an honorarium of \$75 per course, per term, for note taking. It should be noted that the cost of assistive technologies and systems is not automatically funded. Some technologies and systems may be available to students based on a fee, or government grants may cover these types of goods and services. Exam accommodations may also be approved when reasonable and appropriate. Non-academic accommodations may involve assessment of physical accessibility to buildings, adaptive equipment, adaptive furniture, an appropriate size room in

student residence, private space for prayer, and private space for breast feeding (Dalhousie University, 2011, Financial Assistance).

There are Special Bursaries available to students for the purpose of receiving psychological services for specialized learning support (Dalhousie University, 2011, Accessibility & Accommodation, Financial Assistance). Eligible students are those who are;

- In receipt of a psycho-educational assessment containing a diagnosis of a learning disability, or
- Referred to the Office of Student Accessibility and Accommodation by a psychologist with Dalhousie's Counseling Services Centre, who confirms that psychological services for learning support are warranted, or
- In receipt of sufficient medical documentation concerning a diagnosis of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, or
- In receipt of sufficient medical documentation confirming a diagnosis of Asperger's Disorder.

The initial bursary is \$900.00 issued by the Registrar's Office in over two academic terms. It is expected that the financial assistance will provide the student with six sessions with a private psychologist. Second and subsequent bursaries in the amount of \$300.00 are available for the purpose of follow up sessions with a psychologist.

After reviewing Dalhousie University's "Accommodation Policy for Students" and observing the physical accessibility of the campus, there is evidence to support the assertion that the University has adopted an approach to disability that is consistent with Rioux's (1997) typology of disability as social pathology. The University has developed a comprehensive accommodation

policy for students, based on human rights legislation in the province of Nova Scotia. Rioux points out that a rights-outcome approach to disability is important for looking “beyond particular environments to focus on broad systemic factors that keep certain people from participating as equals in society” (Rioux, 1997). The campus has also taken steps to ensure that new construction on campus incorporates elements of accessible design, as demonstrated in the design of the Mona Campbell building. However, an individual pathology approach based on incapacity still informs the definition of disability used by the Office of Student Accessibility and Accommodation, where disability is described as a functional limitation that restricts the ability of a person to perform daily activities in learning and daily living. As Rioux explains:

From the functional approach, the problems of experienced by people with disabilities are interpreted as a result of functional incapacity resulting from an individual impairment.

To treat this functional incapacity, services are made available to the individual to become as socially functional as possible (Rioux, 1997).

The Student Accommodation Office provides a number of services and resources to disabled students, based on individual need, as assessed by a health professional. In making a decision to provide accommodation, the Office also assesses the impact that the accommodation may have on the university, including cost and disruption to others. Rioux (1997) makes the observation that a rights-based approach provides an analysis of how society marginalizes disabled people and focuses on how society can be made more responsive in *reducing* (this author’s use of italics for emphasis) disadvantage. The accommodation policy at Dalhousie University is compatible with a rights-based approach to disability in that the policy states that the University is obligated to “take substantial, timely and meaningful measures to eliminate or reduce the discriminatory

effects of the learning and community environment...” (Dalhousie University, 2011, Accommodation Policy for Students, para. 4)

The *Human Rights Act* (1989) for Nova Scotia interprets disability as either “physical or mental” and speaks to the loss or abnormality of anatomical structure or function and the restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity. Section 3, subsection 1 of the *Act* provides characteristic forms of impairment that are considered to be a disability, indicating that disability is still perceived as an individual problem, and one that requires public policy to reduce social and economic disadvantage. The *Act* prohibits discrimination on the basis of physical or mental disability, “...that has the effect of imposing burdens, obligations, or disadvantages on an individual or a class of individuals not imposed upon others or limits access to opportunities, benefits and advantages available to other individuals or classes of individuals in society (N. S. Human Rights Act, 1989, c.12, s.1).

The *Act* seeks to provide disabled people with equal access to the same services, facilities, and employment opportunities as non-disabled people, but it is a response based on what Thompson (2003) and others refer to as negative discrimination. Negative discrimination “involves not only identifying differences but also making a negative attribution – attaching a negative or detrimental label or connotation to the person, group or entity concerned. That is, it is a question of certain individuals or groups being discriminated *against*” (Thompson, 2003, p. 10). For disability activists the politicization and self-organization of disabled people provides a unifying group identity which directly challenges the negative attributions of legislation and policies underpinned by the medical or functional model.

For many disabled people, engaging in collective action was liberating and empowering. In this way, they openly challenged the public stereotype of passivity and dependence. Moreover, by mobilizing against the injustices of social oppression, disabled people built on a positive definition of group differences, instead of these being regarded as signs of abnormality (Barnes & Mercer, 2003, p. 129).

Dalhousie University School of Social Work

Dalhousie University's School of Social Work embraces a critical anti-oppressive approach to social work practice that includes emphasis on elements common to most social work curricula; social policy, professional values, theoretical perspectives, and practice methods (Dalhousie University School of Social Work, 2011, Undergraduate Calendar 2011/2012). The Bachelor of Social Work Program is described as a 20-credit degree program accredited by the Canadian Association for Social Work Education. There is a Distance Education program in social work that is also offered using a Blackboard Learning System on the Internet. The goals of the BSW program are to facilitate the graduation of students who:

1. Are familiar with historical and current manifestations of inequity and injustice.
2. Understand how social work can both advance and impede the building of a socially just society.
3. Are able to locate themselves and others within the political, value, and ethical contexts of social work.
4. Have analyzed the theoretical and conceptual foundations of social work policies, programs and practices.

5. Are proficient in social work skills that will enable them to engage and work with service users in a variety of practice contexts.
6. Have contributed to a learning environment consistent with the Vision, Mission, and Principles of the School of Social Work.
7. Have learned and internalized principles and processes of critical reflection and analysis.

The admission requirements for the BSW program include making an application comprised of three references (academic, work and volunteer), a personal statement in which the student explains his/her motivation for social work and which discusses a current social issue, and a description of relevant work or volunteer experience that contributed towards the student's preparation for making application. A BSW Admissions Committee explores the aptitude and fitness of the student for social work and the list of admission criteria includes the absence of unethical behaviors as defined by the Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers' *Social Work Candidacy: a Guide for Candidates and Supervisors* (2003), under a section titled "Dealing with Problems", subsection "Candidate Unsuitability". In Nova Scotia provincial legislation requires that all persons practicing social work must be registered with the Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers. "To become registered as a social worker and thus permitted to use the title of social worker, a candidate with a BSW degree must complete at least **three years**, or a minimum of **3,859 hours**, of paid supervised social work experience" (NSASW, 2003). The School of Social Work at Dalhousie University has elaborated on this provision to outline situations which may screen out an applicant for admission:

- Any medical condition that affects an individual's ability to perform as a social worker if that condition is chronic and/or affects judgment.
- Persistent substance abuse (e.g. alcoholism, drug addiction, use of illegal drugs).

- Conviction for a criminal activity (e.g. sexual assault, fraud, and drug trafficking).

The minimum academic requirement for admission is five general university credits (30 credit hours) with a minimum B- (70%) average. Courses can include anything in the social sciences. The School has the caveat that the admission requirements define the minimum level of qualifications necessary for submission of an application. There are a large number of applicants each year and only a limited number of student positions available.

The Dalhousie School of Social Work has an Affirmative Action policy for applicants who are Acadian, Indigenous, Black, members of other racially-visible groups, persons with disabilities and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Two Spirited, Queer and Intersex (Dalhousie University, 2010, Affirmative Action Policy). Applicants make their request to be considered under the policy by indicating their membership in one of the groups on the Social Work Statement Cover Sheet which is part of the BSW application package. Affirmative action policies are a form of positive discrimination through which the historical disadvantage experienced by some groups in society is addressed through specific programming designed to promote individuals who are members of these groups in relation to opportunities for primarily education and employment. Iris Marion Young (1990, p. 133) observes that affirmative action policies compensate for the cultural biases of standards and evaluators used by schools or employers. She argues that the standards and evaluators reflect, to at least some degree, the specific life and experience of dominant groups, typically white, Anglo males. She believes that affirmative action “locates the ‘problem’ that affirmative action solves in the understandable biases of evaluators and their standards, rather than only in specific differences of the disadvantaged group” (Young, 1990, p. 133).

The Vision, Mission Statement and Philosophy of the School

The vision guiding the Dalhousie University School of Social Work is one that is committed to building a socially just society, defined as one that upholds and validates the values of equality, diversity, inclusiveness, democracy and concern for human welfare. The Mission Statement of the Dalhousie School of Social Work states that the School;

...engages in teaching, research, community initiatives and other scholarly activity to promote social justice. To this end, we educate students and collaborate with others to advance change within the social work profession, social institutions, and the broader society (Dalhousie University, 2007, Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles).

The guiding principles and beliefs for the School are:

1. The importance of understanding and addressing inequitable social structures and conditions for advancing individual and collective welfare and development.
2. The importance of supporting the struggles for social justice and social well-being of historically disadvantaged peoples and communities.
3. The importance of conceptualizing the spaces of the social work field in broad terms, as including local, national, and international arenas, and individual, community, policy, and political-institutional contexts.
4. Building a diverse and inclusive school environment. Towards that end we recognize the importance of altering the cultural context of the school in ways that are welcoming to the cultures and belief systems of historically marginalized groups and communities.

5. The importance of accessible education; respectful and collaborative approaches to working with groups and communities; academic and intellectual freedom; collegiality; and open, democratic and inclusive decision-making.

The guiding principles and beliefs at the Dalhousie School of Social Work appear to be indicative of a rights-based, social pathology perspective of disability. Rioux (1997) describes this approach as focusing on the disabling aspects of society, on supporting human diversity, and on empowering disabled individuals. The rights-based approach assumes that policy and programs should aim to address social and economic disadvantage, and services and supports will be needed by some people in order to exercise self-determination. The School also supports an Affirmative Action policy for disabled applicants, which people operating from a rights-outcome approach would view as an important way to empower disadvantaged people. However, the admissions process for the BSW program does have a provision to be able to exclude a student applicant based on a medical condition that is assessed by the BSW admissions selection committee as affecting an individual's ability to perform as a social worker. This provision, which is taken from the Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers' guide for candidacy, makes it possible for the evaluators, both academic and professional, to exclude some students on the basis of disability.

The Faculty

The Faculty of Health Professions' School of Social Work website (2011) lists the current faculty as one Director, one Associate Director, an Undergraduate Coordinator, a Graduate Coordinator, three Professors, four Associate Professors, five Assistant Professors, and twelve Adjunct Professors. A review of faculty credentials indicates that the School has a broad range of areas of expertise, including: anti-racist social work practice, critical gerontology, international

social work, disability, disability and women's health issues, adolescent mental health, cross cultural research, Gay and Lesbian rights and hate crimes, depression, addictions, body image, ethics in helping professions, feminist, post structural and critical theory, Indigenous Peoples in Canada, holistic social work, animal-human bonding and animal-assisted social work practice, social work pedagogy, community development and group work, mediation, Indigenous social policy and Indigenous social work education, just to name a few areas of special interest. During my interview with one faculty member I learned that the School purposely hired a disabled instructor to advance disability curriculum and scholarship at the School.

BSW Degree Requirements

The *Dalhousie University Undergraduate Calendar for Social Work 2011/2012* explains that the five admission credits that form the BSW admission requirements reduce the 20 credit degree requirement to 15 credits for all students. All BSW students are required to take the following required courses, totaling 10 credits:

SLWK 2010 Introduction to Community Social Work	.5 credit
SLWK 2111 Development of Canadian Social Work and Social Welfare	1.0 credit
SLWK 2222 Advancing Social Justice: Self in Relation	.5 credit
SLWK 2333 Field Education for Beginning Practice	1.0 credit
SLWK 2444 Life Processes: Conceptualizations and Practices for Critical Social Work	.5 credit
SLWK 3012 Perspectives on Social Welfare Policy	.5 credit

SLWK 3030 Theoretical Foundations of Social Work	1.0 credit
SLWK 3083 Introduction to Research Methods and Statistics in Social Work	.5 credit
SLWK 3084 Understanding research and research Methods in Social Work	.5 credit
SLWK 3220 Cross-Cultural Issues	.5 credit
SLWK 4010 Advanced Social Work Practice	1.0 credit
SLWK 4033 Field Practicum	1.5 credits
SLWK Social Work Elective*	.5 credit
SLWK Social Work Elective*	.5 credit
Total	10 credits

*A number of elective courses are offered either on a standing basis, every year, or a rotational basis. Students may also choose social problem electives offered by other Dalhousie University Departments or by other Universities. SLWK 4380 Disability Policy and Service is offered on a rotating basis, every second year.

Findings

On October 4th – 6th, 2011, I carried out a site visit to the Dalhousie University School of Social Work for the purpose of completing data gathering related to this case study. Prior to the visit, a manifest content analysis was completed on course outlines, texts and required readings for the three courses included in the sample, and a modified inductive analysis was also conducted on transcripts from interviews with two course instructors. On October 6th a classroom

session of a course was audio-taped for the purpose of critical discourse analysis. The results of these analyses follow.

Manifest Content Analysis

The research question guiding the manifest content analysis was:

- Are social work practice approaches to disability, as represented in various texts, concerned more with theories of individual pathology, social pathology or with critical disability theory?

Course outlines were requested for the following core courses and elective: SLWK 3030, “Theoretical Foundations in Social Work Practice”; SLWK 2222, “Advancing Social Justice”; and SLWK 4380, “(dis)Ability: Policy and Practice”;

- SLWK 3030, “Theoretical Foundations in Social Work Practice” was a full credit year course that was offered Fall/Winter terms 2010/2011. The course description states that the central theme of the course was the integration of theory and practice. The first term concentrated on the theoretical foundations of social work and their relation to social work practice from social, political, economic and historical positions. The second term concentrated on critical theory perspectives. The required text for the course was Malcolm Payne’s (2005) *Modern Social Work Theory* (3rd edition). There was also a reading package for students to purchase for the course.
- SLWK 2222, “Advancing Social Justice” was a half credit course offered during the fall term 2010. The course was described as an introduction to the central concepts of a social justice perspective, including historical and current manifestations of inequity and injustice. The profession of social work was also examined in terms of how it has

advanced and impeded social justice. Particular attention was given to exploring the significance of social identity in the promotion of equitable social relationships. There were three texts and a list of required readings for this course. The texts were:

- Carniol, B. (2005). *Case Critical: Social Services and Social Justice in Canada*.
- Mary, N. (2008). *Social Work in a Sustainable World*.
- Rebick, J. (2009). *Transforming Power: From the Personal to the Political*.
- SLWK 4380, “(dis)Ability: Policy and Practice” was an elective, half credit course that is offered on a rotating basis, every second academic year. The course examines disability from anti-oppressive, social constructivist and a rights-based lenses, focusing primarily on three areas: disability identity and how it is constructed, perceived and utilized in an ablest world; the societal location of disability) in relation to historical and current day (dis)placement of people with disabilities; and policy and practice implications, ranging from grassroots social movements to legislation. There was a text required for the course, as well as a package of readings. The text for the course was:
 - Titchkosky, T. and Michalko, R. (Eds.) (2009), *Rethinking Normalcy: A Disability Studies Reader*.

The findings of the manifest content analysis of texts are provided in Table 7. In total, 99 texts were reviewed for the content analysis and 52 texts (52%) had disability-related content:

- SLWK 3030, “Theoretical Foundations in Social Work Practice”, had 47 texts included in the manifest content analysis with 102 mentions of disability perspectives, in total. The perspectives of disability were represented as follows: 29 (28%) individual pathology; 52 (51%) social pathology; and 21 (21%) critical disability perspectives.

- SLWK 2222, “Advancing Social Justice” had the fewest mentions of disability perspectives out of the three courses from Dalhousie that were included in the manifest content analysis. There were 3 (19%) mentions of individual pathology perspectives; 12 (75%) social pathology perspectives; and 1 (6%) mention of a critical disability perspective.
- SLWK 4380, “(dis)Ability: Policy and Practice” had the most mentions of disability perspectives, as one would expect. There were 72 (20%) mentions of disability from an individual perspective; 140 (39%) social pathology perspectives of disability; and 146 (41%) critical disability perspectives represented in the texts.

It must be noted that there were not any mentions of the individual pathology approach to disability that were considered significant to the findings of the manifest content analysis. All of the mentions of individual pathology were in relation to comparative analyses favouring more progressive approaches to disability.

Table 7

Frequency of Mentions of Perspectives of Disability – Dalhousie University School of Social Work BSW Texts

<u>Course</u>	<u>Individual Pathology</u>	<u>Social Pathology</u>	<u>Critical Disability Perspectives</u>	<u>Totals</u>
3030	29 (28%)	52 (51%)	21 (21%)	102
2222	3 (19%)	12 (75%)	1 (6%)	16
4380	40 (17%)	76 (31%)	126 (52%)	242
<u>Totals</u>	<u>72 (20%)</u>	<u>140 (39%)</u>	<u>148 (41%)</u>	<u>360</u>

Number of texts; $n = 99$

Number of texts with disability related content = 52

Discussion of findings from the manifest content analysis. The course, “Theoretical Foundations in Social Work Practice”, SLWK 3030, was comprised of 47 different readings that included most of the chapters from the text book, *Modern Social Work Theory* (Payne, 2005). The text by Payne (2005) had 10 mentions of disability categorized as representing social pathology perspectives. Examples of this perspective follow:

A social model of disability view is a pluralist position with structural elements arguing that medical models concentrate on disabled people’s impairment. Instead we must recognize that social definitions of what is normal lead to society being organized in ways which create disability. For example, if there were no steps in buildings, a person with a walking impairment would not be disabled (Payne, 2005, p. 276).

In a chapter on empowerment and advocacy in social work, Payne cites the work of Wolf Wolfensberger (1972, 1984) in relation to the importance of self-advocacy:

People who are powerless throughout their lives would carry a sizeable burden of learned helplessness. The response should be...environmental enrichment...Normalisation or social role valorization is related to this form of advocacy. This form of policy and practice seeks to offer people in institutions an environment which gives them valued roles and a life style as close as possible to those valued by people outside institutions (Payne, 2005, p. 305).

Jakubowicz and Meekosha (2002) argue that there have been two major theoretical perspectives in disability reflecting the different trajectories of North American and European approaches to disability; social psychology and structural sociology. The social psychology approach in North America has examined the formation of identity and the role of symbolic interaction in the creation of human communities. For example, Wolf Wolfensberger (1993, as

cited in Jakubowicz & Meekosha, 2002, p. 242), thought that disabled people might survive best outside of institutions if they learned to behave in ways that minimized the challenge their behavior presented to non-disabled people:

Thus social training represented a non-medical response to disability, particularly for people who experienced developmental disabilities and displayed so-called ‘challenging behaviors’. Yet Wolfensberger’s approach, while adopted by government and therapeutic bureaucracies as a technology of control in a period of de-institutionalization, did not prevent widespread mobilization of American disabled people to move beyond conservative models of what is considered normal (Jakubowicz & Meekosha, 2002, p. 242).

The inclusion of normalization and social role valorization as a social pathology perspective is a controversial one. Meekosha and Dowse (2007, p. 172) argue that, despite the focus on community living over institutionalization, normalization and social role valorization perpetuated the individual deficit approach to disability and promoted assimilation of disabled people into “normal” society. However, British disability scholars have compared social role valorization and the social model of disability and have found that, while the social model of disability has focused on enabling the person with learning difficulties to take full control of his or her own life through the provision of whatever support the person believes they need, social role valorization has focused on enabling the person to achieve a valued role. “This can, however, fit Social Model criteria if it is achieved by working *with* the person, not via decisions being made on their behalf by (usually) non-disabled people” (Race, Boxall, & Carson, 2005, p. 519).

Many of the individual pathology perspectives (26 mentions) and social pathology perspectives (41 mentions) in this course were found in an article on disability and social work

education; “Theoretical Approaches to Disability Content in Social Work Education” (Gilson & DePoy, 2002). This article is one of a very few found by this researcher to present a discussion of disability theory and content in American social work curriculum. The article described a number of disability perspectives, ranging from a diagnostic or individual pathology approach to disability as a social construct: “In this article disability is defined as the interplay of diverse human conditions with environmental barriers to full community inclusion” (Gilson & DePoy, 2002, p. 153). In the conclusion of the article, the authors contend that social work education must advance social justice and eliminate oppression by including an analysis of disability from a social constructivist approach, supporting an understanding of disability as the disadvantage resulting from disabling environmental factors.

More recently DePoy and Gilson (2008, 2011) propose an alternative stance to the ways in which disability is theoretically and practically approached within social work. The authors seek to expand the concept of diversity to include and extend beyond impairment to include the uniqueness of all people (DePoy & Gilson, 2008, p. 6). Rather than focus on essentialist categorizations, which they believe are largely based on medical diagnostic accounts of what disability is and is not, or on constructionist approaches which also rely on categorizing people according to medical and other criteria related to impairment, the authors propose a third, alternative approach to disability which they refer to as “disjuncture theory” (DePoy & Gilson, 2008, p. 7). By disjuncture, they mean the ill fit of the body with the environment. They contend that the current built, virtual, and abstract environments are explicitly or implicitly based on standards that emulate “the typical” and “the average” human form. They believe that the intersection of bodies and diverse environments explain *ability*, (my use of italics for emphasis) and the “tyranny of the opposite”, or what ability is and is not respectively. They conclude that

social workers must view disability as part of human diversity that should be observed through pluralistic, rather than essentialist lenses. This approach is greatly expanded upon in their book, *Studying Disability: Multiple Theories and Responses* (DePoy & Gilson, 2011).

There were also 21 mentions of critical disability perspectives in the foundational theory course. The majority of these mentions examined disability through a postmodern lens that is based on social constructionist thinking:

The role of the social scientist and the social worker in the postmodern world is not to cure, control and *legislate* according to alleged universal standards but to *interpret* and understand one world and present it to another (Howe, 1994, p. 521); and

For postmodern critical social workers the challenge seems to be that of recognizing how categories...such as person with a disability, can explain our, or our service users' experiences and form a basis for collaborative action, while also recognizing how these categories limit change activities (Healy, 2005, p. 202);

Mullaly (2007, p. 177) explains that the notion of an essential 'human nature' is rejected by postmodernists. Postmodernists believe that ways of thinking and acting are produced by a network of social forces within which individuals are immersed rather than by an innate characteristic of the individual. Tremain (2005) believes that Foucault's work expands and enriches understanding of the category of "disability", particularly his critical work on bio-power, or bio-politics. Tremain explains that a vast apparatus (income support programs, special education programs, sheltered workshops, asylums and so on) have been erected to secure the well-being of the general population, but has caused the "disabled subject" to emerge into discourse and social existence (Tremain, 2005, p. 5). These practices, procedures and policies have created, classified, codified, managed, and controlled social anomalies through which some

people have been segregated from others; for example, the physically impaired, insane, mentally ill, retarded and deaf. According to Foucault (1978, as cited in Tremain, 2005, p. 6) these practices of division and categorization around a norm have become the primary means by which people are individualized, become understood in scientific terms, and begin to understand themselves in the same way.

An understanding of bio-power's capacity to objectivize people in this way illuminates Foucault's remarks about the dual meanings of the word *subject* as they pertain to the circumstances surrounding disabled subjects. For Foucault, to be a subject is, in one sense, to be subject to someone else by control and dependence, and in another sense, to be tied to one's own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both terms imply a form of power that subjugates and makes subject to (Foucault, 1982, as cited in Tremain, 2005, p.6).

Tremain cites the work of philosopher and historian, Ian Hacking, who extends Foucault's work on the relation of power/knowledge with regard to the subject (Tremain, 2005, p. 7). Hacking examines how medical, juridical, and psychiatric classifications, statistics, and other social scientific forms of information create and cause new "kinds" to emerge, into which people can be sorted. He argues that these "human kinds" refer to social groups whose initial composition can be attributed to knowledges that the human sciences have engendered.

...the people who are classified as members of a kind come to have knowledge of the relevant kind, which changes their self-perceptions and behaviour, motivates them to forge group identities, and often forces changes to the classifications and knowledge about them (he calls this phenomenon "the looping effects" of human kinds) (Tremain, 2005, p. 7).

Therefore, it would seem that, while identity politics may bring about limited change in relation to how various institutions manage disabled people's lives, it is also a means by which disabled people may become complicit with their subjectification.

It should be acknowledged that the "Theoretical Foundations" course, SLWK 3030, was a full credit course and covered a very wide range of theoretical perspectives, including: human behavior theory, structural social work, modern and postmodern perspectives, imperialism and colonization from an Indigenous perspective, psychodynamic perspectives, existentialism and spirituality, feminism, Afrocentric perspectives, social constructionism, post structuralism, and speciesism. One of the learning objectives of this course was to help students to understand the processes and assumptions of theory-building at an introductory level. The course outline explains that there is also a focus on assisting students to develop a personally meaningful way for understanding the diverse application of theories and for questioning assumptions of power.

The course on "Advancing Social Justice", SLWK 2222, utilized sixteen readings which included chapters from the three required text books. The course was comprised of a series of four modules, of two classes each, in which social justice and social work were explored at the cognitive, affective, and spiritual levels. According to the outline, critical reflection and dialogical questioning are key pedagogical concepts that were fostered by the interactive design of the course. There were 3 (19%) references to disability from an individual pathology perspective, found in Carniol's *Case Critical*, but the individual pathology perspectives are mentioned in relation to historical approaches taken to address disability, for example:

As a part of the Eugenics movement, which assumed that "better" breeding would create a "better" society, thousands of people with disabilities, often people with intellectual disabilities, were sterilized (Carniol, 2005, p. 49).

Carniol's book also made reference to 4 out of the 12 (75%) social pathology perspectives of disability in which disability is presented as a social construction:

Central to this approach is the recognition that “problems” faced by people with disabilities are not the result of physical impairments alone, but are the result of social and political inequality that exists between disabled people and able bodied people (Carniol, 2005, p. 31).

Carniol (2005) was the only text to contain a reference to a critical disability perspective which viewed disability as an aspect of human variation:

A woman with disabilities put it this way: ‘I do not want to have to try to emulate what a non-disabled woman looks like in order to assert positive things about myself. I want to be able to celebrate my difference, not hide from it (Carniol, 2005, p. 112).

There were 5 references to disability from a social pathology perspective found in an excerpt from a book by C. Campbell (2003) that was made available to students online. The reading described the relationship between anti-oppressive social work and social justice. Many of the references to disability were citations from well-known activists in the disability community, such as Susan Wendell and Michael Oliver. They define disability as a social construction based on social arrangements (Wendell, 1996), and focus on society's failure to provide appropriate services to disabled people (Oliver, 1996). One of the required texts for the course, *Social Work in a Sustainable World* (Mary, 2008), had two references to disability from a social pathology perspective. One reference was clearly a critique of social work's reductionist perspective in studying and intervening with social problems at the individual level:

...the focus of study and the intervention in problems of aging people is biological decline and disability, not on limited income, lack of long term care options and ageism. As gerontology becomes a bigger part of the field of medicine, the concern of social workers is on assessment and treatment of organic pathology and less on the social and economic forces that limit older people's opportunities to maintain quality of life (Mary, 2008, p. 4).

Later on in the same book Mary advocates for the creation of regional centers for the delivery of personal social services to chronically vulnerable populations, such as disabled people, although she does not clearly explain the reference to vulnerability. It is not understood whether the term is used in relation to the inherent vulnerability perceived to exist because someone has impairment, which is more consistent with an individual pathology focus, or if the chronic vulnerability is created by the dearth of resources and services available to people in need as part of the human condition and is thus universal.

The course “(dis)Ability: Policy and Practice”, SLWK 4380, had a significantly high number of references to disability in relation to both social pathology, 140 (39%) and critical disability perspectives 146 (41%). The course also had 72 (20%) references to individual pathology perspectives of disability, and in all articles the individual pathology perspective was presented, discussed and critiqued from a social pathology or critical disability perspective. The references to disability counted in the social pathology category tended to be those closely associated with the social or minority approaches to disability:

As rendered in disability studies scholarship, disability has become a more capacious category, incorporating people with a range of physical, emotional, sensory, and

cognitive conditions. Although the category is broad, the term is used to designate a specific minority group (Linton, 2006, p. 162).

As explained in the course outline, many of the readings for the “(dis)Ability: Policy and Practice” course critically examined socially based assumptions about disability and the societal structures that underpin these assumptions. Critical disability perspectives were evidenced in a wide range of readings which covered such concepts as:

- Different approaches to consultation with disabled people and how these approaches can support or impede the interests of disabled people (Stienstra, 2003);
- Examination of disciplines of normality and feminist disability theories (Wendell, 1996);
- Recognition that social divisions such as gender, age and ethnicity intersect with disability and can produce barriers to communication (French & Swain, 2004);
- Exploring how the major theoretical perspectives on disability currently privileged within disability studies, both contribute to and limit theorizing about difference (Thomas, 2004);
- The ideological construction of the disabled individual, related to individualism and capitalism (Oliver, 1990);
- Feminist disability theory and the ability/disability system as a category of analysis from which to view cultural diversity (Garland-Thomson, 2006);
- The legal rights of disabled people in Canada (Chouinard, 2009); and
- Foucault’s analysis of power and how government structures and programs shape individuals’ health interests (Prince, 2004a).

Summary of findings from the manifest content analysis. There were 99 texts examined for the purpose of the manifest content analysis at Dalhousie School of Social of Social Work.

There were 52 (52%) texts that had disability-related content which could be categorized into one of three approaches to disability; individual pathology, social pathology and critical disability perspectives. It must be re-emphasized that any mention of the individual perspective of disability was found to be related to a discussion of more progressive approaches to disability, and therefore the number of mentions (72) was not indicative of the theoretical approach to disability in the three courses. The main perspectives represented in the texts were the social pathology perspectives (140 mentions or 39%) and critical disability perspective (146 mentions or 41%). The course “(dis)Ability: Policy and Practice” was the primary reason for the significant number of mentions of disability content.

The predominant approach to disability found within the course texts was characteristic of social pathology perspectives, with a rights-based approach being predominant (Rioux, 1997), based on a socially constructed and political model of disability (represented in articles from Gilson & DePoy, 2002; Neufeldt, 2003; Peters, 2003; French & Swain, 2004; Prince, 2004a, 2004b; Dunn et al. 2008; MacDonald & Friars, 2009). Social work practice from a social pathology perspective emphasizes the following concepts: a disability affirmative perspective in which the disabled person is in the leadership role in defining his or her own needs, priorities, and aspirations (Gilson et al., 1998); the need to deconstruct normative and stigmatizing terminology, and replace it with “people first” language (MacDonald & Friars, 2009); and, adoption of a broad systems perspective where the targets of change would be negative attitudes, discrimination, oppression, limits on civil rights, and limited access to community life (Gilson & DePoy, 2002). The textbook by Payne (2005), which was the main text for the “Theoretical Foundations in Social Work Practice” course, provided a comprehensive overview of social work practice theories and encouraged social workers to adopt an eclectic approach to practice,

drawing ideas from various perspectives, explanatory theories and models. The approach to disability that Payne endorses in his text was one based on self-advocacy and an approach known as normalization or social role valorization, which has been argued to be compatible with a social model approach to disability.

Several of the critical disability perspectives mentioned in the texts provided a critical postmodern perspective and analysis of disability:

- Foucault's (1980) concept of bio-politics, in which the strategic organization of power and knowledge is used to manage health problems and needs, is applied to policy-making in Canada (Prince, 2004a);
- There is a critique of modernist perspectives creating "normative" universal truths which become coercive (Howe, 1994); and
- There is discussion of the role of discourses in shaping service user's experiences of, and social workers' responses to mental illness and disability (Healy, 2005).

Many of the postmodern perspectives on disability found in the texts focused on cultural analyses of disability: cultural ideals of the human body were discussed from both a feminist and disability perspective (Wendell, 1996); the role of cultural discourse in the construction of disability (French & Swain, 2004); the need to incorporate an ability/disability analysis into feminist theory to reveal "cultural signifiers" for the body (Garland Thomson, 2006); and, Indian feminist scholarship examining embodiment along the axes of caste, class, and colonization and the need to include the impaired body in that analysis (Ghai, 2009).

There was one text which examined various theoretical perspectives on disability and which advocated for the development of a theoretical agenda in disability studies based on four themes; the political economy of disability, the psycho-emotional dimensions of disability, theorizing difference, and impairment and impairment effects (Thomas, 2004). Thomas cites the historically materialist work of Mike Oliver in her overview of disability theory, and his analysis of the ideological construction of disability (Oliver 1990) was required reading in the “(dis)Ability” course. The first chapter of Mullaly’s (2002) text on challenging oppression; “Theoretical and Conceptual Considerations” was required reading in the “Theoretical Foundations in Social Work Practice” course. His chapter speaks to the need for a critical social theory informed by postmodern, post structural, feminist and post-colonial insights, and that such a theory would be consistent with the conflict perspective of society in which social problems are located in systems of dominant-subordinate relationships. “Given the nature of society marked by inequality and structured along lines of class, gender, race, age, and ability/disability, the explanation for social problems must lie at a higher societal plane than those perceived by order theorists” (Mullaly, 2002, p. 13).

Given the similarity in counts of social pathology perspectives and critical disability perspectives within the elective course addressing disability, and the high proportion of social pathology perspectives found in the texts from the two theory courses, it can be said that there was a range of disability theory presented to BSW students at the Dalhousie School of Social Work. Social pathology perspectives were primarily based on rights-based analyses and approaches, informed by a social model of disability in which disability was viewed as being socially constructed. Critical disability perspectives tended to be represented by texts supporting an interpretive postmodern view of disability.

The research question guiding the manifest content analysis was stated as:

- Are social work practice approaches to disability, as represented in the various types of texts, more concerned with theories of individual pathology, social pathology or critical disability perspectives?

In answer, the findings of the manifest content analysis indicate that the Dalhousie School of Social Work has introduced critical disability perspectives within one of its elective courses addressing disability. The two core theory courses had a higher proportion of social pathology perspectives than critical disability perspectives, with one course having very little disability-related content. Therefore, critical disability perspectives do not appear to be fully integrated into the core curriculum at the Dalhousie School of Social Work. The elective course addressing disability included a critical postmodern analysis of sociocultural systems, and the extent to which they are disabling to particular groups and individuals (Gilson & DePoy, 2002, p. 160). However, major targets for social work practice included negative attitudes, discrimination, oppression, devaluation, limited access to resources, privilege and limitations in civil rights, all of which come under the umbrella of a human rights-based approach, as explicated by Rioux (1997). Given these indicators, I would say that the social work practice approach to disability, as represented in the texts examined in the manifest content analysis, is more congruent with a social pathology perspective of disability.

Interviews with Key Informants

Two instructors at the Dalhousie School of Social Work were interviewed by telephone using the Interview Protocol in Appendix E. Each instructor had taught one of the courses examined in the manifest content analysis of texts. One of the instructors explained that he/she became

involved in teaching the course after a curriculum review identified the need for a more critically reflexive approach to course material. The other instructor was hired into a faculty position designated for a person with a disability so that the School could continue to advance disability scholarship in its programming.

In response to my question on how the instructors chose the texts for each of their courses, one instructor commented that the School continued to look for texts that challenge the fundamental assumptions upon which human interactions and structures in society are based. Judy Rebicks' book, *Transforming Power: From the Personal to the Political* (2009) was chosen because Rebick's book introduces basic ideas of privilege, oppression, domination, and she does this clearly in relation to social work. According to one instructor, Rebick's book helps students to examine the epistemological assumptions that have guided social work interventions to date. Nancy Mary's book, *Social Work in a Sustainable World* (2008), was introduced to link social work and basic world sustainability. The instructor also chose Ben Carniol's *Case Critical: Social Services and Social Justice in Canada* (2005) because of his explanation of privilege and different types of oppression, although several chapters from Anne Bishop's book, *Becoming an Ally: Breaking the Cycle of Oppression in People* (2002) were used to introduce the basic ideas of oppression and how it is held in place.

The second instructor acknowledged that there was not a text adequate to cover all perspectives on disability. The instructor described his/her approach to be primarily a postmodern one with various theoretical approaches, incorporating a First Person Voice component. Some readings in relation to the social model of disability were chosen from the Disability Archives available online from Leeds University in the United Kingdom. More recently *Rethinking Normalcy: A Disability Studies Reader* (2009), edited by Tanya Titchkosky

and Rod Michalko, had been chosen because of the broad scope of topics on identity, the lived experience of disability, and its critique of aspects of disability studies.

Modified analytic induction was used to analyze the interview transcripts and to test the proposition that, for each case, anti-oppressive social work practice approaches would be consistent with the theoretical framework of critical disability studies. However it was thought that, because the Dalhousie School of Social Work is situated within the Faculty of Health Professions, there might be evidence of influence from the health sciences exerted on the perspectives of disability presented in curriculum. This proved not to be a significant factor in how disability is addressed at the school. One of the instructors did allude to the fact that the School of Social Work does come under some pressure from the Faculty of Health to teach students in the Masters Program how to use the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, a recommendation that the faculty has so far been able to resist. The approach to mental health taken in the manual would be consistent with an individual pathology perspective since it uses diagnostic criteria to determine the type of mental health issue with which a patient is dealing.

The findings from the analysis were developed into three top level categories or themes: critical anti-oppressive social work with disabled people, the influence of the discourse of individualism; and the importance of a First Person Voice perspective.

Critical anti-oppressive social work with disabled people. One instructor explained that the approach to disability taken at the Dalhousie School of Social Work was a human-rights based perspective informed by a postmodern theoretical lens consistent with critical disability theory:

We certainly deconstruct and, um, traditional models like the medical model and even go back and look at Parsons sick role theory and its relation to disability, and certainly explore the social model of disability, even structural social work. So, different theoretical lens are taken to disability, but always under the guise of ‘how do we understand that in relation to a First Person Voice perspective’, which is paramount.

The second instructor explained that the Dalhousie School of Social Work recently completed a curriculum review in which the concepts of social justice and critical reflection were deliberately and consistently embedded in all program goals and activities. This change has expanded the focus of anti-oppressive theory and practice to include examination of oppression, domination and privilege in relation to issues of social justice. One of the main theoretical perspectives taught in the course was social constructionism, but the instructor said that the course goes beyond merely looking at social constructs to identify the world view that is informing the constructs:

What are the fundamental epistemological, ontological, cosmological assumptions about the world that gives rise to working with people who have disabilities in a particular kind of way, or even give rise to working with people who are ‘different’ then, defining difference in a particular way?

One instructor also stated that the Dalhousie School of Social Work adds the descriptor “critical” to describing its anti-oppressive social work approach because of theoretical controversy about the meaning of “anti-oppressive”. Some people had interpreted it in a way that rigidly enforced identity politics, while the School supports a more fluid concept of identity.

The influence of the discourse of individualism. The interviewees both identified the difficulties they have had in helping students to learn to challenge dominant discourses, particularly discourses related to individualism and individual pathology. One instructor explained that students entering the BSW program have very little understanding of racism, for example:

...of course racism exists, but it's the individual acts of individual people. So it never ceases to amaze me how strong that is. How strong individualism is...So even though we have spent three and a half months trying to take that apart, the other discourse on racism, the colour blind approach, and that's not good language, is just so entrenched that we, you know, we're looking at how we infuse it through our whole program and even then, is two years enough?

The second instructor provided practical assignments based on discourse analysis of media and government documents to have students examine the dominant individual pathology discourse underpinning many stories and policies about disabled people.

I can remember they had a redefinition from the Revenue Canada Agency and they were defining people with disabilities for the tax exemption, and one man was, I remember seeing this on the news, a man from Newfoundland who for years and years had qualified under the tax exemption was told all of a sudden that he was no longer qualified and he was a man who was an amputee. So what did he do, grow a leg all of a sudden? ...So sometimes even within class or in an assignment they would write a letter to the editor challenging something or write it to the government...

The importance of First Person Voice perspective. Much of the emphasis of the material in the courses was focused on linking the personal to the political to shift students' thinking away from individualization towards examination of social constructs. However, both instructors stated that they used case examples and first hand narratives to help students to understand how oppression and inequity impact people at the personal level. One instructor found a Hollywood movie, *The Soloist*, assumed to be based on a true story, to present the difference between dominant and alternative assumptions about mental illness.

It's about a young man who was a real violinist virtuoso and was studying at Juilliard and so on...and developed...and was diagnosed, developed schizophrenic processes and ended up living on the streets. He is, I don't know, found by a journalist who wants to write a story on the person. What evolves is their changing relationship, um, where the journalist for quite some time wants to save or fix this person. Of course Nathaniel has a different understanding of his illness, and his so-called illness, is the fountain of his creativity as far as he is concerned...So there's all this back and forth, and we use this in terms of saying; Let's understand these two different perspectives about health and illness, and why we define Nathaniel as ill and the journalist as healthy...Students get quite shaken up by that.

The other instructor who was interviewed explained at the beginning of the interview that he/she was hired because of personal experience living with chronic pain as a disability. A First Person Voice perspective on disability was taken throughout the instruction of the course through sharing of personal experience by the instructor, by asking students to look at their own lives and experiences in relation to disability, and by inviting guest speakers who have personal experience living with impairment. The instructor mentioned that he/she has been providing

courses with a module on disability to encourage enrolment in an elective course addressing disability. Many students have taken the opportunity to approach the instructor after such a presentation, as explained in the following case example provided by the instructor:

...we have a very strong affirmative action policy, but I've had students come to me and come in to talk to me who hadn't previously identified maybe they live with RA, maybe they live with something that's not a visible disability, right? And they are starting to identify and make those connections.

According to one instructor, the integration of First Person Voice into student learning opportunities can sometimes encounter ethical barriers when assignments have students speaking with people outside of their professional roles. When students are expected to speak with service users the assignment must be approved by an internal ethics review board, which has proven difficult, according to one instructor, even at the Graduate level. However, many experiential learning activities were used to assist students with becoming disability "aware". For example, one exercise involved asking students to tour the campus using a mobility or visual disability lens so that they could explore the barriers to accessibility that exist on campus. Other assignments were designed to link theory to social action by having students work in small groups on a research project addressing some specific policy area of disability in which they developed alternatives that fit with the disability theories that they were taught.

Findings from the modified inductive analysis of interview transcripts. The critical anti-oppressive theory and practice taught to BSW students at the Dalhousie School of Social Work is consistent with the critical disability theory perspectives in many important aspects. First, disability is understood to be relationally, culturally and socially constructed rather than as a

medically defined category or condition. Second, professional discourses such as those from the health professions, social work, psychiatry and policy-makers, are critically examined in relation to the role that each discourse has in creating and perpetuating oppression, including ableism. Third, the dominance of individualism was identified as part of a worldview which has had negative implications for how social workers, and others, view social issues and develop strategies for intervention when working with marginalized people and groups. And fourth, the First Person Voice perspective in relation to disability was viewed as critically important to understanding the personal experience of impairment as well as to understanding the incredible diversity and complexity of disability.

These critical disability perspectives are consistent with social constructionism, as defined by Payne (2005) whose text is used as required reading for the “Theoretical Foundations in Social Work Practice” course. Payne broadly defines social constructionism as knowledge and understanding about the world that comes from social interactions among people:

Knowledge is therefore constructed within cultural, historical, and local contexts through the language used to interpret social experiences. This comes to form and represent social experiences because it is the only way in which those experiences are understood (Payne, 2005, p. 58).

Discourse analysis was utilized in both courses to assist students to examine the dominant discourses of individualism and individual pathology. Narratives are used to assist students to understand the personal experiences of inequity and oppression. As Hiranandani (2005b) explains, there has been a move in social work towards a social constructionist framework of disability. According to Hiranandani, language, in particular, serves as a method for producing

meaning and generating knowledge, rather than as a representation of an objective “truth”. “The constructionist perspective asserts that a disability-related impairment comes from the relationship of the person with the disability to the socio-cultural environment” (Hiranandani, 2005a, p. 5). Concepts such as First Person Voice are also very important to understanding how disabled people see, read, and understand the cultures in which they live (Snyder, 2002, as cited in Meekosha, 2004, p. 727).

As disability is a relationship, the meaning of disability has at least two components – the meanings applied to the individual with impairments by others, and the meanings that the individual assigns to the situations in which she negotiates those relationships. These meanings interact and affect each other (Meekosha, 2006, p. 165).

Critical Discourse Analysis of a Transcription from an Audio-taped Classroom Session

Critical discourse analysis was applied to the transcript of an audio-taped classroom session in which oppression was discussed in relation to various worldviews. The aim of the critical discourse analysis was to determine whether or not the theories and practice approaches to social work found to be prevalent within social work texts were also prevalent within classroom presentations and discussions; and then to examine how the scholarly discourse on disability fits with contemporary disability studies perspectives.

It was not possible to audio-tape a class during the fall/winter term of 2010 because Dalhousie University was involved in accreditation activities. In the fall of 2011 I travelled to Dalhousie School of Social Work to audio-tape a class in a half credit course designed to introduce students to the central concepts of a social justice perspective, including historical and current manifestations of inequity and justice. The course outline stated that particular attention was

given to exploring the significance of individuals' positionality in the promotion of equitable social relationships. Course objectives were given as:

1. Recognize, understand, and analyze the meaning and impact of specific and interlocking structures of oppression, domination and privilege as they support or impede social justice.
2. Understand the personal and political aspects of relationships through a critical exploration of one's own role in maintaining or dismantling societal structures of oppression, domination and privilege.
3. Consider the role of social work in supporting and/or resisting structures of oppression, domination and privilege.
4. Develop strategies for 'working with' the discomfort and other strong emotions that arise when exploring issues of justice and injustice.
5. Understand social justice as a way of thinking by engaging in critical reflection and questioning in a dialogical and responsible manner.
6. Explore the complexities and politics of First Person Voice (personal experience and narrative) as a source of knowledge.

When I arrived at the classroom the instructor introduced me to the class of 35 students and I explained the purpose of the study. After receiving informed consent from all of the students who were present, I assumed a position to the side of the classroom to begin taping. The classroom seating was arranged in double semi-circles so that the instructor and teaching assistant could navigate the center of the classroom during discussions. In preparation for the class students were asked to review the following readings:

- Mary, N. (2008). *Social Work in a Sustainable World*; and

- Clark, M. (1995). Changes in Euro-American values needed for sustainability. *Journal of Social Issues*, 51(4), 63-82.

The instructor began the class by situating the learning module to be presented by the lecture into the overall concept map for the course. The objective for learning was to explore the concept of worldview with particular attention to the fundamental assumptions that support how we understand and live in the world. The instructor asked students to examine a large Bristol board cut-out of a tree, which was situated at the front of the class. The instructor explained that this particular module would involve unearthing, digging up, and getting down below the surface of what is informing practice; getting to the “roots”. The instructor stated that the class would be looking at the Euro-Western worldview, in particular, because it has historically been privileged over others, particularly in relation to First Nations Peoples.

The students were asked to look at a map of the world that was available at the front of the classroom. Students immediately noticed that the sizes of the countries were different than they were used to seeing. A second map was introduced and students were asked which map represented a “true” image of the world. The two maps being shown to students were the Peter’s Projection Map and the Mercator Map of the world.

Discussion 1: Whose reality is real?

Instructor: If they both represent our reality, which one is the most correct?

Student: That one (indicating the Peter’s Projection Map) because if you look Africa would be in the center and Canada would be more smooshed.

Instructor: Okay, so you think that, in terms of what the perspective may be, this map is more realistic? Any other thoughts? Which image of the world have you learned most about to this point? That one over there? (indicating the Mercator Map) Why?

Student: It's the oldest.

Instructor: Okay, so is someone suggesting that because it has been around the longest? Okay, any other reasons why?

Student: Because it's from our perspective.

Instructor: Because it's from our perspective, the West? I should take a little time out. Every time someone suggests something I throw another question back at you, right? So it's not meant to ask you to defend yourselves. We are digging here folks, I should have my shovel.

Student: (from a non- white, ethnic background): I learned from that one (indicating the Peter's Projection Map).

Instructor: So you learned from that one, interesting. So our positionality influences what we learn about things.

A video clip of an excerpt from an episode of the television show "The West Wing" was then shown to the students. In the excerpt from the television show cartographers are visiting the White House to explain that the current Mercator Map, being taught and used in American schools, was designed for oceanic travel using latitude and longitude. It distorts the actual geographical size and location of countries. The cartographers explain that this misrepresentation of country size has implications for social equality since, in Western society, we equate size with importance. Third World countries, especially Africa are typically underrepresented in size on

maps. Location is also important since most third world countries are represented as being below the equator or to the south of Western countries. The cartographers state that on a ball, like the earth, there is no north and south.

Discussion 2: If there are different points of view on the world then there must be different points of view on everything within that world.

Instructor: Any reaction to that?

Student: It makes sense.

Instructor: It makes sense right? So talk about the illustration of dominance of living in and understanding the world. And this is the one I really love. This is the one where she was saying we need to stop and figure it out. Doesn't that just throw you for a loop? It does me, I mean looked at that a lot. I still can't quite get my head around it. Can you guys see it? But why couldn't it be that way? I mean the earth is round so how did we decide which was the top of it? Right? And it sure makes you understand the world quite differently when you look at it that way. What they say down here is that the world, like a ball, has no top. We can look at it from any point of view. And that is what we are trying to get at with this whole concept of worldview. Is that we can look at things in multiple ways. The top is a matter of habit, convention, and emphasis. The top is not truth, it is a matter of habit. This particular map [gestures towards Peter's Projection Map] teaches us to question assumptions, so I invite people at the break to look at the illustrations of all different maps that are along the bottom there. They are just different points of view on the world. I'm sure you can see where we are going with this, if there are different points of view on the world in general there must be different points of view of everything

within that world and with various professionals and the ways that we've been taught to think about this.

The instructor then asked students to consider the location of Dalhousie University.

Discussion 3: Who gives identity truth status?

Instructor: Ask questions. Lots of time what we do is just reject it. Right. So lots of time, and again we will be putting forward that's the one reason why social injustice continues because we reject each other's ways of seeing and understanding. Question for you.

Where is Dalhousie University located?

Student: On LeMarchant [Street].

Instructor: Where else?

Student: The center of the universe.

Instructor: The center of the universe.

Student: Central Halifax.

Instructor: Central Halifax, okay. And where is Halifax? Nova Scotia, okay. So we say that Dal is located in Halifax. The question is...is it really or is it possible that where we see Dalhousie located depends on our positionality? So Mi'kmaq have always known this land as Mi'kmaqui. I am really plundering the pronunciation and I apologize. But if you asked a Mi'kmaq elder what this territory is they would say it's Mi'kmaqui. But this territory was also home to an early French population. What did they call it? Anybody know?

Student: L'Acadie.

Instructor: L'Acadie, exactly. So where are we right now? Are we in Nova Scotia?

Mi'kmaqui? L'Acadie?

Student: All of the above.

Students were then divided into small discussion groups and asked to consider the following questions about the geographical and historical location of the Dalhousie School of Social Work on LeMarchant Street:

1. If this territory has multiple identities why is Nova Scotia assumed to be the only “right” or “true” identity?
2. Who named the territory Nova Scotia?
3. What does the ability to name a place – to give it identity with truth status- say about power? Who has power and who doesn't?

Once students reconvened into the large group a discussion ensued on the power of being able to define identity and its implications for the way people see themselves and others.

Discussion 4: Who has the power to name?

Instructor: Okay, so let's get a bit of feedback from each group. Points of discussion that you spent the most time on, whatever. How was it that people in the ships had the power to decide what this land was?

Student: They pretty much won the war, I guess you could say. The French came in and took the land from the Mi'kmaq and the English took the land from the French, so...winning the war.

Instructor: So there's a whole understanding of land there isn't there? The land is something that can be owned and the ownership of the land can go back and forth. What else came up?

Student: How when we change the names of places we erase and rewrite history.

Student: We were talking about how even some of the names of original places were changed by the Europeans. I remember in elementary school the Mi'kmaq were known as the Micmac and then in junior high all of a sudden the spelling was changed. They kind of changed the identity of the people who were already here too.

Instructor: So what gives them the ability to do that? Does anyone know the fairytale of Rumpelstiltskin? The moral of that tale is?

Student: Wasn't there always a catch to his deal to give people what they want?

Instructor: I think one of the things about Rumpelstiltskin is the power of naming.

Because she was able to name him his power was taken away. In some versions he kind of disintegrates doesn't he? So what is that? I'm sorry I've forgotten your name (instructor gestures to a student).

Student: K_____.

Instructor: No it's not, it's Susan. (Students all laugh). Okay, if I can say from now on, though shalt be known as Susan, what would that be like?

Student: Well it would be a change.

Instructor: yeah, and what does that say about identity and what would that say about the power that I hold if I was able to do that? And by the way, you don't live in Halifax anymore, you live in Cartoonville. I mean, over and over and over again, how would that get internalized?

Student: It would change everything about everything. How people see you, how you see yourself.

The instructor then moved the class into an interactive discussion of the different kind of fundamental assumptions that were identified from the map and naming exercise. Students were introduced to assumptions such as:

- Axiology, exploring questions about values.
- Epistemology, exploring questions about truth.
- Cosmology exploring the nature of the universe and humans' place in it.
- Ontology, exploring questions about what is real.
- Praxeology exploring questions about actions.
- Spiritual exploring questions about the nature of the universe and faith.

Students were then asked to assist the instructor in acting out the creation story of Adam and Eve. Once the role play was completed students were asked to identify the various assumptions underpinning the story. Once students had practiced this analysis with the instructor they were divided into smaller groups with some groups acting out one of three creation stories from Iroquois legends, from Hindu religion and from a science fiction story, while the other groups provided an analysis of each story, identifying the primary assumptions. The objective of the exercise was made clear to students when the instructor asked them to think about some of the fundamental assumptions that form the foundation of the education system.

Discussion 5: Whose knowledge is the right knowledge?

Instructor: Knowledge is something that one person or one entity holds and passes, takes the cover off and pours it in. I mean I'm over-generalizing right? Would you say that is a fair assumption? What about ontology? What basically do we operate from in an

education system? It's real if it's scientifically proven? Or at least there is a reality. If we look hard enough and rigorously enough we'll find it. We might not know it all and there might be different interpretations but if we look hard enough we'll find the right one.

Um, can you see any other assumptions embedded in your education? That would fit either primary or secondary?

Student: The difference between right and wrong.

Instructor: the difference between right and wrong?

Student: Praxeology also in terms of the classroom and the dynamic of teaching.

Instructor: So what would be the praxeological beliefs informing this?

Student: How we behave?

Instructor: Listening? You have to get to identifying what they are. It's not that it's a vegetable, is it a sweet potato or a rutabaga? Yes, it's praxeology that we have to behave in a certain way in order to learn, So almost any system that we have established and set up is based on some type of belief system or assumption. It's our job to try and take that apart if we plan to change it... Sometimes we are so enmeshed in that way of seeing the world it's hard to recognize that it could be different.

When the class reconvened after a lunch break, the co-developer of the course, a member of the faculty, stopped by the classroom to talk about her work on Indigenous social work practice. This was an unexpected event and I did not have permission to audio-tape her presentation. However, the presentation was intended to reinforce the teaching points from the morning's class activities, but more specifically in relation to Indigenous world views and the privileging of a Euro-centric worldview and its impact on First Nations peoples. Once the guest left there was a short webinar presentation on Residential Schools in Canada. Students then were asked to go

into their respective Teaching and Learning Groups, which the course outline describes as a group to offer mutual assistance and understanding and integrating the required readings. My observation and audio-taping of the class concluded.

Findings from critical discourse analysis of a transcript from an audio-taped class. The audio-taped class did not address disability in either content or discussion. Emphasis was given to providing students with experiential learning opportunities to identify underlying assumptions and to categorize them according to their fundamental nature. The objective of the class, as stated in the course outline, was to have students explore world views, as well as dominant and alternative values, beliefs and assumptions, particularly the Euro-centric worldview in relation to Indigenous populations. The critical postmodern theory that informs the theoretical content of the class, social constructionism, has important implications for understanding disability and is part of the critical theory framework informing disability studies.

Discussion 1: Whose reality is real? Students were challenged in the first exercise to examine their assumptions about the conventional image they had of the world as represented by the Mercator Map, one that was commonly used in schools but was developed for use in circumnavigation. The map allegedly distorts the size and placement of countries, particularly developing countries like Africa. Next, the instructor played a video clip from a television show, “The West Wing” in which two cartographers explained to White House staff that continents such as Africa are underrepresented in size on the Mercator Map. The Peter’s Projection Map represents countries to scale, wherein Africa appears as the largest continent on the map in comparison to the continents of North America and Europe, and it is situated centrally on the map rather than south of Western countries. The cartographers explained that the misrepresentation of the size of countries has social implications since we tend to equate size

with importance. Location is also subjective, according to the cartographers, since the earth is round and there is really no top or bottom, no north or south. Yet, Third World countries are shown on the map to be below the equator, south of Western countries.

The instructor related the map exercise to social work practice by stating: “I’m sure you can see where I’m going with this, if there are different points of view on everything in that world in general, there must be different points of view on everything within that world and with various professionals and the ways the we’ve been taught to think about this.” The instructor then asked students to break into small discussion groups to consider questions examining the local historical and geographical aspects of Nova Scotia and Dalhousie University. The instructor provided students with three questions which asked students to explore how a territory such as Nova Scotia can have multiple identities associated with it in terms of the people who live there, and have historically lived there, yet there is an assumption that the province should have a name privileging one group of that population - Western Europeans.

It is interesting to note that disability theorists, Mairian Corker and Tom Shakespeare, also use the metaphor of “mapping” to explain the importance of postmodern theory for disability studies. In their edited book, *Disability/Postmodernity: Embodying Disability Theory* (2002), the first chapter, “Mapping the Terrain” explains that postmodern and post-structural scholarship can contribute to understanding disability and the diverse experiences of disabled people. The authors write that the culture of the Enlightenment is at the heart of modernity and that postmodern thought is a challenge to the underpinnings of modernist thinking:

This is founded on assumptions about the unity of humanity, the individual as the creative force of society and history, the superiority of the West, the idea of science as

Truth and the belief in social progress, and this is what we mean when we refer to *modernism* (Corker & Shakespeare, 2002, p. 2).

Corker and Shakespeare (2002: 15) argue that existing theories of disability, particularly the medical and social models of disability, seek to explain disability universally and end up creating meta-narratives that exclude important dimensions of disabled people's lives and of their knowledge. They call for the development of inclusive societies by "thinking globally" and acting "locally" at the same time.

Post-structuralism and postmodernism did not invent complexity or inaccessibility; they have been a traditional hallmark of much academic thought, as a consideration of the work of Kant, Hegel, or indeed the Marxist tradition itself shows. What postmodern ideas have noted, however, is that people's lives are far more complex than modernism likes to believe and they choose to engage with this complexity (Corker & Shakespeare, 2002, p. 15).

The two exercises on positionality and worldview were the instructor's way of challenging students to examine the world from alternative perspectives, to understand that truth is subjective and depends on your perspective, or position in society. It is not known if students would be able to generalize this learning to a social constructivist understanding of disability, since disability was not discussed in the class that day.

Discussion 2: If there are different points of view on the world then there must be different points of view on everything within that world. The large group discussion on the "power of naming" challenged students to think about place names and how they reflect the historical interests of certain individuals and groups in society. The discussion focused on the

history of the area around Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia and how the indigenous people, and the territory they lived in, were re-named by Europeans to reflect European pronunciation and interests. This discussion was reminiscent of Foucault's work on the history of thought, knowledge and philosophy, as explained in *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse of Language* (1982). In his introduction, Foucault states:

To be brief, then, let us say that history, in its traditional form, undertook to 'memorize' the *monuments* of the past, transform them into *documents*, and lend speech to those traces which, in themselves, are often not verbal, or which say in silence something other than what they actually say; in our time, history is that which transforms *documents* into *monuments*. In that area where, in the past, history deciphered the traces left by men, it now deploys a mass of elements that have to be grouped, made relevant, placed in relation to one another other to form totalities (Foucault, 1982, p. 7).

Discussion 3: Who gives identity truth status? The discussion on the history of the region was meant to challenge students to think about how historical events, and the way that history has been recorded and told through historical discourse, reflect vested interests, and particularly evident in the classroom discussion was the historical dominance of the interests of Western European nations. Foucault explains that these "ready-made syntheses" must be ousted and obscured, and "instead of according them unqualified, spontaneous value, we must accept, in the name of methodological rigour, that, in the first instance, they contain only a population of dispersed events (Foucault, 1982, p. 22). Foucault used what he referred to as "genealogies" or historical-critical analyses to trace the making of identities, selves, social norms and institutions, to demonstrate how scientific and historical discourses shape "disciplinary" society (Corker & Shakespeare, 2002, p. 8). In his chapter on "The Formation of Objects", Foucault (1982)

explains that discourses can no longer be treated as groups of signs but as practices that systematically “form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 1982, p. 49).

Discussion 4: Who has the power to name? Social work educators and disability theorists, Andrew Jakubowicz and Helen Meekosha (2002, p. 243) contend that disability studies has emerged as a theoretical area developed from critiques of previous paradigms, particularly medical and rehabilitative, which managed people with disabilities and their social relations. Meekosha (2006, p. 162) further explains that disability needs to be understood as a social relationship rather than a characteristic of individuals with impairments. Meekosha explores how the category of race has no scientific validity, yet it has major social meaning. She cites the writing of Mitchell and Snyder who argue that: ‘disability and race (are) a mutual project of human exclusion based on scientific management systems successfully developed with modernity’ (Mitchell & Snyder, 2003, as cited in Meekosha, 2006, p. 166). For Meekosha, social analysis and action for social change must integrate various factors contributing to a disabling society and should suggest directions for moving towards an enabling society;

While gender, race, class and disability constitute discrete areas for analysis, and are powerful markers of identity; they are also inextricable aspects of the foundations of societies and nation states....the boundaries between gender, race, ethnicity, class and disability are permeable, especially as the concepts are often used in a derogatory, discriminatory and can be used in an overlapping and interchangeable manner. They are all social constructions of exclusion and processes of naming and classifying who does and who does not constitute a full citizen (Meekosha, 2006, p. 172).

Discussion 5: Whose knowledge is the right knowledge? Reeve (2002, p. 497) believes that Foucault's work is important because Foucault has provided an analysis of how power and knowledge are inextricably linked; knowledge is what makes people subjects because they make sense of themselves and others by referring to various bodies of knowledge. Hiranandani (2005a) explains the importance of the contributions of Foucault's version of social constructionism in relation to the difference between sovereign and disciplinary power in modern societies. He states that, instead of sovereign authority, liberal institutions such as education, health and welfare services are all instruments of domination. According to Hiranandani, the significance of professional discourses such as social work is that they legitimize the ability of professional elites to maintain relationships of power in the production of welfare policies and services. "These relationships of power and surveillance, that are inconsistent with social work principles of social justice, client empowerment, and self-determination, call for critical reflections on social work practice and pedagogy" (Hiranandani, 2005a, p. 9).

Postmodernism, particularly Foucault's version of social constructionism provides an important theoretical analysis for understanding disability. Tremain (2005, p. 9) posits that Foucault's (1982) juridical conception of power, in which power is construed as a fundamentally repressive thing possessed by a centralized external authority, is reflected in the social model of disability. As Barnes explains, "the social model is a deliberate attempt to shift attention away from the functional limitations of individuals with impairments onto problems caused by disabling environments, barriers, and cultures" (Barnes, 2012, p. 18). According to Tremain, a Foucauldian analysis of disabling power would show that the juridical concept of disability that is assumed within the terms of the social model obscures the productive constraints of modern bio-power (Tremain, 2005, pp. 10-11).

A Foucauldian approach to disability would hold that governmental practices into which the subject is inducted and divided from others produce the *illusion* that they have a prediscursive, or natural, antecedent (impairment), which in turn provides the justification for the multiplication and expansion of the regulatory effects of these practices...In short, an argument about disability that takes Foucault's approach would be concerned to show there is indeed a causal relationship between impairment and disability, and it is precisely this: the category of impairment emerged and, in many respects, persists in order to legitimize the governmental practices that generated it in the first place (Tremain, 2005, p. 11).

Barnes (2012, p. 21) believes that the social model of disability has been seriously undermined by the emergence of postmodern and post structural perspectives. He contends that these approaches shift attention away from the primacy of economic forces in the creation of disablement. "Constructions of the body rather than the economic and social relations of capitalism are prioritized" (Barnes, 2012, p. 22). He argues that the disability dichotomy of impairment/disability is a pragmatic one that does not deny that impairment may limit a person's ability to function independently, but he believes that how people deal with their impairment is determined by their access to a range of social and material resources.

Summary of findings from the critical discourse analysis. The class addressing oppression did not address disability directly in either class content or in the ensuing discussions. Emphasis was given to providing students with experiential learning opportunities to understand the importance of postmodern ideas of identity, difference and the power of knowledge and discourse. These critical theory concepts are part of important theoretical analyses and debates within disability studies, and in that regard, the content was congruent with critical disability

studies. However, it is not known if the students would be able to generalize these concepts to understand disability as a social construction in the same way that the identity of indigenous peoples was discussed, as pejorative and given meaning by governments, societal institutions and professional discourses.

Summary of Findings in Relation to Main Research Questions

The main research questions to be explored in this case study were:

- What dominant ideas inform the theoretical lenses on disability within social work texts, course outlines, and instruction in core and specialized courses related to disability at Dalhousie University School of Social Work?
- How consistent are current social work perspectives on disability, found in social work texts in core and specialized courses on disability, with the dominant theoretical perspectives advocated within the critical disability studies literature?

A review of the findings from the manifest content analysis of texts, the analytic inductive analysis on interview transcripts from key informants, and the critical discourse analysis of a transcript from a classroom discussion have been utilized to provide insight into the way that disability is being defined and presented at the Dalhousie School of Social Work, as follows:

1. The manifest content analysis of social work texts from the three courses found that 52 (52%) of the texts reviewed had disability-related content that could be categorized according to one of the disability typologies; individual pathology, social pathology or critical disability perspectives. Social pathology perspectives and critical disability perspectives were equally well-represented in the texts in the elective course, “(dis)Ability: Policy and Practice”, at 39% and 41%, respectively. However one of the

two core theory courses, “Advancing Social Justice”, SLWK 2222, had relatively little disability content with only 16 mentions of disability perspectives, 75% of which were categorized as social pathology perspectives. The other core theory course, “Theoretical Foundations in Social Work Practice” had predominantly social pathology perspectives represented within the texts with 52 mentions (51%).

2. The modified inductive analysis of transcripts made from interviews with two instructors revealed that the instructors incorporated a postmodern social constructionist framework into analysis of social issues, including disability. The social constructionist framework emphasizes that understanding and knowledge are constructed within cultural, historical, and local contexts used to interpret social experiences. The interviews revealed that professional discourses need to be critically examined in relation to the creation and perpetuation of oppression. The personal perspective of the service user, referred to as the First Person Voice perspective, was also mentioned as being important to understanding the experience of disability, as well as to understanding the incredible diversity and complexity of disability.
3. The critical discourse analysis of the transcript from a classroom discussion and presentation provided insight into the pedagogical strategies that can be enlisted to assist students to apply and understand a social constructivist analysis. “Rather than taking theory and the dominant forms of understanding as definite conclusions, constructionists uphold that what can be known is bound by cultural assumptions, historical precedents, sociocultural rules, and language” (Patterson, 1997, as cited in Hiranandani, 2005b, p. 75). It is not known how disability was addressed within this core theory course, but the manifest content analysis of texts for this course revealed that there was little disability

related content in the course and the few mentions of disability perspectives found within the texts were categorized as predominantly social pathology perspectives.

The three courses sampled in this case study all have content which is meant to build on and reinforce a social constructionist, postmodern framework that focuses on theory-building and the development of a critically reflexive social work practice. Disability is recognized as difference rather than as an anomaly, a part of human diversity that is to be valued in society. The rights-outcome approach, in particular, focuses on empowering disadvantaged individuals and on the provision of services and supports that are needed by some people to gain access to, participate in and exercise self-determination as equals in society. Disability theorists, Mairian Corker and Tom Shakespeare (2002) have explored the contributions of postmodernism to understanding disability and they acknowledge that postmodern analysis increasingly centers on aspects of culture, identity and the body, to the exclusion of political issues addressing oppression. However, postmodernism is viewed by the authors as having enormous potential for creating inclusive societies and for being politically engaged, as writers from feminism, queer theory and post-colonialism have demonstrated.

Mullaly (2007, p. 223) believes that modernist and postmodernist critical theories are different in many respects but they both stand against domination and oppression. Mullaly cites the work of Ife (1997) to explain that, by emphasizing difference and localism it reduces any potential for solidarity among groups experiencing the commonality of oppression. By its rejection of universal meta-narratives, postmodernism also rejects the importance of universal discourses that are the foundation of most social justice movements, such as human rights movements (Ife, 1997, as cited in Mullaly, 2007, pp. 222-223). However, critical postmodernism attempts to forge links between critical theory (Marxism, racism, feminism and so on) and

postmodernism (Mullaly, 2007, p. 174). Mullaly asserts that a postmodern critique can inform and revitalize progressive and emancipatory notions with respect to paradigms and ideological formations:

- Discourse theory deconstructs ideologies to see how their assumed essentialisms are in fact contingent and relational (Mullaly, 2007, p. 181).
- Incorporating the value of difference into progressive paradigms helps prevent the social welfare policies and social work practices of ‘homogenization, exclusion, bureaucratic control and surveillance, hierarchical decision-making and professional expertise’ that have occurred within dominant paradigms (Mullaly, 2007, p. 182).
- Postmodernism and cultural studies have contributed to an understanding of how culture mediates the effects of the person on the political and the effects of the political on the person (Mullaly, 2007, p. 183).
- Recognition of the fact that people occupy more than one social identity, and can be both an oppressor, and oppressed, at the same time (Mullaly, 2007, p. 184).

The introduction of critical disability perspectives found in the texts of the disability course may not be enough to change conventional social work practice in relation to disability.

Disability studies is considered to be a postmodern (inter)discipline, as defined by literary theorist, Dr. Vincent B. Leitch, which has been constructed, in large part, to challenge the oversights, blind spots, or ingrained prejudices of modern disciplines. Most interdisciplinary work supports or modifies, but does not transform, existing disciplines (Leitch, 2003, p. 166). Leitch explains that a “discipline” has an array of requirements, examinations and certifications; with specialized skills, vocabularies, canon, problematics, and traditions; with clear criteria for

admission and advancement; with relative autonomy in setting goals, standards, and rankings.

“This disciplinary border labor entails protecting the inside from the outside, ensuring the distinctiveness of the discipline and thereby solidifying the division of knowledge” (Leitch, 2003, p. 167). Leitch believes that university professors are disciplinary subjects, teaching within disciplinary institutions, which are themselves situated within disciplinary societies:

In casting the school as a “disciplinary institution,” Foucault has in mind specifically the use of dozens of so-called disciplines, that is, microtechniques of registration, organization, observation, correction, and control, all maximally synergized. Among these tiny ubiquitous “disciplines” are, to name a dozen or so, examinations, case studies, records, partitions and cells, enclosures, rankings, objectifications, monitoring systems, assessments, hierarchies, norms, tables (such as timetables), and individualizations...

Universities and colleges deploy the microtechniques to train and discipline the students in preparation not only for jobs and professional disciplines, but for disciplinary societies (Leitch, 2003, p. 168).

Leitch’s observations on the difficulty of changing disciplinary institutions can be appreciated by examining the inconsistent approach to disability present at Dalhousie University, and its School of Social Work. A review of Dalhousie University’s Accommodation policy found that it was consistent with a social pathology perspective based on a liberal human rights approach that has the stated intent to reduce disadvantage. However, an individual pathology perspective informs the definition of disability, as a functional limitation, used by the Office of Student Accessibility and Accommodation. The School of Social Work, which is one of many disciplines within the University, has an admissions policy with a provision to be able to screen out applicants with chronic medical conditions, and the guiding principles were argued to be

premised on a rights-based social pathology perspective of disability. Therefore, although there are a high proportion of critical disability perspectives found within the texts of the elective course addressing disability, there are indications that critical disability perspectives have not yet been fully integrated into the curriculum and policies of the School, as a whole. I would say that that there are indications that the School has integrated social pathology perspectives on disability to a greater extent than critical disability perspectives, although there are still vestiges of individual pathology perspectives within the admissions policy and disability services.

Chapter Six

Case Study of the University Of Manitoba BSW Program, Fort Garry Campus

The University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work has a mission statement to provide inclusive educational programs that promote respect for human rights and dignity, individual worth and well-being, diversity, social inclusion, and the principles of social justice. The Faculty also shares the Fort Garry Campus with a Graduate Disability Studies program, and has a 6 credit hour elective course specifically developed to address disability in social work theory and practice. The BSW program description emphasizes the need for professional and psychosocial treatment in bringing about social change, which is clearly in the realm of individual pathology. However, the influence of a disability studies program may be indicated by an approach to disability that falls midway between the medical model approach anticipated to be found at Dalhousie University School of Social Work and the structural approach to disability espoused by St. Thomas University School of Social Work.

The main research questions addressed in this case study are:

- What dominant ideas inform the theoretical lenses on disability within the social work texts, course outlines, and instruction in core theoretical courses and specialized courses related to disability at the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work, Fort Garry Campus BSW Program?
- How consistent are current social work perspectives on disability, found in core theoretical courses and specialized courses related to disability, with the dominant theoretical perspectives advocated within the critical disability studies literature?

Historical and Geographical Context

The University of Manitoba website asserts that it was western Canada's first university, founded more than 130 years ago on February 28, 1877 (University of Manitoba, 2001, Our History, para. 5). A "university education accessible to all" was the keystone for the establishment of the University of Manitoba, based on the philanthropy of Alexander Kennedy Isbister. When Isbister died in 1883 he provided a legacy of prizes and scholarships, based on merit, to students who wished to attend the University of Manitoba. It was his wish to provide awards to people regardless of gender, race, creed, language or nationality. The University website indicates that the University of Manitoba currently offers over 90 degrees, with more than 60 at the undergraduate level, and also is home to a wide range of research centres and institutes (University of Manitoba, 2010, Our History, para. 1).

The Faculty of Social Work at the University of Manitoba is located on the fourth and fifth floors of the Tier building, and is located on the Fort Garry Campus. The Tier Building, built in 1932 and named after a former Dean of Arts, William Tier, is not a fully wheelchair accessible building. Social work students using a wheelchair or other mobility aids must access the building through either the entrance at the ground level of the adjacent Fletcher Argue building or through the Welcome Centre, accessible from a large parking area located at the back of the Fletcher Argue building. From ground level, students can use an elevator to access various floors in the Tier building. However, the elevator is small in size and capacity and accessible through only one side, meaning that people using wheelchairs must either back in or out of it. It is also the elevator used by the university's technical services, located in the Fletcher Argue Building, to transport audio and visual equipment needed for classes, so it is in frequent use by able-bodied people. One advantage that the Fort Garry Campus has for disabled people that the other two

Universities in this study do not, is a tunnel system for travelling from building to building in inclement weather. Maps of the accessible interior pedestrian corridors are available on the University website. Student Accessibility Services informs me that the tunnel system at the Fort Garry campus is designed such that those in wheelchairs, or those with visual impairment, can navigate through them (S. Bilenki, personal correspondence, June 29. 2012). There is also designated parking for disabled staff and students. Accessible or special needs parking pass applications can be picked up at the Parking Services office located in the Welcome Centre. There are two types of parking passes for people with disabilities:

- Accessible parking passes for individuals who require specific parking spots, usually designated with a wheelchair symbol; and
- Special needs parking passes for specific parking lots, not specific parking spots.

University of Manitoba Policy on Accessibility for Students with Disabilities

Under *Governing Documents: University Community (2009), Respectful Work and Learning Environment*, the University of Manitoba has declared a commitment to a workplace and learning environment where individuals or groups of individuals are free from harassment and discrimination. To ensure that the policy is enforced, the University has appointed an equity services advisor whose duties include the investigation of complaints and the provision of advice and assistance in connection with concerns and complaints. Training for staff on harassment and discrimination, and the establishment and implementation of educational programs designed to enhance awareness of the policy, are mandated by the University. Each year a report is prepared by Equity Services concerning the number, type and disposition of cases, and the educational activities that have occurred in relation to the policy. A definition of “harassment” is provided by

Workplace Safety and Health Regulation #217, which defines it as “any objectionable conduct, comment or display by a person that;

- a) Is directed at a worker in the workplace;
- b) Is made on the basis of race, creed, religion, colour, sex, sexual orientation, gender-determined characteristics, political belief, political association or political activity, marital status, family status, source of income, disability, physical size or weight, age, nationality, ancestry or place of origin; and
- c) Creates a risk to the health of the worker.

Provincial regulation requires that this policy be reviewed every three years.

Under the auspices of the *University of Manitoba Act*, Section 16 (1)(b), the University of Manitoba has made a commitment to providing reasonable accommodation of the needs of persons with documented disabilities (University of Manitoba, *Governing Documents: Students*, 2009). The purpose of the policy is to support an accessible learning environment, “where students with disabilities, who are admitted to the University of Manitoba, can gain access to all programs for which they are academically qualified” (Section 1.2, *Governing Documents: Students*, 2009). In general, the policy statement explains that the University will foster, create, and maintain an accessible campus and provide other supports and services to students with disabilities. To do this, the University has established a Disability Services office (now referred to as Student Accessibility Services) to provide a “focus for activity and expertise regarding disability-related accommodations within the University, and for liaison with outside organizations regarding accessibility issues...” (Section 2.2, *Governing Documents: Students*, 2009).

The Student Accessibility website, accessed on January 02, 2012, explains that the office of Student Accessibility Services (SAS) also provides support to students with temporary impairment due to injuries such as sprains and broken bones. The SAS office is mandated by the University to act as a liaison between the students, faculty and staff of the University of Manitoba. The mission statement for SAS states that there is “Equal Access for All” through the provision of supports and programs, partnership, and education about accessibility. The office of the Student Accessibility Services is located centrally at the University Centre, Fort Garry Campus.

The Governing Documents: Students Policy on Accessibility for Students with Disabilities (University of Manitoba, 2009), makes it clear that Student Accessibility Services has a responsibility to ensure that the University’s criteria for excellence is not compromised and that services are delivered in a way that promotes equity, recognizing that performance is not inferior merely because it is different. However, disabled students are required to meet the academic standards established for each course, regardless of disability status.

Students must register for SAS services and an Accessibility Advisor meets with each student to determine the appropriate level of accommodation. Registration requires a letter, assessment, or medical documentation from a physician, specialist or counselor. Medical documentation must include a clinical diagnosis of the condition, along with the name of the diagnostician, date of testing, indication of how the disability affects the student, a recommendation of the accommodation required for daily functioning, and the duration of time that accommodation is expected to be required.

Student Accessibility Services also provides information to faculty on how to create an inclusive classroom for students with disabilities. Faculty are encouraged to demonstrate flexibility when considering due dates for assignments, and for classroom attendance. Material for classes can be provided in multiple formats, and teaching incorporates different formats such as visual displays, overheads, handouts, and other creative ways to deliver information. Faculty are advised to avoid casting disability as a negative or tragic condition by avoiding phrases such as “suffering from...” or “confined to a wheelchair” because they fail to recognize the independent and fulfilling life that most persons with disabilities enjoy.

Student Accessibility Services provides a number of services and programs to students with disabilities, including interpretation services, academic assistants or attendants, adaptive technology, classroom equipment, coaches, computer and study room use at the University Centre, tutoring (fee for service), volunteer note taking, as well as the provision of workshops and professional development opportunities for students, staff and faculty. Of particular interest is the coaching program in which coaches, “support, encourage, advise, and confront while providing opportunities for skill development that leads to increased self-efficacy and successful academic outcomes...” (University of Manitoba, 2011, Student Advocacy and Accessibility, Programs). Workshops and professional development opportunities provided to students with disabilities focus on interview and resume-writing skills but also include symptom management, coping, and self-advocacy.

In summary, there are many older buildings on the Fort Garry Campus, such as the Tier Building, which are not disability friendly in terms of accessibility. However, many steps have been taken by the University of Manitoba to meet the commitment made to provide a more accessible campus and to provide supports and services to disabled staff and students. It is

significant that the former “Disability Services” office has been renamed as Student Accessibility Services. Hall (1997, p. 1) writes that language operates as a representational system that is central to the processes by which meaning is produced. Linton (1998, p. 8) believes that linguistic conventions that structure the meanings assigned to disability and the patterns of response to disability are attendant on those meanings:

The term *disability*, as it has been used in general parlance, appears to signify something material and concrete, a physical or psychological condition considered to have predominantly medical significance. Yet it is an arbitrary designation, used erratically both by professionals who lay claim to naming such phenomena and by confused citizens. A project of disability studies scholars and the disability rights movement has been to bring into sharp relief the processes by which *disability* has been imbued with the meaning(s) it has and to reassign a meaning that is consistent with a sociopolitical analysis of disability (Linton, 1998, p. 10).

By renaming Disability Services to Student Accessibility Services, the University has transferred the focus away from the person with the condition towards the social processes and barriers that constrict disabled people’s lives. However, to register for accessibility services, a student must still provide a clinical diagnosis of the condition and medical documentation must include recommendations on the accommodations required for daily functioning.

The approach to disability at the University of Manitoba has elements of both the functional approach and the environmental approach (Rioux, 1997). The functional approach, associated with the individual pathology perspective, assumes that the deficit stems from an individual condition or pathology. To register for Student Accessibility Services, individual students must

have supporting medical documentation including a clinical diagnosis of the condition, and a recommendation of the accommodation required for daily functioning. Rioux (1997) explains that the functional approach to disability is to make services available to enable the individual to become as socially functional as possible, so that the people who use the services can, to some extent, achieve the capabilities of non-disabled persons. The environmental approach, associated with the social pathology framework, focuses on adapting environments to enable participation, including adapting curricula. It is interesting to note that disabled students are required to meet the academic standards of each course, regardless of disability status. Therefore, disabled students may be expected to conform to academic standards that have been established by non-disabled instructors without consideration of academic accommodation. In the article, “Best Practices in Promoting Disability Inclusion Within Schools of Social Work” the authors contend that Universal Instructional Design (Pfeiffer, 2001; Palmer, 2003, as cited in Dunn et al., 2008, p. 3) should be followed, which includes multiplicity of course design, delivery and evaluation so that the broadest range of student learning styles can be accommodated.

Mullaly (2007, p. 98) explains that reform liberalism values individualism but supports the belief that inequalities should be reduced on humanistic and/or pragmatic grounds:

Liberals accept inequality of circumstances because of their profound belief in equal opportunity, which means that we are all equal before the law. No one has any more freedoms or liberties than anyone else. Everyone has access to education, the job market, health care, social services, and so on. If a person fails in society it is because he or she did not take advantage of available opportunities. Liberals do not consider the possibility that some people in society, because of their social position and resources, may be in a

better position to exploit these so-called available opportunities than others (Mullaly, 2007, p. 98).

The University of Manitoba's commitment to foster, create and maintain an accessible campus, in combination with a focus on helping individual, disabled, students to access services and supports to be able to meet established academic standards, appears indicative of reform liberal ideology. The reform liberal approach to social problems is consistent with Rioux's social pathology framework in relation to its emphasis on making subsystems (educational institutions, the built environment) more accommodating and on assisting the individual to become more adaptive to these systems.

University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work, Fort Garry Campus

The 2011-12 Calendar for the Faculty of Social Work, available on the University of Manitoba website, indicates that the BSW Program has the intent to provide students with knowledge and skills necessary for generalist practice in a variety of social work fields. The *Applicant Information Bulletin for Fall 2011* further explains that the program is usually completed in three years after one year of general university study. The program consists of a total of 123 credit hours of which 72 credit hours must be social work credits and 51 credit hours may be academic electives (including 30 credit hours required for admission). It is also possible to complete the degree in two years plus a summer of study, which is referred to as the Concentrated Program. Part time completion of the degree is also an option as long as the degree is completed within nine years. The BSW Program is offered at a number of sites, including: the Fort Garry Campus, the Inner City Campus (William Norrie Centre), the Northern Campus (Thompson), and through Distance Education.

In June 2006, the Faculty of Social Work adopted the *University Of Manitoba Faculty Of Social Work Equity Plan* (University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work – Educational Equity, 2006) which has as its purpose to correct the conditions of disadvantage in professional education experienced by Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, immigrants and refugees to Canada, gender and sexual minorities, and persons who are members of a visible minority. This statement is further clarified in the Bulletin (University of Manitoba, 2011, Faculty of Social Work Applicant Information Bulletin, para. 5) stating that educational equity means more than treating people in the same way, it also requires special measures and the accommodation of difference. The definition of persons with disabilities is provided as follows: “Persons with disabilities are those who would consider themselves disadvantaged by reason of any physical, intellectual, mental, sensory or learning impairment” (University of Manitoba, 2006, Faculty of Social Work – Educational Equity Plan).

The Mission and Vision of the Faculty of Social Work

The *BSW Student Handbook* 2010 – 2011 (Revised September 2010) provides students with the mission statement for the Faculty of Social Work, as follows;

To pursue knowledge and provide accessible and inclusive educational programs that will advance the fields of social work practice and social policy at all levels and that will contribute to the development of societies in promoting respect for human rights and dignity, individual worth and well-being, diversity, social inclusion, and the principles of social justice. To prepare students for ethical, competent, critically reflective, innovative, anti-oppressive, accountable, and effective social work practice at all levels. In particular, to prepare Indigenous students for social work practice in culturally appropriate and

sensitive ways. To create and maintain a learning environment that promotes and supports respect for difference, risk-taking, democratic participation, a spirit of inquiry, equity, innovation, originality, and collaboration. To acknowledge, support, and promote different traditions of knowledge and different methods of knowledge gathering (University of Manitoba, 2010, BSW Student Handbook, ii).

The Faculty of Social Work vision, in part, is to:

...help create and contribute to a world where there are no great inequalities of wealth or income, where economic and political power is more evenly distributed, where human need is the central value of distribution of society's resources, where diversity of culture is celebrated, where people have greater control over their own lives, and where all people are afforded maximum opportunity to enrich their physical, spiritual, psychological, and intellectual well-being...(University of Manitoba, 2010, BSW Student Handbook, p. ii).

The BSW program description (University of Manitoba, n.d., Faculty of Social Work – Undergraduate Programs) states that the complexity of life makes it difficult for people, families and population groups to achieve self-realization without professional assistance. “It has also created the need for services that help social institutions respond to personal needs” (University of Manitoba, n.d., Faculty of Social Work – Bachelor of Social Work Program Description, para.1). The program description also states that professional social work practice is involved in psychosocial treatment and social change.

The BSW mission and vision statements appear to be based on a reform liberal view of social justice and social change; there is promotion of respect for human rights, economic and political

power are to be more evenly redistributed, the diversity of culture is to be celebrated, and people are to be afforded maximum opportunity to enrich their well-being. In a reform liberal view of social justice, social justice is understood to be based on a redistribution of resources, which is consistent with a belief in equal opportunity (Mullaly, 2007, p. 96). “Part of a just society is that individual rights are protected by legislation...and a major human right is the right to participate/compete in society without being discriminated against...” (Mullaly, 2007, p. 96). The celebration of cultural diversity is consistent with multiculturalism, which is a recognition and acceptance of cultural pluralism, but does nothing to address the situation of there being one dominant culture and all others subordinate to it (Agger, 1998, as cited in Mullaly, 2007, p. 281). The dominant theory of multicultural social work in Canada, the US, and Australia is that of cultural sensitivity, in which workers become more aware and sensitive to different cultural norms in an effort to reduce institutional racism (Mullaly, 2007, p. 281).

Social work practice within a reform liberal paradigm usually involves three activities, 1) personal reform based mainly on systems theory; 2) limited social reform based on an ecological model of practice; and 3) advocacy based on a pluralist view of society (Mullaly, 2007, p. 104). The BSW program description states that the complexity of life makes it difficult for people, families, and populations to achieve self-realization without professional assistance, and that there is a need for services that help social institutions to respond to individual needs. These statements appear indicative of the belief that some personal reform, in the form of psychosocial intervention, is required:

They must be counseled and helped to learn more effective methods and patterns of communication so that they can enter into and maintain healthy relationships in all areas of their life. Or, they must be rehabilitated or resocialized so that their attitudes and

behavior are more congruent with the expectations that society places on them. Or, they must undergo psychotherapy and have their ego defence mechanisms strengthened so that they can better cope with competing and conflicting demands placed imposed on them (Mullaly, 2007, p. 104).

The need for more responsive social institutions, in relation to meeting needs, is consistent with an ecological approach to social work practice in which the individual and his/her community are viewed as simultaneously affecting and being affected by the other and are understood to be in a reciprocal relationship (Germain & Gitterman, 1996). The strategy of social work intervention within this perspective involves identifying sources of discord in the ecosystem to try and make changes in the person's immediate environment (Mullaly, 2007, p. 104). Advocacy work involves assisting people to obtain programs and services within the immediate environment.

In the literature review I argue that a reform liberal explanation for social problems appears consistent with Rioux's (1997) social pathology schema. The social pathology perspective of disability holds the assumption that disability is not inherent to the individual independent of the social structure, gives priority to the political, social and built environments, recognizes disability as difference, and views disability as the interaction of the individual and society. The point of intervention is within social, environmental and economic systems. However, the inclusion of psychosocial treatment in the program description is more consistent with a "functional approach" which is part of the individual pathology perspective. Services developed from a functional approach include life skills, pre-vocational training, counseling, and job training. "In targeting the individual for change, professionals and researchers using a functional

approach run the risk of legitimizing assumptions about the person's 'best interests' that may not always coincide with what the person wants for him or herself" (Rioux, 1997).

Faculty

The Fort Garry BSW program has a large academic cadre with a wide range of research and practice expertise. There are five Professors, nine Associate Professors, five Assistant Professors and several Lecturers. The areas of specialization described in faculty profiles include: social work administration and management; aging; Indigenous self-government; elder abuse and critical social gerontology; psychological and social aspects of chronic pain and illness; feminist social work; violence against women; Indigenous child and family welfare; mental health; academically at risk children; social and family policy; cultural identity; refugee and immigrant settlement issues; Indigenism and anti-colonialism; community development; population health promotion; alternative human service organizations; cross cultural social work; gender equality and social work with women in China; Indigenous people and the criminal justice system; anti-oppressive approaches to social work practice; and treatment of sexual abuse survivors. There is not any faculty member who identifies disability as an area of interest or specialization in the profiles, although several have research interest in the area of mental health. However, there was one Associate Professor who did not list areas of interest or specialization.

The *University Of Manitoba, Faculty Of Social Work Equity Plan* (2006) incorporates wording drawn from the *CASSW Accreditation Standards and Educational Policy Statements* to acknowledge the burdens of marginalized groups, and to recognize the entitlements that membership in dominant groups brings. The plan outlines a strategy to recruit Indigenous students, staff and faculty; gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered/transsexual students, faculty and

staff; immigrant, refugee and visible minorities; and students, staff and faculty with disabilities. Under a section titled “Recruitment, Retention and Success of Students, Staff and Faculty with Disabilities” the plan states that accessibility and accommodation for students, staff and faculty with disabilities “require the removal of all barriers (both attitudinal and structural) that restrict or prevent opportunities for education and employment” (University of Manitoba, 2006, Faculty of Social Work Equity Plan).

Changes to curriculum are recommended by the *Equity Plan* such that all courses should contain material addressing disability. It is suggested by the plan that at the BSW level, the expectation would be to develop a generalist base of knowledge about disability and that the social model of disability would be a central aspect of course content on disability. Suggested strategies include disability content that emphasizes a critical, theoretical and practice model of disability, as well as disability awareness education for faculty, staff, students and sessional and field instructors. The time frame for completion of the plan was 2006 – 2009. Indicators of success are outlined as follows:

- Increased recruitment, retention and success of students, staff and faculty with disabilities;
- Increased access, accommodation and comfort for faculty, staff, and students with disabilities;
- Disability policy in all student handbooks, posted at all campuses and on the website;
- Meet or exceed *CASSW Accreditation Standards and Educational Policy Statements*; and
- Increased recruitment, retention and success of students, staff and faculty with disabilities.

A review of the 2010 – 2011 BSW Student Handbook, available in the university's website, indicates that the disability policy is currently under review and no other information is provided.

Although the Faculty of Social Work affirms that the social model of disability should become a central aspect of course content on disability, the *Equity Plan* (2006) does not explain what a social model of disability represents in relation to philosophy, assumptions and guiding principles. At its most basic conception, the social model views disability as a phenomenon constructed by factors in the external environment. However, as Gilson and DePoy (2002, p. 156) explain, within constructionist conceptualizations of disability there are different emphases. Disability as a political construction and disability as culture, or the minority model approach, are two of the major social constructionist perspectives. To integrate the social model of disability into course content would require that faculty share an understanding of the social model and how it could be linked to social work theory and practice.

Admission Requirements for the BSW Program – Fort Garry Campus

Eligibility for admission to the BSW program on the Fort Garry Campus is determined by applicants meeting one of two criteria, as follows (University of Manitoba, 2011, Faculty of Social Work Admission Requirements);

1. Successful completion of a minimum of 30 credit hours in academic courses taken in any faculty which are acceptable to the University of Manitoba, with a minimum 2.5 (C+) adjusted grade point average (A.G.P.A.). The adjusted grade point average is calculated to take into account the student's most recent academic work and to allow for elimination of the lowest grades within this work.

2. For students enrolled in the ACCESS Program⁶ of the University of Manitoba, successful completion of 18 credit hours by May 1st, with the condition that an additional 12 credit hours will be successfully completed during Summer Session. Accepted students who have completed 51 credit hours of study with a minimum A.G.P.A. of 3.0 may apply for the two year concentrated program.

The selection procedure for applicants considers academic achievement (60%) and educational equity (40%). According to the “Applicant Information Bulletin for Fall 2011”, applicants may identify themselves in as many categories identified within the *Educational Equity Initiative* as are applicable to them: Canadian Indigenous people, non-Indigenous applicants enrolled in the ACCESS program, visible minorities, immigrants and refugees, gender and sexual minorities, and persons with disabilities. Spaces for applicants in each Educational Equity priority group will be awarded based on the highest A.G.P.A. All applicants applying under the Educational Equity category must identify themselves on the BSW Application Form.

BSW Degree Requirements

Social work courses that are required, or are core, for completion of the BSW Program at the University of Manitoba are:

SWRK 1310 Introduction to Social Welfare Policy Analysis 3 credit hours

SWRK 2080 Interpersonal Communication Skills 3 credit hours

⁶The Access Program facilitates university studies at the degree level for persons who traditionally have not had the opportunity for such experience because of social, economic, and cultural reasons, lack of formal education or residence in a remote area. Preference is given to Indigenous Manitobans.

SWRK 2090	Human Behavior and Social Work Practice	6 credit hours
SWRK 2110	Emergence of the Canadian Welfare State	3 credit hours
SWRK 2120	Britain: Poor Laws to the Welfare State	3 credit hours
SWRK 2130	Comparative Social Welfare Systems	3 credit hours
SWRK 3130	Contemporary Canadian Social Welfare	3 credit hours
SWRK 3100	Systematic Inquiry in Social Work	3 credit hours
SWRK 3140	Introduction to Social Work Practice	3 credit hours
SWRK 3150	Field Instruction 1	12 credit hours
SWRK 4200	Field Focus of Social Work Practice 1	6 credit hours
SWRK 4210	Feminist perspectives on Social Work Practice	6 credit hours
SWRK 4220	Indigenous People and Social Work Practice	6 credit hours
SWRK 4120	Field Instruction 2	12 credit hours
SWRK 4300	Field Focus of Social Work Practice 2	6 credit hours
Total		72 credit hours

Graduation from the BSW Program is contingent on the successful completion of 72 credit hours of required social work courses, with successful completion meaning the attainment of a minimum grade of “C” in all social work courses and a minimum Subject Grade Point Average

of 2.50 (C+). The student must also complete 51 credit hours of electives, including three credit hours of written English and 3 credit hours of Mathematics.

Findings

During the Fall Term of 2010, course outlines for two core theory courses and one elective course specializing in social work practice addressing disability were requested for the purpose of completing a manifest content analysis of texts used in teaching course material. During the fall and winter academic terms of 2010 – 2011, interviews were completed with two instructors from the courses sampled in the manifest content analysis; one was interviewed by telephone and the other in person. A site visit was carried out at the Fort Garry campus, Faculty of Social Work, on February 14th, 2011 for the purpose of completing an audio-taped session of a class addressing disability. The results of those analyses follow.

Manifest Content Analysis

The research question guiding the manifest content analysis was:

- Are social work approaches to disability, as represented in various texts, concerned more with theories of individual pathology, social pathology, or with critical disability theory?

To conduct the manifest content analysis course outlines were requested for the following core theory courses and one elective course addressing social work practice and disability:

- SWRK 3140, “Introduction to Social Work Practice” was a three credit hour core theory course held during the winter term of 2010. The course description states that the purpose of the course is to introduce students to ecological and other generalist-based practice

frameworks, and to the role of professional social workers. The assigned text book for the course was;

- Heinonen, T. and Spearman L. (2010). *Social Work Practice: Problem Solving and Beyond*.
- SWRK 4210, “Feminist Perspectives on Social Work Practice and Social Welfare Policy” was a six credit hour core course held during the fall term of 2010 and winter term of 2011. The course was divided into a theoretical focus (fall term) and a social work intervention focus (winter), and each term had a different instructor. I was granted informed consent to review the course outline for the fall term, only, and could not obtain a copy of the course outline for the winter term despite repeated requests. A description of the course states that the content presented an analysis of social work practice and welfare policy from a feminist perspective. The course emphasized the integration of social work intervention with policy and examined concepts such as empowerment, ecological practice, oppression, and practice in the context of cultural diversity. There were several texts listed for the course and these texts were supplemented with required readings. The required texts were:
 - Bishop, A, (2002). *Becoming an Ally: Breaking the Cycle of Oppression* (2nd edition).
 - Baines, D. (Ed). (2002). *Doing Anti-oppressive Practice*.
 - Mandell, N. (Ed.) (2010). *Feminist Issues: Race, Class and Sexuality*. (5th edition).

- SWRK 4200, “Social Work Policy and Practice in Disabilities (and FASD)” was a six credit hour elective course offered during the fall/winter term of 2010 – 2011. The course outline explained the course goal as being; “...to challenge the view of disability as an individual deficit or defect that can be remedied through medical intervention or rehabilitation”. The course examined a variety of approaches to disability and theories of disability with an aim to explore the social, political, cultural and economic factors that define and disenfranchise persons with disabilities or differences. The course was also designed to assist students to explore ways that social work professionals can become critical thinkers, allies and supporters of individuals with disabilities. The text books for the course were:

- Driedger, D. and Owen, M. (2008). *Dissonant Disabilities: Women with Chronic Illnesses Explore Their Lives*.
- Titchkosky, T. and Michalko, R. (eds.) (2008). *Rethinking Normalcy: A Disability Studies Reader*.

The findings of the manifest content analysis of texts are provided in Table 8. In total, 52 texts were reviewed for the purpose of the manifest content analysis and 41 were found to have disability-related content. Although there was a range of perspectives represented in the texts, as indicated by the findings in the table, an explanation of the context in which the perspective was mentioned or found was necessary to understanding the significance of the findings, and this explanation will be presented in the discussion of findings.

- SWRK 3140, “Introduction to Social Work Practice” had two texts included in the analysis, the course outline and a social work text book. The perspectives of disability represented in the two texts were categorized as follows: 3 (14%) mentions of individual

pathology; 8 (38%) mentions of social pathology; and 10 (48%) mentions of critical disability perspectives.

- SWRK 4210, “Feminist Perspectives on Social Work Practice and Social Welfare Policy” had 14 texts, including the course outline, included in the analysis. The perspectives on disability found in the texts were represented as follows: 1 (6%) mention of an individual pathology perspective; 6 (33%) mentions of social pathology perspectives; and 11 (61%) mentions of critical disability perspectives.
- SWRK 4200, “Social Work Policy and Practice in Disabilities (and FASD)” had the most frequent mentions of disability perspectives, as one would expect in a 6 credit course in which disability was the focus. Perspectives on disability were found, as follows: 13 (9%) mentions of individual pathology perspectives; 41 (29%) mentions of social pathology perspectives; and 85 (61%) mentions of critical disability perspectives.

Table 8

Frequency of Mentions of Perspectives of Disability – University of Manitoba Faculty of Social Work, Fort Garry Campus BSW Texts

<u>Course</u>	<u>Individual Pathology</u>	<u>Social Pathology</u>	<u>Critical Disability Perspectives</u>	<u>Totals</u>
4210	1 (6%)	6 (33%)	11 (61%)	18
47.314	3 (14%)	8 (38%)	10 (48%)	21
4200	13 (9%)	38 (28%)	85 (63%)	136
<u>Totals</u>	<u>17 (9%)</u>	<u>52 (30%)</u>	<u>106 (61%)</u>	<u>175</u>

Number of texts; $n = 52$

Number of texts with disability related content = 41

Discussion of the findings from the manifest content analysis. SWRK 3140, “Introduction to Social Work Practice”, did not have any references to disability in the course outline. The outline did have two assignments designed to have students examine the case of an Indigenous woman diagnosed with schizophrenia. The first assignment involved students completing a social work assessment consistent with the ideology and knowledge that is part of a professional lens. The second assignment involved planning for the discharge of the same woman from a Regional Psychiatric Hospital. The assignments were designed to support the key objectives of the course, one of which was to assist students to develop a framework for generic social work practice incorporating a problem-solving process and an ecological approach, contrasted with and informed by alternative perspectives. It has already been argued in the literature review to this study that the ecological approach is consistent with assessing issues related to “person in environment”. The emphasis is on helping the client to adapt and cope (Minou Michilin & Juarez-Marazzo, 2001) and interventions are designed to help the person to “fit better into the dominant culture” (Fong & Furuto, 2001). This social work perspective is consistent with the social pathology perspective as explained in Rioux’s (1997) framework for understanding disability policy.

The “Introduction to Social Work Practice” course utilized a social work text book for presenting course content: Heinonen, T. & Spearman, L. (2010). *Social Work Practice: Problem Solving and Beyond*. In the introduction, the authors explained that the text is about generalist social work within the context of current Canadian practice (Heinonen & Spearman, 2010, p. 6). The authors further explain that the most important characteristic of generalist social work practice is the ability to practice in a wide range of settings, and involves the incorporation of a particular set of principles, values and knowledge. The principles they referred to are those

elucidated by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) *International Declaration of Ethical Principles of Social Work* (1994, 2004), and the values taken from the *Canadian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics* (2005). Within the principles of the IFSW is a statement of the responsibility of social workers to challenge negative discrimination based on ability or physical characteristics (CASW, 2005, as cited in Heinonen & Spearman, 2010, p. 33) and to challenge social conditions that contribute to exclusion, stigmatization or subjugation. The core CASW principles and values do not directly address ability/disability but, “Value 2: Pursuit of Social Justice”, states that; “Social workers advocate for equal treatment and protection under the law and challenge injustices, especially injustices that affect the vulnerable and disadvantaged” (CASW, 2005, as cited in Heinonen & Spearman, 2010, p. 34).

The text book for the “Introduction to Social Work Practice” course had three mentions of disability from an individual pathology perspective. In a chapter discussing social work roles, people with physical disabilities were given as one example of groups of clients who are very vulnerable and have to overcome significant challenges. Other vulnerable client groups provided in the example were frail elderly people, people with serious mental illnesses and children requiring foster care. These groups; “...often require coordinated services that meet several areas of need...” (Heinonen & Spearman, 2010, p. 54). The assumption that people with physical disabilities are generally vulnerable in the same way that frail elderly people and children needing protection from abuse and neglect are vulnerable, falls within the individual pathology categorization of disability wherein disability is characterized by incapacity and disabled people are portrayed as generally dependent on others to have their needs met (Rioux, 1997). A second mention of disability from an individual pathology perspective occurs in the chapter examining the client-social worker relationship. Again, a disabled person is used in the example to

demonstrate the difference between being empathetic or reacting emotionally to a client's situation:

Empathy means being honest with yourself and the client. Consider for example, what might happen if you became completely focused on the emotions faced by a young disabled man who has come to you seeking help with life choices. You might feel unable to help him in dealing with his problems, but might instead try to solve them for him to relieve some of his distress. There is no sense in telling the man, for instance, that you can help him resolve his problems and that 'everything will be okay' (Heinonen & Spearman, 2010, p. 104).

There is an underlying assumption in this example that it is the disability causing the young man to experience problems and distress in making his life choices, rather than consideration of the economic, environmental and cultural barriers encountered by people who are viewed by others to have "impairment". This assumption is consistent with the view of disability as "personal tragedy" and is characteristic of the individual pathology perspective of disability.

The third mention of disability from an individual pathology perspective appeared in a chapter of the text which addresses "Strengths-Based Practice as a Development Process". A subsection of the chapter concerned "recovery in mental health" and in this part of the text the authors explain the recovery model of mental health in comparison to the medical model. The recovery model contends that, even though mental illness is real and debilitating, it does not define the person. The illness is viewed as a factor with which the person must contend:

People can and do lead quality lives even though they have a mental illness. The recovery view is much like that of people challenged with a physical condition, such as loss of use

of legs. Many people live quality lives even though they are bound to a wheelchair (Heinonen & Spearman, 2010, p. 231).

The language used to describe the physical condition of loss of legs leading to the use of a wheelchair is a negative connotation in which the person is viewed as having his/her life limited by having to use a mobility aid. Simi Linton (1998, p. 27) explains that phrases such as “wheelchair bound” or “confined to a wheelchair” imply that a wheelchair restricts the individual and holds a person prisoner. This language supports a view of disability as personal tragedy characterized by physical incapacity (Rioux, 1997). “Disabled people are more likely to say that someone *uses a wheelchair*” (Linton, 1998, p. 27). In this same chapter on strength-based practice Heinonen and Spearman assert that social work practice emphasizing a deficit model, in which clients are viewed in terms of their deficits, is inconsistent with the ideology and values of social work.

The text used in the “Introduction to Social Work Practice” course also had eight mentions of disability from a social pathology perspective. Out of these eight mentions of disability, five mentions were concerned with disability from a feminist viewpoint. All of the five mentions were found in the chapter on “A Feminist Approach to Social Work” and involved women overcoming obstacles caused by the intersection of disability, aging and gender. Many of the examples used spoke to the need for advocacy, accommodation, and the need for awareness about the impact of chronic and disabling conditions for aging women:

The woman with a disability needs to know that the social and physical environments are disabling due to obstacles yet to be dismantled. By joining others who face or have faced

similar problems in trying to live independently, she might feel more empowered personally (Heinonen & Spearman, 2010, p. 290).

The previous statement is typical of a social pathology perspective of disability in which the social, political and built environments are viewed as contributing to the exclusion of the disabled individual. The social model of disability does not deny the importance of individual-based intervention, but draws attention to the limitations of a society constructed for non-disabled individuals (Oliver 1990). The remaining three mentions of disability from a social pathology perspective were in relation to disability as a social location, much like gender, age, and economic class, that can advantage or disadvantage people in meeting needs and life chances.

The “Introduction to Social Work Practice” course had ten mentions of disability from a critical disability perspective. One mention was found in the chapter on “The Client-Social Worker Relationship: Voluntary and Involuntary Relationships” under a subsection titled “Power, Authority and Control”. The authors of the text cite the work of Mullaly (2007) and Carniol (2005) in discussing the use of the authority and the sanction of the state in working with clients in mandated services such as probation, and child and adult protection.

We understand the importance of empathy, respect, and concern for clients, recognizing that often people’s issues or problems are not completely of their own making but reflect structural inequalities in society based on class, gender, ethnoculture, age, sexual orientation, or disability (Carniol, 2005; Mullaly, 2007, as cited in Heinonen & Spearman, 2010, p. 111).

It is interesting and significant that six mentions of disability from a critical disability perspective are cited from the work of Mullaly (2007), Carniol (2005), Thompson (1993), and Bishop (2002), all of whom are well-known critical theorists within social work academia. However, in this same chapter on the client-social worker relationship the authors used the situation of a young disabled person who was experiencing distress and personal problems making life choices, ostensibly due to his physical disability, to explain the need to be realistic and honest about the limits of social work intervention. This example fit within the category of individual pathology due to the assumption of personal tragedy that was inherent to the language used to describe the young man's situation. Therefore, the text book appeared to exhibit theoretical inconsistency in addressing social work practice approaches with disabled persons.

The course outline for SWRK 4210, "Feminist Perspectives on Social Work Practice and Social Welfare Policy" (fall term) had two references to disability from a critical theory perspective. The overview of the course explained that social work is a profession dominated by women, and the majority of social work clients are women. Yet, women should not be viewed as a homogenous group and the intersection of race, class, age, ableism and sexual orientation all contribute to "a diversity of experience needs and interests of women" (Course Outline, SWRK 4210, 2010). One of the course objectives was to explore how issues of race, class, age, sexual orientation, ableism and gender together impact on Canadian women within the context of Canadian social policies and social work practice. Despite the references to ableism in the course outline, there were only 18 mentions of disability perspectives found within the course texts.

Many of the readings for the "Feminist Perspectives on Social Work Practice and Social Welfare Policy" course were taken from one of the required textbooks for the course; *Feminist Issues; Race, Class, and Sexuality* (Mandell, 2010). There were five assigned readings from the

textbook and they accounted for eight of the critical disability perspectives found in the texts for the course. Several of the readings referred to the intersection of gender, race, class, sexuality and disability in contributing to the marginalization of women. In one chapter on “Feminist Theorizing on Race and Racism” (Reece, 2010) the writer commented that women with disabilities are faced with higher risk of poverty because racism, sexism and disability interact to play a role in the types of jobs women acquire. Reece also commented that many domestic violence agencies have incorporated same sex service delivery in their programming, but it is seldom that programming for persons with disabilities is delivered or even acknowledged. Meekosha (2006, p. 161) writes that feminist analyses of race, class, and gender often exclude dimensions of disability and, despite a few comments on disability the chapter by Reece does not provide such an analysis. Meekosha explains;

Disability, gender and race become intertwined in patterns of dominance and subordination. Issues of disability may be present when the sexual division of labour and the racial division of labour overlap. Racial domination relegates the “other” women to low paid or unpaid domestic labour and menial factory work. Similarly the experience of disabled women in employment is one of low pay and menial work as in sheltered workshops and institutions, where occupational health and safety issues often go unchecked (Meekosha, 2006, p. 170).

There were six mentions of disability from a social pathology perspective found in the feminist perspectives course, all of them found in an article titled, “DisAbled Mothering – Building a Safe and Accessible Community” (Smith, 2008). The article discussed the need for physical adaptations to community housing, particularly transition houses, since the unavailability of accessible housing can leave the woman and her children with few options to

leave an abusive situation. The article also contained the only mention of the medical model of disability found in the course texts, which was contrasted with the preferred social approach:

The medical model is the traditional view of disability. This sees disabled people as passive receivers of service, and the impairment as being the problem. This results in a society that segregates and separates, creating “special” facilities away from community life; and the Social Model sees the person as disabled by society. In this view, the impairment is not itself a problem, even though it may produce a need for a different set of living requirements. Rather, society’s insistence on segregation in education and services, and inaccessibility of things such as transport and buildings results in a general prejudice against an integrated community life for disabled people (Smith, 2008, pp. 2 - 3).

The “Feminist Perspectives on Social Work Practice and Social Welfare Policy” course” had a number of readings examining women’s issues from a variety of theoretical perspectives, including ableism. The course examined race, particularly through an Indigenous lens, sexual orientation and class through various assigned readings. In terms of disability, the assigned text addressing feminist issues, *Feminist Issues: Race, Class, and Sexuality* (Mandell, 2010) did not have a chapter specifically addressing disability. Yet, as Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2009) explain, feminism has been extremely important in the development of critical disability theory. They observe that feminist disability studies have addressed questions of representation and difference and engaged with issues of identity, subjectivity, the body, sexuality and language. The work of Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2006) discusses how an analysis of gender intersectionality takes into consideration the ability/disability system – along with race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class. Garland-Thomson believes that a feminist disability approach fosters a more

complex understanding of the cultural history of the body (p. 258). She explains that feminist disability theory's radical critique hinges on a broad understanding of disability as a pervasive cultural system that stigmatizes certain kinds of bodily variations.

The informing premise of feminist disability theory is that disability, like femaleness, is not a natural state of corporeal inferiority, inadequacy, excess, or stroke of misfortune. Rather, disability is a culturally fabricated narrative of the body, similar to what we understand as the fictions of race and gender (Garland-Thomson, 2006, p. 259).

The elective course SWRK 4200, "Social Work Policy and Practice in Disabilities (and FASD)", had the most significant number of mentions of the three perspectives of disability, as one would expect from a course specializing in disability. The assigned texts for the course; *Dissonant Disabilities: Women with Chronic Illnesses Explore Their Lives* (Driedger & Owen, 2008), and *Rethinking Normalcy: A Disabilities Studies Reader* (Titchkosky & Michalko, 2009), provided the majority of readings for the course, except for an additional reading of Ian Brown's *The Boy in the Moon* (2009), in relation to an assignment examining disabilities and childhood, youth and family life.

The course overview for "Social Work Policy and Practice in Disabilities (and FASD)", stated that the course was designed to challenge the view of disability as individual deficit or defect and instead would examine a variety of theories of disability. Many of the representations of disability found in the text by Titchkosky and Michalko (2009) were consistently categorized as fitting within the framework of critical disability perspectives. However, there were also chapters examining the social model of disability (Oliver, 2009) and disability history (Kudlick, 2009) that were more descriptive than theoretical, and the chapters spoke to the need for more

progressive alternatives to individual pathology approaches for addressing disability. Another chapter from the same text, examining media representations of disability (Longmore, 2009) explores the social stigma of disability from a historical perspective. There was also a chapter written by Marcia Rioux, “Bending Towards Justice” which argues for adoption of a social pathology approach to addressing political disenfranchisement, economic disempowerment and social inequality. These chapters were found to be compatible with social pathology perspectives.

Critical theory perspectives of disability were evident in many of the assigned readings taken from the text edited by Tanya Titchkosky and Rod Michalko. The cultural representation of disability in Western society was interrogated in a chapter on “Disability, Identity and Representation” (Garland-Thomson, 2009):

...disability is a representation, a cultural interpretation of physical transformation or configuration, and a comparison of bodies that structures social relations and institutions. Disability, then is the attribution of corporeal deviance – not so much a property of bodies as a product of cultural values about what bodies should be or do (Garland-Thomson, 2009, p. 64).

In a chapter on feminism, queer theory and disability, the writer examines postmodernism and the proliferation of multicultural groups and group identities. McRuer (2009) argues that queer theory and activism has led to the normalization and tolerance of lesbian, gay and queer groups in society, rather than “on a queer critique of structures of heterosexism, patriarchy, and homophobia” (McRuer, 2009, p. 312). He argues that disability studies, in coalition with

feminist, queer, postcolonial, and other movements, could provide an alternative way of examining the “postmodern subject position”.

A chapter on “The Normality of Doing Things Differently: Bodies, Spaces, and Disability Geography” (Hansen & Philo, 2009, p. 262), critically examines the “realities of the impaired body set within non-disabled space.” What sets this writing about physical space apart from most texts discussing physical accessibility and accommodation, which is part of a social pathology perspective of disability, is that the authors examined the expectations related to body functions imposed by Western capitalism and they advocate for “the normality of doing things differently” (Hansen & Philo, 2009, p. 264).

Another assigned reading, “Difference in Itself; Validating Disabled People’s Lived Experience” (Overboe, 2009), refutes the progressiveness of labeling of disabled people as “people first”:

The ‘naturalness’ of the notion of the able-bodied liberal individual coupled with the negation of a disabled sensitivity makes many disabled people queue for the chance to be anointed as ‘people first’, while simultaneously disavowing their previous positions as ‘gimps’ and ‘cripples’. Ironically, disabled people who achieve ‘people first’ status are not achieving full normative status but are only legitimizing an able-bodied resemblance through their desire for normalcy (Overboe, 2009, p. 82).

Overboe is referring to the assimilationist ideal that is reflected in the terminology of “people first” when referring to disabled people. Young (1990, p. 130) states that when rights are universally formulated so that they ignore differences, achieving rights perpetuates rather than undermines oppression. Mullaly (2007, pp. 280-281) extrapolates on Young’s work to explain

the oppressive consequences of assimilation: 1) The privileged group (in this case able-bodied people) defines that standards against which all are measured (for example “normalcy”) and that puts subordinate groups at a disadvantage in terms of measuring up to those standards; 2) the assumption of a universal humanity means that subordinate groups are expected to subvert their own group specificity and adopt the dominant culture; and 3) Assimilation means accepting an identity other than one’s perceived own, only to be reminded by others of one’s other identity.

The readings taken from *Dissonant Disabilities: Women with Chronic Illnesses Explore Their Lives* (Driedger & Owen, 2008), contain perspectives on disability which range across three of the theoretical typologies utilized in this study; individual pathology, social pathology and critical disability perspectives. In the introductory chapter to the text, the authors stated that the book utilizes a definition of disability based on the social model. However, the authors argue that the disability movement has not acknowledged the personal experiences of impairment and has tried to distance itself from chronic illness because it serves to reinforce the ‘sick role’ first delineated by American sociologist Talcott Parsons (1951). A chapter titled “There Always Seems to be Excuses; A Grad Student’s Narrative of Autoimmunity” sums up much of the theoretical argument being made by the editors to include chronic illness as a disability:

The disability rights movement internationally has firmly taken the position that impairment and disability are distinct, and that having a disability does not make one “ill” and in need of medical intervention. However, in the case of chronic illness it is significant to examine how the repeated assertion that “we’re not sick” contributes to the alienation of people who are sick but still require access to society and their human rights (Devaney, 2009, p. 124).

Required readings with perspectives categorized within individual pathology perspectives focused on; examining the psychological uneasiness between the “normals” and the stigmatized (Isono, 2008); promoting adaptation to chronic disease through “lifestyle management” (Chow, 2008); advocating the need for positive thinking and reframing the identity of disabled to “differently abled” (Stevens, 2008); proposing the development of a comprehensive communications systems between care providers and the health care system (Brown, 2008); and the wellness effects of participating in dragon boat racing (Mitchell et al., 2009).

Out of the eighteen assigned readings from the text, *Dissonant Disabilities* (2008), there were forty four references to disability from a critical theory perspective. Several readings examine how feminist theory failed to address the distribution of power and its role in the production and reinforcement of chronic illness;

Through an examination of the distribution of responsibilities in the family and how men and women think about these arrangements in terms of equity, we are then able to consider the impact of these arrangements on women’s patterns of resistance and how this relates to illness (Delaney & Bell, 2008, p. 36).

Chronic depression is also explored as a socially constructed category which intersects with gender:

A feminist social theory of mental illness as a disability allows us to contest the way depression is typically dealt with by medical professionals and society in general. Instead of concentrating on individual responsibility or blame, the emphasis becomes focused on the societal constraints that depressed people face. This change in perspective allows us

to gain a sense of empowerment and control over identities (Fraser & Matwee, 2008, p. 51).

Anorexia is examined through a feminist disability lens that critiques third wave feminisms⁷:

Rhetorically savvy wordplay addresses the instability of the word “recovery” as it applies to dis*ease (online users often modify the spelling to play off the discomfort of the topic “dis-ease” versus the medical implications of “disease”), focusing on the possibility of choosing to live with anorexia instead of facing “recovery”, the pro-anorexia Websites offer counter-narratives to the third wave “getting better” stories (Gresham, 2008: 82).

In the book, *Exploring the Divide: Illness and Disability* (1996), British disability theorists, Colin Barnes and Geof Mercer, contend that two theoretical perspectives have dominated the sociological analysis of health and illness; one functionalist, the other interpretive. The functional analysis is informed by the work of American sociologist Talcott Parsons (1951) in which the “sick role” meant that the sick person is not held responsible for their condition, but is granted an exemption from fulfilling his/her ‘normal’ social obligations. In return, the sick person is required to take all appropriate steps to ensure their recovery. The interpretive tradition, centres on how individuals balance the demands and uncertainties of chronic illness, as well as treatment regimes, in performing everyday social routines. “The focus has been on the meaning and experiences of chronic illness, and how far, and in what ways, people adapt to, and cope with, these constraints (Barnes & Mercer, 1996, p. 4). Many of the chapters in *Dissonant*

⁷Third wave feminism is characterized by resistance to the imposition of labels and categorizations. A central tendency is to push the boundaries of the second-wave mantra of ‘the personal is political’ to ‘the personal is theoretical’. Experiences gleaned from early feminisms can be used to educate, trouble, disrupt, challenge and reinforce feminism (Karaian & Mitchell, 2010, p. 63).

Disabilities (2008) reflected the interpretive tradition of a sociological analysis of chronic illness and they were categorized as critical disability perspectives.

Students in the “Social Work Policy and Practice in Disabilities” course were also asked to complete an assignment in which they wrote a five page mini-essay on *The Boy in the Moon* (Brown, 2009). The question they were to consider from reading the book was: What did you learn from a social work perspective and how will this “inform” your social work practice? The text is the non-fiction account of parents, particularly the perspective of a father, who questions the meaning of disability in our society and finds that the real value in difference is its acceptance of humanity in all of its incarnations. The author, Ian Brown cites the work of Foucault in *The History of Madness* to explain that:

We have been organizing and categorizing and “solving” intellectual disability since at least the onset of the Age of Reason – when Descartes decided that he existed only because his brain was capable of thinking that he existed. But in the course of making the problem appear to disappear by appearing to contain and resolve it, society has also managed to contain, and box in, its own fear of disability, our fear at the prospect of physically engaging with it (Brown, 2009, p. 265).

Much of Brown’s book focused on the humanism espoused by the L’Arche movement founded by Jean Vanier. Vanier explains to Brown:

I wanted to liberate those who were oppressed, Vanier explained. I think my impression of people with disabilities was that they were the most oppressed people in this world. I suppose somewhere at the heart of the beginning of L’Arche was a desire for liberation, to liberate them (Brown, 2009, p. 203).

This perspective of disability was categorized as social pathology in the manifest content analysis. While humanism acknowledges and promotes the inherent worth of every human life, there are limitations to this philosophy in that it overlooks the implications of inequality and does not contain a structural analysis of oppression (Mullaly, 2007, p. 57). Because liberal humanism does not challenge the status quo, the text was categorized as an example of a social pathology perspective.

Summary of findings from the manifest content analysis of texts. There were 52 texts reviewed as a part of the manifest content analysis and 41 (80%) texts had disability-related content. The most significant number of mentions of disability fell within critical disability perspectives with 106 mentions (61%), followed by 52 (30%) mentions of social pathology perspectives. There were relatively fewer mentions of disability from an individual pathology perspective with 17 mentions (9%); but several were found to have significance for the analysis. The individual pathology perspectives were primarily found in the examples used to illustrate direct social work practice approaches with disabled people (Heinonen & Spearman, 2010) and in an edited book examining chronic illness and disability (Driedger & Owen, 2008).

It must be stated that the majority of mentions of disability from critical disability perspectives were found in the elective course, “Social Work Policy and Practice in Disabilities (and FASD)”, with 85 mentions of disability from a critical disability perspective out of a total of 106 mentions (80%). The majority of mentions of critical disability perspectives was in relation to a feminist interpretive approach taken by some of the authors who contributed to the book *Dissonant Disabilities: Women with Chronic Illnesses Explore Their Lives* (Driedger & Owen, 2008). The other major source of critical disability perspectives was the book *Rethinking Normalcy: A Disability Studies Reader*, (Titchkosky & Michalko, 2009). Critical disability

perspectives included the cultural construction of disability, issues of diversity, societal expectations of body functions, the ideological function of naming disabled people, and feminist analyses examining power and its role in the production of chronic illness. Many of these perspectives represented theories that were feminist postmodern; including both interpretive and social constructionist analyses of disability.

The research question guiding the manifest content analysis was:

- Are social work approaches to disability, as represented in various texts, concerned more with theories of individual pathology, social pathology, or with critical disability theory at the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work?

In response, the findings indicate that the texts from the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work, Fort Garry Campus, BSW program have a significant representation of critical disability perspectives in comparison to social pathology and individual pathology perspectives, but that the critical disability perspectives were primarily found in an elective course addressing disability. Although critical disability perspectives were also found in the foundational theory courses, mentions of social pathology and critical disability perspectives were relatively few: 17 in one theory course and 18 in the other, representing only 20% of all mentions of disability perspectives in the three courses. There were also social work practice case examples from one theory course that indicated that an individual pathology perspective still informed social work practice with disabled persons.

Interviews with Key Informants

Two instructors from the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work, Fort Garry Campus BSW program, were interviewed in accordance with the Interview Protocol in Appendix E. One

interview was completed on the telephone, and the other interview was completed during a site visit by this researcher made in February 2011. In accordance with the protocol, I asked each instructor how they chose the texts for their respective courses. The first instructor that I interviewed had been teaching for a number of years and his/her current six credit course, combining policy and practice, came about in 1989 after changes were introduced into the undergraduate curriculum. The instructor was going on research study leave during the winter term of 2011 and a different instructor was to assume responsibility for the last 3 credit hours of the course. The instructor of the course who agreed to be interviewed clarified that the first half of the course, the part he/she was teaching, was more concerned with theoretical perspectives. The instructor for the winter term of the course was approached about participating in the interview but declined to respond to my emails and letter of invitation. The textbooks for the course were supplemented by readings, but during a class on the topic of disabled women one instructor referred students to the Disabled Women's Network (DAWN) because the required textbooks actually had very little information specific to feminist perspectives and disability.

The second instructor who was interviewed said that it was very difficult to find a text on disability that combined both the practice and policy aspects into one text book. The instructor commented that he/she was relatively new to teaching a course about disability and he/she was not satisfied with the texts that had been chosen for the course. The instructor explained that he/she had chosen the book on chronic illness and disability because it was a controversial area within the disabled people's movement. The instructor did not see the text on "normalcy" as being particularly strong because; "Normalcy, um, is a critical read but I don't think the orientation to disability is particularly strong".

Modified analytic induction was used to analyze the interview transcripts and to test the proposition that; for each case, anti-oppressive social work practice approaches will be consistent with the theoretical framework of critical disability studies. The findings from the modified analytic induction were developed into five key themes; the intersection of disability with other forms of oppression; disability across the life cycle; the invisibility of disability; the need for a social constructivist understanding of disability; and the importance of the lived experience of disability to social work practice with disabled people.

The intersection of disability with other forms of oppression. Both instructors emphasized the need to understand disability in relation to other forms of oppression, such as gender, race and class. One of the instructors commented about the way he/she addresses disability in his/her class:

...then we look at unemployment, in particular, this little piece that the chapter covers... highlights quite nicely job discrimination, high levels of unemployment among women with disabilities, men with disabilities. Then it moves into expectations around mothering, having children and sexual relationships, and concepts of self, and then the vulnerability of women with disabilities to violence...experience with violence, and then it kind of ends up with a summary of the importance of an intersectional perspective on disability and that's the lens I use for the whole course, the intersectional lens.

The instructor for the course with a focus on disability explained that his/her course examined disability through a number of lenses, but that he/she would like to incorporate even more of a focus on particular theoretical lenses such as that provided by a feminist perspective, for example.

Disability across the life cycle. Both of the instructors examined disability from the perspective that it is a normal part of the life cycle, particularly for people who are aging. One instructor responded that one of the most important concepts that he/she wanted students to understand is that disability is a socially constructed category and that it is a relative term.

...I want them to all realize that the likelihood, if they are lucky enough to live to be an older person, they will be living with a disability because a very high percentage of people over the age of 85, 80, 85, are all living with a disability, so then it becomes normative.

The instructor for the course with a focus on disability also believed that disability should be understood from the point of view that it is not an exceptional circumstance. His/her course examined the relationship between chronic illness and disability; “Disability is all over the map. It’s children, it’s adults, it’s older adults.”

The invisibility of disability. One instructor commented that he/she had to introduce disability as a topic for class because the most current edition (2010) of the edited text book required for his/her course had very little disability-related content.

...in my reading, this was not an area that was emphasized in traditional second wave feminism, third wave feminism is more inclusive in terms of its approach, but still, the perspectives and needs of women with disabilities is not a focus for any of the broader perspectives.

I asked one instructor why feminist and Indigenous perspectives appeared particularly well-represented in the core curriculum at the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work, while

disability remained as an elective. He/she responded: “I think it would be a hard sell. While the students see it as important the general population may not.”

The need for a social constructionist understanding of disability in social work. One instructor focused on the differences between the social model of disability versus the medical model. During the interview he/she quoted from one of the readings that he/she provided to students in the class on women with disabilities; ‘Marx suggests that we challenge this reductive focus on essential disabled persons in favour of an explanation in favour of the way people are socially constructed within the context of a range of disabling environments’ (Mandell, 2001, p. 91). Later in the interview this instructor emphasized the need to understand that disability is a socially constructed category.

The importance of the lived experience of disability to social work practice with disabled people. One instructor stated that he/she referred students to the DisAbled Women’s Network (DAWN) website so that they would have a first person analysis of women’s issues related to disability. The instructor also commented that students with disabilities have provided powerful and personal perspectives as a part of the discussion on disability. One teaching aid that the instructor utilized to demonstrate the intersection of oppressions within disability was an older film titled “Towards Intimacy”. The film documents the experiences of four disabled women, from very different backgrounds, who talk about sexuality, intimate relationships and internalized oppression. However, the main focus of the three hour class on women and disability was to have students become aware of sources for alternative perspectives on disability;

But again, my emphasis is on having them learn from the women in DAWN, who will participate with DAWN, having them hear those voices is really important to me. They just don't have the model from professionals who will define what the problem is. I'm much more interested in having them hear the voices from the women themselves...

The instructor of the course with a focus on disability found that the real challenge was how to connect the various theoretical perspectives on disability to social work practice. Each week he/she had highlighted a particular theory and developed a classroom exercise in which the students prepared presentations on particular issues of disability. In speaking about the texts he/she had chosen for the course, the instructor commented that he/she would like to introduce a practice text the next time he/she teaches the course and he/she mentioned that a recent release of a generalist social work practice text was particularly good.

Findings from the modified inductive analysis of interview transcripts. The interview data from one of the two instructors seems to indicate that the perspective on disability being taught at the BSW program on the Fort Garry Campus supports a social constructionist understanding of disability. One instructor commented that disability was not well addressed in the texts he/she chose for a course. He/she had to research a source for readings that linked feminist perspectives with disability and he/she chose the DAWN website as a resource for students to gain a better understanding of disability from the perspective of disabled women. There are many different feminist perspectives represented on the DAWN website and the particular text that the instructor chose for the class on the "Perspectives of Disabled Women" was an article which examined the accessibility of the physical or built environment of transition houses. While this particular reading supported a social pathology perspective of disability it was supplemented by a documentary film on the lived experiences of women with disability,

particularly in relation to sexual and intimate relationships, with discussion on the social and economic impact of discrimination against disabled women.

Critical disability scholars have developed an understanding of disability as socially constructed, in the same way that race and gender have been shown to be socially constructed phenomenon (Meekosha & Dowse, 2007, p. 172). In particular, Meekosha (2006, p. 162) argues that approaches which examine the points of intersection between gender, race, class and disability are critical for social change. Goodley (2012, p. 6) explains that intersectionality is not simply about bringing together these markers but to consider how each supports or unsettles the constitution of the other.

It could not be ascertained, on the basis of the transcript from the second interview, whether or not the theoretical perspectives presented to students in the course included critical disability perspectives, other than the instructor mentioned that one of the lens used to examine disability was that of 'normalcy', which the instructor did not find very useful. The interview took place just prior to the audio-taping of a classroom session in the instructor's course, and as a consequence it was very brief. There were also problems with the tape in regard to electronic interference and parts of the interview were very difficult to hear and transcribe.

One of the reasons that the BSW program at the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work, Fort Garry Campus, was sampled for the purpose of the study was that it is located on the same campus as a Graduate Program in Disability Studies. I asked one instructor if having the Disability Studies program on campus had any influence on the approach to disability taken in the course. The instructor appeared not to understand the question and responded that Disability Services had been in to the class to do a presentation. The presence of a graduate program in

Disability Studies may not be well known to other Faculty and Programs on the Fort Garry Campus.

It is not possible to ascertain from the two interviews if the social work theory and practice approach in the BSW program on the Fort Garry campus is consistent with the theoretical framework of critical disability studies. It is evident that a social constructionist understanding of disability is being promoted in one course, and that the approach is consistent with critical disability perspectives. It is not apparent from the second interview what perspectives of disability, beyond the construct of 'normalcy', are being presented to students. The critical discourse analysis of a classroom session in the elective course on disability course may provide some insight into the theoretical perspectives being discussed and presented in class.

Critical Discourse Analysis of a Transcription from an Audio-taped Classroom Session

The aim of the critical discourse analysis of a classroom seminar of a specialized course on disability was to see if the theoretical perspectives and practice approaches identified in the manifest content analysis were also prevalent within classroom presentations and discussions. On February 14th 2011, I visited the BSW program at the Fort Garry Campus for the purpose of audio-taping a class that focused on disability. The course outline described the methods for presenting disability content to students as; lectures, films, readings and research assignments and presentations. The pedagogical model taken was one of adult education in which the skills and knowledge of students, together with the instructor, worked together to build the learning experience. Assignments included journaling to reflect on the connection between their field work and the material discussed in class.

The topic for discussion on the day that I attended class was “The Politics and Policies of Disabilities”. The assigned readings were from the text; *Dissonant Disabilities: Women with Chronic Illnesses Explore Their Lives*, (Driedger & Owen, 2008), although the readings were not discussed during the class. The classroom was large for the number of people in attendance and the seating was arranged in a classic U-shape. The class started at 9:30 am and continued, with one 15 minute break, until 12:20 pm.

The instructor began the class by saying that the students would be participating in a Canada reads competition and that each student was expected to go to the front of the classroom, to a podium, to pitch the book or movie that they chose based on some aspect of disability. The first three presentations were organized as follows:

The Canadian documentary film *The Freedom Tour* (2008), produced by People First;

A fictional autobiographical book titled *The Girls* (2005) written by L. Lansens; and

A book of humorous stories *Funny You Should Ask: Living With a Disability* (1996) written by R. Dunn.

The students were given approximately 20 minutes to promote watching or reading their particular book or movie selection. The first three students appeared enthusiastic in advocating for their particular choices.

The documentary, *The Freedom Tour*, produced in Canada by People First, was presented as both touching and educational. The presenter described how members of People First, who include disabled people, travelled to various treatment institutions in Canada housing disabled people and found that “they were treated like animals, some of the rooms had beds but not

private, sometimes people were naked”. At the end of the presentation the audience, consisting of the instructor and five students, were able to ask questions and make comments. The following exchange took place, demonstrating the student’s understanding of the medical model and the social model of disability.

Discussion 1: The differences between the medical and social models of disability.

Instructor: Now we have the medical model, we have the social model. If you were going to classify this film, would you say it takes a medical model approach to disability or did it take a social model approach, or an integrated approach?

Presenter: I think it did pretty much present both. It’s more like the doctors make the decisions to put people into the institutions, then people fight to get them out so it’s the social model too.

The next presentation was in relation to the book “The Girls” which is a fictional autobiography of co-joined adult twins, Rose and Ruby. According to the student presenter, the book is written from the perspective of Rose, with some observations made by Ruby. It chronicles the lives of the 29 year old women from birth to their impending death from an aneurysm. The instructor asked the presenter how she felt about a writer who is not disabled creating the story.

Discussion 2: The experience of disability narrated by non-disabled people.

Instructor: How do you feel about people who are not disabled creating an experience?

Presenter: Well, I think I remember reading something when I first read this, I feel like I researched it because it really fascinated me how...and she spent a lot of time researching this, I feel like she writes a big long thank you and in that she says, yeah, I consulted

numerous works while writing this novel and wish to cite a few that were especially helpful. And then she lists a bunch of sources...I don't know, it's fictional in a sense so I guess, yes, she's writing about disability but really emphasizing that they are just normal individuals and I think that's the whole point of the book.

The third presentation was on a book of humorous short stories written by a disabled woman. The student explained that the main reason that he chose the book was that because it was a quick read, under a hundred pages. However, the student did make a number of interesting and very detailed observations from the collection of stories that indicated to me that that he learned a great deal from the personal experiences and perspective of the writer.

Discussion 3: A first person narrative of disability.

Student: The last thing she talks about is integration into society. About basically how they do all these specific things for disabled people in the workplace and everything, and it's supposed to help them integrate into the able-bodied world. It really doesn't work out that cleanly. She considers that integration isn't really an action for her; it's more of a social condition in which society itself must change or at least help out disabled people. And it's not just the action of disabled people to try and integrate into the able-bodied world. She had a bit of a good point at the end, integration will come about when we all accept responsibility for the society we have created. I thought that was a pretty good statement and it kind of goes well with what we talked about in class, especially when we did that presentation on barriers for community walking.

Later in the presentation the student comments:

...I guess if there was a social work theory mentioned in there it would be structural. She talks about why the structural changes need to be made in society for disabled people.

Plus she works for a non-profit agency and a lot of people she speaks with expect her to make the changes. That that specific agency will help out and change everything. It's not just that agency, its society as a whole, plus the government, that needs to change.

Legislation, all that stuff, it's not just one person...

One student was curious about the first book the student presenter chose, and then rejected, in favour of the collection of humorous short stories. The presenter said it was a book on Robert Latimer. He found the book too difficult to get into because of the moral and ethical issues it raised. Once the third presentation was finished the instructor informed the class that they would be switching to a different activity. He/she handed out pieces of flip chart paper to each student and directed them to divide it into quadrants. Before the students left the classroom for a 15 minute break the instructor informed them that the exercise was one used in addictions, with the idea being that you cannot predict the future:

Instructor: You had a great time listening to each other's books and now you are going to draw your past, present, and future pictures. Okay, you are drawing a picture of what your world was like five years ago, what it's like currently, and for the future we are going to add a picture. Somewhere between the present and the future you are going to acquire a disability. So past, present, future, and then altered future. If you acquired a disability your world will change...pictures!

The students worked on the pictures for 20 minutes before taking a break. When the students returned the instructor informed them they would resume the Canada reads presentations. The next presentations were as follows:

A fictional book titled *House Rules* (2010) by J. Picoult.

The movie *I am Sam* (2001) directed by Jessie Nelson.

The movie, *The Cake Eaters* (2007), an American independent film.

The book *House Rules* (2010) was presented as a mystery novel about a young man with Asperger's Syndrome who has the remarkable ability to solve crimes, even though he had trouble reading social cues. The presenter found the book extremely engaging because of the author's development of the character of the main protagonist. At the end of the presentation the instructor commented that it was very interesting to have two students choose books that were written by non-disabled writers. "It's almost like a genre...From a publicity point of view, this [disability] is used to sell the book. The Asperger's makes you pick it up..."

The next presentation was on the Hollywood movie, *I am Sam*, which was described by the student as the heart-warming tale of a man with developmental delay who is the parent of a young daughter. On her 6th birthday the child, Lucie, is apprehended by social services and placed in an adoptive home because people are concerned about Sam's ability to parent. The presenter explained that the main plot of the movie involved Sam's fight to have his daughter returned to him. Although the story was fictional, the student said it was personally uplifting and challenging.

Discussion 4: Disabled people as tragic victims and as heroes.

Presenter: I think it really challenged me and to me it was very heart-warming and sometimes those movies can seem not so realistic. People go; "Oh, what a touching story but it's too bad that it's not how it was". I think it's very much a hope for the future. Like hey guys, with the right people and resources we can make independence for these individuals. That's what I came away with. We often talk about stigmatization in class but it just challenged me to look within myself and even in the movie, I saw it years and

years ago when I was young and my reaction was very much like most viewers would be.

But as I was watching it again, as I was doing this, it's just a different viewpoint from being in this class and being in social work for the last couple of years.

The last presenter chose the independent film, *The Cake-Eaters* which was released in 2009. The presenter described the movie as a complex story about the relationships in two families and how they are brought together by the chronic illness/disability of a young woman with a terminal neuro-muscular disease, Friedreich's Ataxia. The presenter commented that the main theme of the movie was the young woman's need for independence. There were not a lot of comments or questions at the end of the synopsis because a "winner" had to be chosen. As the outside observer the instructor called upon me to declare a winner, despite my objection that I was to remain unobtrusive in my role as a researcher. When pushed I chose the *Funny You Should Ask: Living with a Disability* book because the presenter made so many insightful observations that he had learned, including theoretical linkages, from being exposed to the perspective of a disabled person.

Once the Canada reads exercise was completed the instructor presented a short Powerpoint lecture on the disenfranchisement of disabled people based on the book *Absent Citizens: Disability Politics and Policy in Canada* (Prince, 2009). The instructor explained the aim of the book:

Discussion 5: Citizenship and disability.

Instructor: What he is talking about is that, if you have a disability in Canada you are not a part of your environment. The purpose of the book is to examine the mechanism of how we exclude and how we include in Canada. To look at public attitudes towards disability

in Canada and to look at how we make policy, what social activism is floating around disability, and also to examine in detail the disability community. Basically his goal is to advocate for action that is going to make our absent citizens present...

During the lecture of approximately 30 minutes duration, the instructor made the following points in regard to inclusion and exclusion of people with disabilities from mainstream social, economic and political participation;

- "...that disability is not really an individual problem but is an issue of community commitment or community neglect;"
- "Citizenship means more than what we think of as a legal term, it also includes where you are as a citizen socially, your economic status and cultural dimensions;"
- "...disabilities are socially constructed, they are administratively negotiated, we make rules to determine who has disabilities;"
- "One of the problems with the whole disability picture in Canada is that it is historically layered and it is fragmented, and it continues to be fragmented but is beginning to be pulled together now...there is a Masters in Disability Studies now;"
- "...disability groups...want equality of treatment and a human rights approach. They want the government to take a strong leadership role and challenge exclusion. They don't believe it should be discretionary but based on entitlements for people with disabilities;"
- Why are people with disabilities excluded? There is a struggle for power throughout the system. What groups are advocating for on behalf of people with disabilities, or what are people with disabilities advocating for themselves...they have to be good at persuasion and doing their research. They have to have money;"

- “Disability should be a distinct domain of policy and a dimension of any other program area. So policy should have a disability lens passed over it.”

Once the lecture was completed the instructor asked the students to talk about the pictures they had drawn portraying the past, present, future and future with a disability.

In talking about the future and a possible future with disability, I observed that the students minimized the disability that they chose for themselves and they minimized the impact that the disability would have on their lives. Three out of six students chose a mobility disability, while one chose to lose an arm and have partial hearing. Another chose a neck injury which was based on an actual experience that the student had because of a past accident. The majority of students stated that they did not expect their lives to change drastically once they acquired impairment. In particular, social work seemed to be a profession that most of the students believed would accommodate their needs for accessibility and support. The only person who did not have as much of an optimistic view was the person who had actually experienced a neck injury in the past. That student commented that things usually do not go as planned and that you feel dependent on others.

The final activity of the class on disability and policy was a theoretical exercise in which students were asked to think of three social work theories and to identify a premise for each theory. The instructor then asked students to visualize the movie *The Wizard of Oz* and to understand that Dorothy, the protagonist, was now in a coma and Aunty Em was looking after her. The instructor asked students to think about the social work theory they would use to help Aunty and Dorothy. After approximately 10 minutes the students were asked to respond to the question.

Four out of six students chose an ecological approach and/or systems theory to engage community resources in assisting Aunty Em. Two students chose anti-oppressive theory but had difficulty explaining what that approach meant in practice with disabled people, as the following exchange demonstrates:

Discussion 6: Social work practice with a disabled person.

Student 1: I don't know if it's so much a theory as a way of practice...anti-oppressive practice.

Instructor: What is your premise?

Student 1: Well basically asking for change but not just change at an individual level, change at all levels. Change in one area does not mean everything will change. Think big, think political, think policy. Let's see, Dorothy is in a coma and will need social supports, I want to say legislated and part of a policy designed to help out. It's hard to think. (There is a sidebar conversation with another student) I wonder if I should go with something else...the strengths based approach based on empowerment and working with strengths, it also focuses on social networks. So we would need to sit down with Aunty Em and look at supports and then strengths.

Student 2: I said that I would look at the ecological approach, to look at various levels.

Student 3: I didn't get that far because I got kind of stuck. I guess the ecological approach and Systems theory for some kind of support. May have to rely on family support rather than agencies.

Findings from the critical discourse analysis. The instructor utilized a number of exercises designed to assist students to think about disability at both practice and policy levels. The Canada reads exercise had students examine how disability is portrayed in books and in other

forms of media such as film. It is interesting to observe that only one student chose a book actually written by a disabled person, but a review of the course objectives listed in the course outline does not include any objective related to developing an understanding of disability from the perspective of a disabled person or persons. As a point of comparison, one of the other courses sampled in the case study emphasized the need for a First Person perspective in the analysis of women's issues related to disability. I believe that the exercise asking students to visualize their lives in the future, without and with a disability, revealed that students may need to understand the impact of the lived experience of disability at the individual level. The one student who had experienced an injury was aware that impairment could have a significant impact on being able to live an independent life.

The portrayal of disabled people in literature and in the media is an important part of a critical disability analysis of the politics of representation. Garland Thomson (1999, 2001) finds that these cultural narratives of disability often depict disabled people as tragic, unattractive and inadequate figures. The story of the co-joined twins in the book *The Girls* contains some elements of the tragic element of disability. Conversely, people with disabilities can also be depicted as heroic figures, which was the case in the story of the young man with Asperger's Syndrome who solved crimes that the police could not even though his disability often made him a social outcast, and in the case of Sam, who was able to overcome systemic discrimination with the assistance of a non-disabled lawyer and non-disabled people in his social network.

The lecture section of the class in which the instructor spoke about the exclusion/inclusion of people with disabilities really focused on a reform liberal approach to disability policy in Canada. Many of the political beliefs presented in the class were consistent with liberalism, with government being asked to take a leadership role in ensuring that the interests and needs of

disabled people are protected and promoted through legislation and policy. Disability advocacy groups were encouraged to become more persuasive in communicating with government, and to use research to compete for funding and power, indicators of a pluralist worldview.

The critical discourse analysis of the transcript from the classroom discussion revealed that the approach to social work practice dominant in the classroom on the day of audio taping was that of the ecological approach and systems theory, which is also consistent with a liberal reform paradigm. The exercise in which Dorothy is in a coma and the students must choose a particular theoretical approach to practice indicated that the systems theory and ecological approach are practice approaches with which students appear most familiar. As explored in the literature review, a reform liberal explanation for addressing disability is consistent with Marcia Rioux's social pathology framework because the focus is on making systems, and subsystems, more accommodating and on assisting the individual to cope and adapt.

The aim of the critical discourse analysis was to determine whether or not the theories and practice approaches found to be prevalent within the social work texts analyzed as part of the manifest content analysis are also prevalent within classroom presentations and discussions, and then to examine how the scholarly discourse on disability fits with contemporary disability studies perspectives. The findings of the manifest content analysis were that the perspectives in course texts ranged between the social pathology perspective (36%) and critical theory perspectives (54%). In the one class room experience that was subject to a critical discourse analysis, the theoretical perspective was predominantly reform liberal and the social work practice approaches were consistent with that paradigm; systems theory and the ecological approach. These findings indicate that the social pathology perspective of disability was the

dominant theoretical framework informing the discourse of the instructor and the students in the class addressing disability.

Summary of Findings in Relation to the Main Research Questions

The main research questions explored in this case study were:

- What dominant ideas inform the theoretical lenses on disability within the social work texts, course outlines, and instruction in core theoretical courses and specialized courses related to disability at the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work, Fort Garry Campus, BSW Program?
- How consistent are current social work perspectives on disability, found in core theoretical courses and specialized courses related to disability, with the dominant theoretical perspectives advocated within the critical disability studies literature?

A review of the findings from the manifest content analysis of texts indicates that there is a range of theoretical perspectives represented in the texts used in the three courses; social pathology (36%) and critical disability perspectives (54%) were predominant. However, when it came to social work practice approaches there were case examples based on an individual pathology perspective that were found to be in conflict with the more progressive theories on disability presented in the texts. The two core theory courses had little disability content and represented only 20% of all mentions of disability found in the texts of the three courses studied in the case.

The modified inductive analysis of interview transcripts from two interviews with instructors found that a social constructionist approach to disability was prevalent in a core theory course. The social constructionist framework emphasizes the need to understand and incorporate the

personal narratives of women with disabilities, as well as to understand that the category of “disability” is socially and culturally constructed, in the same way that the categories of “gender” and “race” have been socially and culturally constructed. This theoretical approach was found to be consistent with critical disability perspectives. Both instructors commented that they had difficulty finding social work content related to disability in academic texts.

The critical discourse analysis of a transcript from the class addressing social work and disability yielded findings that were consistent with a social pathology perspective of disability. In choosing stories and films about disabled people, most students chose fictional accounts of disability that either portrayed the disabled person as a victim of tragedy or as a hero. The lecture emphasized the need for a citizenship approach to inclusion. People with disabilities were understood to be excluded from participation in important political arenas because of a struggle for power and resources within the political system; an indication that the citizenship approach was largely based on liberal pluralism. Finally, students tended to employ conventional, and not progressive, social work practice theories based on systems theory, the ecological approach and the strengths perspective, when asked to describe social work practice with a disabled person. However, there are many elements of the readings/texts used in the disability course that contain critical disability perspectives and it should not be assumed that these perspectives were not discussed as part of other classroom learning experiences and assignments.

There was evidence from the findings of the manifest content analysis and critical discourse analysis of a classroom discussion on disability that social work practice approaches, in particular, were informed by both the individual and social pathology perspectives, despite the predominance of critical disability perspectives found in texts. In an interview with one course instructor, there was some evidence that a critical disability perspective, based on postmodern

social constructionism, was introduced into analysis of the intersectionality of disability, gender, race, and class. However, the lecture component of the class focusing on disability, analyzed as part of the critical discourse analysis, clearly advocated for a liberal reform approach to addressing disability at the political level, and this was found to be consistent with a rights-outcome, social pathology perspective of disability. There is some inconsistency between the critical disability perspectives represented in the texts and the social work practice approaches to disability found in case scenarios provided in texts, and in classroom discussions and exercises, which tended to be based on individual and social pathology perspectives. However, I would argue that social pathology perspectives of disability are dominant within the BSW program at the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work.

Chapter Seven

Cross-Case Analysis

Recent research examining social work education and how it addresses disability has identified a significant gap between the theoretical frameworks used by social work educators and those being advocated within the disability studies literature. The purpose of this multicase study was to examine current ideas about disability at three Canadian BSW programs in order to identify and describe the major perspectives and themes of disability dominant within each of the programs, and then to compare them with the major theoretical frameworks identified from the critical disability studies literature.

The selection of the three BSW programs sampled in the study was based on theoretical replication in which there were expectations of contrasting results. Purposive sampling was utilized to select three BSW programs that demonstrate a commitment to values of diversity and inclusiveness within their respective philosophical statements:

- St. Thomas University School of Social Work was selected for the study because of its major emphasis on structural social work theory and on helping students to understand the structural roots of problems. Within structural social work theory, inequality is viewed as rooted in the social and economic order and not in the individual. The literature review to this study argued that structural social work theory is congruent with many of the theories and approaches advocated by critical disability studies.
- The Dalhousie University School of Social Work places emphasis on critical analysis in understanding equity and justice, and its focus is on elective courses that explore the differential impacts on constructs such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and

ability. However, unlike the two other BSW programs in the study, the School is located within a Faculty of Health Professions which may influence the perspective on disability presented in the curriculum more in the direction of a medical model approach.

- The Faculty of Social Work at the University of Manitoba has a mission statement supporting diversity, inclusion and the principles of social justice. It is different from the other two BSW programs because it emphasizes psychosocial treatment and professional intervention. The Faculty is located on the same campus as a Graduate Disability Studies program and the BSW program has a 6 credit hour elective course that specializes in social work practice with disabled persons.

My prediction was that social work education on disability within each of these BSW programs would represent different points on a range of disability perspectives between order and conflict perspectives of disability; with Dalhousie University School of Social Work positioned close to the individual pathology perspective, St. Thomas University School of Social Work positioned closest to critical disability perspectives, and the University of Manitoba Faculty of Social Work positioned somewhere in the mid-range between the two theories representing social pathology perspectives of disability.

Site Visits and the Local Contexts of the Cases

In an article titled “Best Practices in Promoting Disability Inclusion within Canadian Schools of Social Work” (Dunn et al., 2008), the authors describe a number of recommendations for improving disability inclusion within Canadian Schools of Social Work. These recommendations were used to provide a framework for comparing and analyzing observations made during my site visits to the three BSW programs, and for examining university documentation related to accessibility and disability awareness.

Recruitment

The “Best Practices” (Dunn et al., 2008) article states that faculty, staff and students with disabilities must be clearly represented within the School: “Further, faculty with disabilities could serve as mentors to potential students with disabilities, helping to answer pre-admission questions and breaking down the isolation often experienced when entering a new institution” (Gitlow, 2000, as cited in Dunn et al., 2008, p. 4). A more recent survey of Canadian Schools of Social Work, conducted in 2010 – 2011, reported that most schools provide an opportunity for applicants to the BSW and/or MSW programs to declare disability as part of an education equity statement in the admission process and a few schools also include equity statements in the hiring process for faculty and staff (Carter et al., 2012, p. 121). My findings in relation to the recruitment of faculty and staff at the three BSW programs found that one school of social work has an equity statement addressing disability, and one school has actively recruited a disabled faculty member.

Only the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Manitoba has a clearly stated recruitment strategy which is outlined in the *University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work Equity Plan* (2006). The *Equity Plan* has the objective to increase the recruitment, retention and success of students, staff, and faculty with disabilities. However, there is not any detailed plan as to how this objective will be achieved. As a part of the *Equity Plan* disability policy is to be included in all student handbooks, posted at all campuses and on the website. An examination of the BSW Handbook for 2010 – 2011 indicates that the policy is not yet articulated and it is currently under review.

Only the Dalhousie School of Social Work has actively recruited and hired a faculty member with disabilities who has the mandate to address disability content within curriculum and to

elevate disability awareness on campus. That is not to say that there are not faculty members with disabilities within the other two social work programs in the study. However, a review of faculty profiles at St. Thomas University School of Social Work and the University of Manitoba Faculty of Social Work, Fort Garry Campus, does not identify any faculty member with an interest in the field of disability or disability studies. It should be observed that the research carried out by the Persons with Disabilities Caucus in 2006 found that faculty and staff with disabilities represented less than five percent of employees (Dunn et al., 2006). According to the research findings; “The lack of people with disabilities within PhD programs in Social Work, 1.3% (Dunn et al.), suggests that these numbers are not going to improve in the near future” (Carter et al., 2012, p. 124).

Admissions

The article on “Best Practices” makes a number of recommendations related to admissions. The authors believe that Schools of Social Work must move beyond a “do not discriminate against students” approach, which does little to change the status quo, towards adoption of a principle of educational equity. “Educational equity is the assigning of extra merit to students from traditionally disadvantaged groups in an effort to make the process of admissions more equitable” (Dunn et al., 2008, p. 4). A review of the BSW admissions practices at the three universities indicates that only two of the BSW programs, St. Thomas University School of Social Work and the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work have adopted “equity approaches” to admissions.

At St. Thomas University School of Social Work the policy applies to all students who self-identify as experiencing marginalization, underrepresentation, or discrimination. Applicants must complete an Educational Equity Statement explaining the structural barriers they have faced and

the School will assess the statement and may award up to 5 points on the scoring system used to select successful applicants. This policy was approved by the University Senate in May 2012.

The University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work has also adopted an *Equity Plan* (2006) which has as its purpose to correct the conditions of disadvantage in professional education experienced by Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, immigrants and refugees, gender and sexual minorities, and persons who are members of a visible minority. Applicants to the BSW program must identify themselves on the application form as being a member of an Educational Equity category, and they may identify themselves in as many categories as are applicable to them. The selection procedure for applicants to the BSW program considers academic achievement (60%) and education equity (40%).

The Dalhousie School of Social Work has an Affirmative Action Policy for applicants who are Acadian, Aboriginal, Black, members of other racially visible groups, persons with disabilities, and Lesbian, gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Two Spirited, Queer and Intersex. Affirmative action policies are a form of positive discrimination in through which the historical disadvantage experienced by some groups in society is addressed through specific programming designed to promote individuals who are members of these groups in relation to education. Although affirmative action is promoted as the only effective method for addressing discrimination (Crosby & Clayton, 2004, as cited in Carter at al., 2012, p. 121), affirmative action policies serve to compensate for the cultural biases of evaluators and assessors, who may belong to dominant groups in society, rather than focusing on the disadvantages experienced by marginalized groups (Young, 1990, p.133). Applicants make their request to be considered under the Affirmative Action Policy by indicating their membership in one of the groups on a Social Work Statement

Cover Sheet which is part of the BSW application package. The weight or extra merit awarded for being a member of one of the disadvantaged groups was not indicated in the policy.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The “Best Practices” (Dunn et al., 2008) article states that most universities and colleges have some form of disability services to accommodate students with disabilities in their educational pursuits. However, a best practice approach would promote collaboration with disability centres in promoting disability awareness. The authors also believe that schools of social work should adopt Universal Instructional Design, which stresses the use of a range of teaching modalities to accommodate a diversity of learning styles among students, including students with disabilities.

Best practices in classroom teaching using this approach include: creating equitable learning opportunities such as accessible web-based course ware; making use of available supports such as equipment/technology and academic support services including captioned videos, appropriately spaced overheads and large font PowerPoint slides, and email lists or chat rooms; presenting instructional materials such as text books, reading materials and other instructional supports in digital format or on-line; ensuring multiplicity in design, delivery and evaluation in order to accommodate the broadest possible range of student learning styles; and finally, being flexible and prepared to make accommodations and adjustments to support student success (Alberta Human Rights & Citizenship Commission, 2004; Pardo & Tomlinson, 1999; The Ohio State University Partnership Grant, 2006, as cited in Dunn et al., 2008, p. 5).

St. Thomas University has a small Accessibility Centre with one Coordinator for Student Accessibility. The Coordinator is responsible for meeting with the instructors of courses that the student with specialized learning needs has registered in and to assess the university’s ability to

meet those needs in light of limited resources and budget. The Accessibility Centre also has a role to provide advice to instructors on how to accommodate specific disabilities in the classroom. *A Handbook for Professors on Students with Disabilities and Specialized Learning Needs in the Classroom* (n.d.) provides instructors with helpful advice in relation to specific conditions of impairment. There are technical aids and adaptive technologies available to students, and St. Thomas University also has access to resources at the larger UNB Accessibility Centre. I found that the approach taken by the university, with respect to accommodation, contained elements of the individual pathology perspective due to the language used to describe disability (as having detrimental effects that require accommodation), and the fact that the university campus has made few adaptations to buildings to make them more accessible.

Dalhousie University has a Student Accommodation Office, and an “Accommodation Policy for Students” (2010) that addresses both academic and non-academic accommodation needs. Each of the University’s eleven faculties is required to have a senior academic administrator, or a Faculty, School, or Department committee responsible for academic accommodation requests. Classroom accommodations include note taking in the classroom, verbalizing visually presented information, alternate formatting of instruction materials, assistive listening devices, assistive technology, sign language interpretation, minimized penalties for spelling and grammar, and breaks for prayer. There are bursaries available to students for the purpose of receiving psychological services for specialized learning support. After reviewing the “Accommodation Policy for Students” and observing the physical accessibility of the campus, I found evidence to support the assertion that Dalhousie University had adopted an approach to disability that was consistent a rights-based, social pathology perspective of disability. The university has taken steps to develop a comprehensive accommodation policy for students, based on human rights

legislation, and has focused on making the physical environment of the campus, including its buildings, more universally accessible to all students, faculty and staff.

The University of Manitoba has made a commitment to providing reasonable accommodation of the needs of persons with documented disabilities. To achieve this aim services are provided by the Student Accessibility Service office, located centrally on campus. One unique aspect of the University of Manitoba's approach to accommodation is that students with temporary impairments are also eligible for assistance. The Student Accessibility Services office also provides information to faculty on how to create an inclusive classroom environment. They provide a wide range of services and programs to students with disabilities and assume responsibility for providing workshops and professional development opportunities for staff, students and faculty with disabilities. The approach to disability at the University of Manitoba has elements of both the functional approach and the environmental approach (Rioux, 1997). The functional approach, associated with the individual pathology perspective, assumes that the deficit stems from an individual condition or pathology. To register for Student Accessibility Services individual students must have supporting medical documentation including a clinical diagnosis of the condition, and a recommendation of the accommodation required for daily functioning. The environmental approach, associated with the social pathology framework, focuses on adapting environments to enable participation, which is achieved through the provision of resources and services supporting inclusion. However, there are many buildings on campus, including the Tier Building utilized by the Faculty of Social Work, that have limited accessibility for students requiring aids for mobility.

In the conclusion to the article on "Best Practices" (Dunn et al., 2008) the authors comment that there is a growing knowledge about how to create inclusive environments and ways to

promote disability inclusion. The authors believe that disability inclusion in schools of social work means striving for educational environments that not only promote equity, but actively do so in all aspects of their programs, as well as evaluating outcomes. The case examples examined as a part of this study indicate that the three universities have acknowledged the need for more comprehensive accommodation services and for better accessibility. However, collaboration with local disability communities, including disability studies programs, in developing programs for disability awareness and for participating in, and evaluating current recruitment, admissions and accommodations policies does not yet form a part of accommodation strategies.

Organization of the Analysis

Cross-case analysis was conducted for the three case studies in accordance with the methodology developed by Robert E. Stake (2006). For Stake, the purpose of cross-case analysis is to invoke a “case-quintain” dialectic in which the themes preserve the main research questions of the study, while individual case findings are explored in terms of their similarities and differences in relation to what they tell the researcher about the quintain. The quintain for this multicase study was:

- To determine the extent to which critical theories of disability, as explicated within the disability studies literature, are being presented, explained, and promoted within core theory courses and specialized courses on disability in social work education.

Four research questions, or themes, were identified as being most relevant for understanding the quintain in this multicase study:

1. What theoretical and social work practice approaches to disability are prevalent in the course outlines and texts used in core theory courses and elective courses addressing disability?
2. What are the theoretical and social work practice approaches to disability represented in the transcripts from interviews with key informants?
3. What are the theoretical and social work practice approaches to disability identified from analyses of the transcripts from classroom lectures or seminars?
4. How do these social work theory and practice approaches to disability fit with current theoretical frameworks within disability studies?

Each theme was explored to give attention to local situations and findings for each case, in addition to identifying the contribution that the findings make to the quintain. Cross-case assertions were then developed based on the “case-quintain” dialectic which emerged from a discussion of each theme.

Theme 1

What theoretical and social work practice approaches to disability are prevalent in the course outline and texts used in core theory courses and specialized courses addressing disability?

St. Thomas University School of Social Work. Texts making reference to social work practice and disability at the St. Thomas University School of Social Work reflected social pathology perspectives concerned with a rights-outcome approach to disability. More generally, the findings from the manifest content analysis of texts at St. Thomas University School of Social Work indicated that the distribution of the frequency of critical disability perspectives was disproportionate across the three courses in the sample, with the introductory theory course

representing 32 out of 34 (94%) mentions of critical disability perspectives and the second theory course addressing social work practice theories representing 27 out of 36 (75%) mentions of social pathology perspectives. Only one text, a journal article, addressed disability and social work practice from critical theory perspectives. Other critical perspectives on disability found in the introductory theory course were located in the course text book, *The New Structural Social Work* (Mullaly, 2007), in which ableism was addressed under the broad framework of a structural social work theory and oppression. The introductory theory course was also the only course in the sample to provide an Indigenous perspective on disability in relation to health issues and jurisdictional barriers.

What was interesting to observe from the findings of the manifest content analysis of texts at the St. Thomas School of Social Work was that the emphasis on critical disability perspectives that had characterized the findings in the introductory theory course had shifted to predominantly social pathology perspectives in the second theory course addressing theory and social work practice. Social work practice addressing disability was primarily concerned with advocacy, consumer rights, the strengths perspective, sensitivity to diversity, humanitarianism and social role valorization; all tenets of a social pathology approach to disability. These social work practice approaches have been explored in the literature review and found to be characteristic of conventional social work perspectives, based on personal and/or limited social change. There was also a significant finding in the social work practice in diverse contexts course of three mentions of the individual pathology perspective of disability in which disability was presented as a loss and tragedy.

The Dalhousie School of Social Work. The BSW program at the Dalhousie School of Social Work had 140 (39%) mentions of social pathology perspectives and 146 (41%) mentions

of critical disability perspectives in the 52 texts found to have disability-related content. An elective course addressing (dis)Ability and social work policy and practice accounted for 126 mentions of critical disability perspectives, meaning that the other two core theory courses had predominantly social pathology perspectives in the texts, with 64 mentions of social pathology perspectives compared to 22 mentions of critical disability perspectives. The full credit (two terms) core theory course had an assigned textbook, *Modern Social Work Practice* (Payne, 2005) which had 10 mentions of disability from a social pathology perspective and several of those mentions supported normalization and social role valorization, the social model of disability, and the independent living philosophy.

The two core theory courses in the BSW program at the Dalhousie School of Social Work had texts with mentions of disability that primarily represented social pathology perspectives of disability; advocating for disability to be understood as a social construct originating in the interaction of diverse human conditions with environmental barriers to inclusion. The course addressing disability and social work practice also had a significant number of mentions of social pathology perspectives of disability, including; a socially constructed and political approach to disability based on human rights, the adoption of a broad systems perspective to target attitudes, discrimination, the limits on civil rights, and self-advocacy and self-determination for disabled people. The critical disability perspectives found in a course addressing disability represented postmodern perspectives on disability based on; the normative nature of universal truths, Foucault's (1980) concept of bio-power, feminist perspectives on disability including a discussion of the cultural ideals of the human body, and the sociocultural construction of disability.

There was a range of disability perspectives found in the texts at The Dalhousie School of Social Work, primarily representing social pathology and critical disability perspectives. It is understood that a social constructionist analysis of disability may have many different emphases. The emphases found in the texts included a postmodern analysis of the interactions of individuals within sociocultural systems, examination of the extent to which the sociocultural and political systems are disabling for particular individuals and groups, and respect for diversity. The major targets for change, and hence social work practice, were negative attitudes, discrimination, limited access to resources, privilege and limitations in civil rights, all of which fall under the framework of Rioux's (1997) social pathology perspective of disability.

The University of Manitoba Faculty of Social Work, Fort Garry Campus. The case of the University of Manitoba Faculty of Social Work, Fort Garry Campus, BSW program had 51 texts analyzed in the content analysis with 41 (79%) found to have disability-related content, which was the highest percentage in the multicase study. Overall, the manifest content analysis of course outlines and texts found that there were 17 (9%) mentions of disability from an individual perspective, with only 3 of these mentions having any significance for the case study; disabled persons were represented as tragic figures who are generally dependent on able-bodied people when portrayed in case scenarios. There were 52 (30%) mentions of the social pathology perspective of disability and 106 (61%) mentions of critical disability perspectives found in the texts from the three courses. However, the distribution of mentions of social pathology and critical disability perspectives was disproportionate across the three courses in the study, with the elective course addressing disability accounting for 38 out of 52 (73%) mentions of social pathology perspectives and 85 out of 106 (80%) mentions of critical disability perspectives. Although there were a significant number of mentions of critical disability perspectives found in

the texts at the University of Manitoba Faculty of Social Work BSW program, the two core theory courses had relatively few mentions of disability. When disability was addressed in a course on generic social work practice, the examples of social work intervention with disabled individuals were found to be based on an individual pathology perspective. Therefore, despite the high number of critical disability perspectives identified by the manifest content analysis of texts, the examples of social work practice approaches addressing disability appear to be inconsistent with critical disability frameworks.

The Case-Quintain Dialectic for Theme 1. The Chi Square Test of Independence was completed on the data from the frequency tables for each case. The Chi Square Test of Independence was used to test the following hypotheses (see Appendix H):

H_0 : There is not any relationship between social work theory and practice approaches to disability found in texts and particular university BSW programs.

H_a : There is an association between social work theory and practice approaches to disability, found in the texts and particular university BSW programs.

It was the expectation of this researcher that the null hypothesis would be rejected, as follows:

- A critical disability perspective of disability would be more closely associated with St. Thomas University School of Social Work because of its emphasis on structural theory and practice approaches to oppression.
- The individual pathology perspective of disability would be more closely associated with the Dalhousie University School of Social Work, which is located within a Faculty of Health Professions.

- The person-in-environment or social pathology perspective would be closely associated with the BSW program at the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work, Fort Garry Campus, because it emphasizes professional intervention and psychosocial treatment. However, it was thought that the influence of a graduate program Disability Studies program on the same campus may provide a mediating influence away from an individual pathology approach.

The Chi Square Test of Independence resulted in a rejection of the null hypothesis: $\chi^2 = 22.14$, $df = 4$, $p < .05$. However, the data indicates that the nature of the association between the three BSW programs and particular perspectives on disability was not as expected in the alternative hypotheses. The only BSW program to exceed the expected value for critical disability perspectives was the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work, with an observed value of 106 and an expected value of 81.82, a difference of 24.18. Critical disability perspectives at the University of Manitoba represented 61 percent of all mentions of disability, while at St. Thomas University School of Social Work critical disability perspectives represented only 42 percent of all mentions of disability, closely followed by the Dalhousie School of Social Work with 41 percent. Social pathology perspectives were most frequently mentioned at St. Thomas University School of Social Work, with 44 percent of mentions of disability categorized as being social pathology perspectives.

A range of disability perspectives were found in the course outlines and texts used in core theory courses, and specialized courses on disability, for all three cases. The predominant approaches to disability found in all of the texts were social pathology perspectives and critical disability perspectives, with critical disability perspectives having the highest number of mentions overall, at 47 percent. It cannot be assumed, on the basis of the findings of the manifest

content analyses, that because there are higher or a more frequent number of mentions of critical disability perspectives within the course outlines and texts of the three cases that the social work education approach within BSW programs (the quintain) is congruent with approaches advocated in the critical disability studies literature. There was at least one course sampled in each case which had very little disability content, indicating that disability theory and analysis has not yet been yet fully integrated into the overall curriculum. Additionally, the findings in at least two cases were that the social work practices approaches to disability, as presented in the texts, were not always consistent with critical disability perspectives.

My initial hypotheses did not prove to be supported by the findings of the manifest content analysis of texts at the three BSW programs. I expected to find that the St. Thomas University School of Social Work would have the highest proportion of mentions of critical disability perspectives but the social pathology perspective actually had the highest proportion of mentions (44%). I expected the Dalhousie School of Social Work to have the highest proportion of mentions of the individual pathology perspective because it is located with a Faculty of Health Professions, but the proportion of mentions of the individual pathology perspective was relatively low (20%), compared with social pathology (39%) and critical disability perspectives (41%). I expected the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work, Fort Garry Campus, BSW program to have the highest proportion of mentions of social pathology perspectives, but critical disability perspectives had the highest proportion of mentions (61%), while social pathology perspectives represented only 30 percent of mentions of disability. Clearly there are other factors influencing the choice of texts addressing disability at the three universities outside of external factors such as program philosophy or co-location within a Faculty of Health Professionals. I also know from the interviews with key informants at the University of

Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work that the Graduate program in Disability Studies has had little influence on the way that disability is addressed in that BSW program.

It must be remembered that the relatively small sample size of three courses from each BSW program cannot be viewed as representative of the BSW program as a whole. A more comprehensive analysis would be provided by examining the texts from all core courses. While the proportion of mentions of perspectives of disability highlighted in the manifest content analysis provides some insight into the disability content of texts utilized at each BSW program, it does not provide an explanation for how those texts were used in coursework. Interviews with key informants have identified a shortage of available textbooks addressing disability and social work practice, especially from a critical theory perspective.

Assertions Emerging from Theme 1:

Critical disability perspectives have not yet been fully integrated into the curricula of BSW programs.

A necessary, but not sufficient, way to ensure the inclusion of critical disability theories requires the use of appropriate texts in the courses.

Theme 2

What are the theoretical and social work practice approaches to disability represented in transcripts from interviews with key informants?

The case study of St. Thomas University School of Social Work. Three instructors from the St. Thomas University School of Social Work were interviewed and the transcriptions from the interviews were subjected to modified analytic induction. It was expected that anti-

oppressive social work practice skills at the School would be congruent with the theoretical framework of critical disability studies, since the School endorses a structural theory approach to oppression. The findings of the modified analytic induction were summarized into four top-level categories from coding segments of text into categories related to theory and practice approaches to disability and oppression. The emergent categories were: theoretical approach to ableism; structural social work practice elements and disability; the role of pedagogy in educating students about ableism and other forms of oppression; and the importance of the positionality of the instructor.

The three key informants interviewed at the St. Thomas University School of Social Work stressed the importance of integrating structural social work theory into anti-oppressive social work practice. Anti-oppressive social work practice, from a structural theory perspective, involves understanding the various ways that individuals and groups experience oppression through processes of exploitation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence (Young, 1990; Mullaly, 2007). The instructors were in agreement on the need to include a postmodern analysis to recognize the importance of diversity and individual experience in understanding individual and cultural processes of oppression. All of the instructors believed that students would be able to generalize structural social work with oppressed groups from a discussion of the readings and personal experiences of oppression. Yet, only one instructor included a reading on disability and social work in the course design, and although the instructors said that students were encouraged to talk about their own experiences of oppression, those discussions may not have included experience with disability. It should be acknowledged that one instructor commented that it was very difficult to find a text book or readings that addressed social work practice from a critical disability perspective.

The hypothesis that the anti-oppressive social work theory and practice skills being taught at St. Thomas University School of Social Work would be consistent with the theoretical framework of disability studies, was found to be more complex than simply linking particular theoretical approaches to social work practice. The modified inductive analysis of the transcripts revealed that the positionality, or stance of the instructor had important implications for the topics that were presented, emphasized and discussed during a course. The role of pedagogy in educating students about ableism and other consequences of oppression emerged as an important link between theory and practice. As one instructor commented, the classroom environment was about creating an ethical space for students to explore values, as well as practice. However, despite the congruence of structural social work theory and practice with critical disability perspectives, the absence of learning objectives directly related to ableism and disability, as well as the absence of planned classroom discussion specifically addressing the personal, cultural, and structural elements of ableism, the dominant discourse of individual pathology in social work may remain relatively unchallenged.

The case study of the Dalhousie University School of Social Work, BSW Program. Two instructors at the Dalhousie School of Social Work were interviewed as a part of the case study, and the findings from the modified inductive analysis of the interview transcripts were developed into three major categories: critical anti-oppressive social work with disabled people; the influence of the discourse of individualism; and the importance of the First Person Voice perspective. In general, the critical anti-oppressive theory and practice taught to students at the Dalhousie School of Social Work was found to be congruent with the critical disability perspectives in the disability studies literature in several important respects. First, disability was understood to be relationally, culturally and socially constructed. Second, the role of professional

discourses, such as those found in the health professions, social work, psychiatry and social policy, were critically examined in relation to the creation and perpetuation of oppression, including ableism. In particular, the dominance of the discourse of individualism was identified as part of a worldview having negative implications for how social workers, and others, view social issues and develop strategies for intervention when working with marginalized people and groups. Third, the First Person Voice perspective in relation to disability was viewed as critically important to understanding the incredible diversity and complexity of disability, from the perspective of disabled people. All of the findings from the modified inductive analysis of interview transcriptions were found to be consistent with social constructionism, which is part of the theoretical framework of critical postmodernism and therefore comprises part of critical disability perspectives.

The case study of the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work, Fort Garry Campus BSW Program. Two key informants at the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work, Fort Garry Campus, were interviewed as a part of the case study. There were four significant categories developed from the modified inductive analysis of the interview transcripts: the intersection of disability with other forms of oppression; disability across the life cycle; the need for a social constructionist understanding of disability in social work; and the importance of the lived experience of disability to social work practice with disabled people.

The modified inductive analysis of the transcripts from the interviews revealed that the perspective on disability being taught in the BSW program was generally supportive of a social constructionist understanding of disability. One instructor, in particular, emphasized the need to examine disability in relation to its intersection with other forms of oppression such as gender, race, and class. Both instructors believed that disability needed to be understood as part of a

normal life cycle, rather than as an anomaly. Both instructors commented that disability should be viewed as a socially constructed category that is constructed within disabling environments. The instructor for the core theory course emphasized the need to have a first person analysis of disability in which the personal narratives of disabled people are given primacy over professional definitions of “the problem”. While it was not possible to discern the particular perspective of disability espoused by one instructor due to the poor quality of the sound on the audio-tape, the second instructor was supportive of a social constructionist understanding of disability which would be considered part of the framework of critical disability perspectives.

The Case-Quintain Dialectic for Theme 2. A modified inductive analysis was carried out on all seven of the transcripts from interviews with key informants (See Appendix I). The original hypothesis tested was stated as:

- The anti-oppressive social work practice approaches to disability described by the key informants will be consistent with the theoretical framework of critical disability studies.

After analysis of each transcript for findings related to anti-oppressive social work practice approaches to disability, the original hypothesis was repeatedly modified to include divergent themes and a final hypothesis emerged, as follows:

- There is a range of theoretical social work practice approaches represented in the transcripts from the interviews with key informants that includes social pathology and critical disability perspectives, with critical disability perspectives being more prevalent.

There were several common themes identified across the three cases in relation to how disability was addressed by the instructors. The first theme was the difficulty that instructors had in finding a comprehensive text on social work policy and practice related to disability. This

finding is closely related to the invisibility of disability within critical theoretical social work scholarship, as identified by an instructor at the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work and an instructor at the St. Thomas University School of Social Work. The second theme of importance to the quintain was the fact that for every case, instructors found the voice or narrative of individual experience with marginalization and oppression to be invaluable for understanding the way that oppression becomes internalized, for learning about diversity within subordinate groups, and for developing strategies to address oppression. For example, one instructor asked guest lecturers from the community of people with disabilities to speak to the class about the experience of disability, while another asked students to visit websites set up by disabled women. Third, the positionality of the instructor was important to whether or not disability was addressed in curricula and how it was addressed. The importance of this finding is supported by the fact that the Dalhousie School of Social Work has hired a faculty member, with a disability, who has the mandate to advance disability scholarship at the school. Fourth, critical postmodern theory was viewed as a valuable theoretical framework for understanding the complexity of disability, and for understanding the relational, social and cultural interactions that produce disability. These findings form a part of a critical disability perspective in which the experience of disability is viewed as socially and culturally constructed, professional and client discourses are viewed as techniques of power, and narratives/stories about personal experiences with disability affirm the contributions of disabled people and dispel stereotypes of disabled people as victims of tragedy and incapable.

Assertion Emerging from Theme 2:

An understanding of the theoretical frameworks informing critical disability perspectives is an important, but not sufficient way, to develop a curriculum that integrates critical disability studies into social work theory and practice. The experiences and voices of disabled people must be included in the development, planning, and delivery of course content addressing disability.

Theme 3

What are the theoretical and social work practice approaches to disability identified from critical discourse analysis of the transcripts of classroom lectures or seminars?

The case study of the St. Thomas University School of Social Work BSW Program.

Critical discourse analysis of a transcription from a class discussion on anti-oppressive practice theories revealed that students in the theory class had difficulty generalizing elements of structural social work theory to a critical analysis of disability and ableism. One of the more significant findings from the critical discourse analysis was that students did not appear to understand oppressive processes at the cultural level of society. Although the students would have completed the first foundational theory course, based on structural social work theory, they generally appeared to view culture in terms of ethnographic concepts and struggled to understand when such cultural practices would be viewed as oppressive rather than as a respect for diversity. For example, in some cultures, the man walks several steps ahead of a woman. Students questioned whether or not this cultural practice was a physical manifestation of a gender power imbalance, or if the woman accepted this role, was it simply an ethno cultural practice? An understanding of cultural imperialism and hegemony was not in evidence although the instructor

did speak to the need for a postmodern analysis of power in which social workers must view every individual as a vehicle of power; both oppressor and oppressed.

The classroom discussion in relation to disability revealed that disability is still viewed as a personal problem of deficiency or limitation rather than as an outcome of oppressive processes at the individual, cultural and institutional levels of society. There was acknowledgement that disabled people are denied educational and employment opportunities more than non-disabled people, but the needs and interests of disabled people are not viewed as heterogeneous and diverse in the same way as the needs of women, First Nations peoples, and immigrants are understood to be diverse. There was an inherent assumption that, by addressing the physical, social and political barriers to accessibility, disabled people will be placed on a “level playing field” with nondisabled people. There was not any acknowledgement or discussion of the fact that disabled people are expected to compete according to expectations and standards set by non-disabled people.

The case study of the Dalhousie University School of Social Work BSW Program. The critical discourse analysis of the transcription from a class in a foundational theory course did not have any direct content related to disability but it did offer insight into how students are taught about alternative theoretical perspectives. Students participated in a number of exercises designed to challenge dominant values, beliefs and assumptions, especially in relation to Indigenous peoples. The concepts taught to the students included an examination of positionality, identity, and power, which have some relevance for understanding critical perspectives on disability. Students were led through a variety of role-playing exercises and small group discussions designed to challenge assumptions, values and beliefs about the world, particularly in

relation to the social construction of identity and social spaces. Important concepts identified from a review of the transcript included:

- Divisions such as race, gender, age, ability and so on, are social constructions based on particular assumptions and world views.
- Identity is fluid and the ability to “name” through dominant discourse is an important mechanism of power.
- Assumptions about knowledge and who “knows” are fluid and subjective.

These theoretical concepts are associated with a critical postmodern, social constructionist understanding of oppression which has also been integrated into the elective course on (dis)Ability, as explained in the interviews with key informants at the School. The critical discourse analysis of the transcription from the core theory course provides some insight into how a critical anti-oppressive pedagogical approach can be developed, such that students are given the learning opportunities they need to understand and build on their theoretical analyses of particular processes of oppression, such as ableism.

The case study of the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work, Fort Garry Campus, BSW Program. The major finding of the critical discourse analysis of the transcription from the classroom experience at this BSW program was that the theoretical perspective on disability evident in the lecture and discussion the day of audio-taping was the social pathology perspective of disability. The social work theory and practices discussed by students that day were also found to be congruent with the social pathology perspectives; namely the ecological approach and systems theory.

The critical discourse analysis of an audio-taped class had high relevance for understanding the quintain because the class was directly related to social work practice and disability. On the

day of the audio-taping, the students were asked to complete an assignment on the portrayal of disabled people in various forms of media. Most students chose fictional texts and movies that either portrayed disabled people as heroic or tragic figures, although all of the students expressed being personally affected by the stories in a way that made them more empathetic to the barriers faced by disabled people in society. A review of the outline for the course revealed that there were not any learning objectives related to understanding disability from the perspective of the disabled person and this may be one reason why the First Person Voice perspective was generally not in evidence.

In another exercise, students were asked to envision their own future with and without an acquired disability. The majority of students minimized the impact that impairment would have on their careers as social workers, with many believing that social work, as a profession, was well placed to provide accommodation and support for someone with impairment. A final exercise had students consider the social work intervention strategies that they would use to assist someone to care for a disabled person. Most students chose an ecological or systems theory approach, and two chose an anti-oppressive social work practice approach but had difficulty explaining how that approach differed from conventional social work approaches.

The Case-Quintain Dialectic for Theme 3. Although the case of the St. Thomas University School of Social Work BSW program did not have a class which examined disability as a part of the curriculum or course outline in the three courses, disability was discussed on the day of audio-taping the classroom discussion on oppression. Students generally viewed disability as an individual problem, albeit one requiring social, economic and political accommodation so that disabled individuals could participate in educational and employment opportunities, in the same way as non-disabled people. The finding of the critical discourse analysis was that the approach

to disability in the classroom discussion was consistent with a social pathology perspective on disability. This finding was similar to the approach to disability found in the class addressing disability at the University of Manitoba BSW program.

Students at the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work, Fort Garry Campus BSW Program class on disability theory and practice had difficulty explaining how they would use anti-oppressive social work interventions to assist an individual with an acquired impairment. They appeared generally unaware that the perspective of a disabled person might be different from that of a non-disabled person in discussing or writing about disability, and they did not understand how the cultural representations of disabled people contribute to negative assumptions, stereotyping and unrealistic expectations for disabled individuals. Students in the class at St. Thomas University School of Social Work were able to identify needed social and political structural changes, such as the need for more accessible physical spaces and legislation to protect rights but could not understand how social work practice operates at the cultural level of society. Neither group could identify intervention strategies that were different from more conventional social work approaches such as the ecological perspective or systems theory.

Students in the Dalhousie School of Social Work were introduced to alternative worldviews and to concepts of critical postmodern theory during the class that I audio-taped. Although the concepts have much in common with critical disability perspectives, the students did not discuss disability. Therefore, it is not known if students would be able to generalize the theoretical concepts to particular processes of oppression, such as ableism.

Assertions Emerging from Theme 3:

BSW programs, and instructors, must incorporate pedagogical strategies for developing the capacities of students to be able to translate critical disability perspectives into social work practice interventions.

An understanding of the role of culture in the oppression of disabled people is an important element of critical disability perspectives.

Theme 4

How do the social work theory and practice approaches to disability, identified in the three cases, fit with the current theoretical frameworks within disability studies?

The case study of St. Thomas University School of Social Work BSW Program. The St. Thomas University School of Social Work had approaches to disability representing all three perspectives of disability, despite a program mission statement reflecting the importance of structural social work theory. Overall, the approach to disability taken at the St. Thomas University School of Social Work was found to be more congruent with social pathology perspectives of disability than with critical disability perspectives.

- The manifest content analysis of the course outlines and texts from the three core courses indicated that, while there were examples of critical disability perspectives represented in the texts, there were very few texts with disability-related content. The critical disability perspectives that were found in the texts were not distributed proportionately over the three courses, but were mainly found in the introductory social work theory course because of a particular reading explaining various perspectives on disability.

- The modified inductive analysis of transcripts from interviews with three instructors at St. Thomas University School of Social Work found that the positionality of an instructor influences the topics chosen for the course, the emphasis given to certain topics, and the topics discussed in the classroom. If there is not any planned integration of critical disability perspectives into curriculum, critical disability perspectives may not be addressed.
- The critical discourse analysis of the transcript of a classroom discussion addressing oppression and social work practice interventions found that the students in the class were not able to generalize a critical or structural social work analysis of oppression in relation to disability, although they were able to do so in relation to gender and race. Disability was viewed by the students in the class to be an individual problem of limitations which required remedy at the social, economic and political levels of society, mainly by improving accessibility and opportunities available to disabled individuals. This approach had elements of both the individual pathology and social pathology perspectives. The cultural hegemony of “normalcy” was not explored and students appeared confused about the role of culture in oppression, questioning some ethno cultural practices as being oppressive when compared to the dominant culture, but not understanding why the practices were oppressive given the need to respect cultural diversity.

The case study of the Dalhousie University School of Social Work BSW Program. The case of the Dalhousie University School of Social Work BSW Program provided several findings that contribute to an understanding of how social work education at the School addresses

disability. I found the approach to disability at the Dalhousie School of Social Work BSW Program to be congruent with Rioux's social pathology perspective.

- The manifest content analysis of the three courses; two foundational theory courses and one elective course specifically addressing disability, found that both social pathology perspectives and critical disability perspectives were represented in the texts, particularly in the texts of the (dis)Ability course, as one would expect. However, the two core theory courses had little disability content, overall, and the disability content that was present was categorized to as predominantly social pathology perspectives.
- The modified inductive analysis of transcripts from interviews with two key informants at the School revealed that the instructors incorporated a critical postmodern perspective into their analysis of social issues. Professional discourses were interrogated in relation to the role that social work and other professions play in contributing to and perpetuation oppression. Both instructors who were interviewed said they found it challenging to have students understand that there are alternative theoretical frameworks that challenge the dominant discourse of individualism, which is still prevalent in liberal education and in social welfare in general. The analysis also found that a First Person Voice perspective is critically important to helping students to understand the individual experience of impairment, internalized oppression, and for understanding the diversity of experiences of disabled people.
- The critical discourse analysis of a classroom seminar and discussion during a foundational theory class revealed that positionality, identity, and power, were important concepts for assisting students to understand oppression. The critical discourse analysis provided insight into how a critical anti-oppressive approach can be integrated into class room discussions and

activities such that students are given the theoretical foundation they need to examine particular processes of oppression, but it was not evident how this analysis would be used to address disability, since disability was not discussed in the class on the day of audio-taping. During one of the interviews a key informant stated that the approach to disability taken in her course was a “human-rights based” approach, with postmodern theoretical concepts. The “human rights-based” based approach is consistent with liberal pluralism in which political power is divided among competing interest groups so that no one group dominates the other. The government, through legislation and policy, acts as an independent arbitrator for these groups, but it is the dominant groups, and dominant discourses in society that decide the regulations and policies by which the subordinate groups must compete for opportunities and resources.

The case study of the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work, Fort Garry Campus BSW Program. A review of the findings from each of the analyses completed as a part of the case study indicates that there is a range of perspectives utilized to address disability at the Faculty, with social pathology perspectives more predominant in the two core theory courses.

- The manifest content analysis of texts found social work practice examples representing individual pathology perspectives. The two core theory courses addressed disability from primarily social pathology perspectives. Mention of critical disability perspectives were highest in the elective course on disability, which also represented the highest number of mentions of critical disability perspectives found in any of the courses sampled.

- The modified inductive analysis of transcripts from the interviews with two key informants found that a critical postmodern, social constructionist approach to disability was clearly in evidence in a core theory course discussing the intersectionality of disability with other forms of oppression.
- The critical discourse analysis of a transcript made from an audio-taped class in which the focus was disability produced findings that I argue were more consistent with a social pathology perspective addressing disability, underpinned by reform liberalism.

Case-Quintain Dialectic for Theme 4. All three of the cases examined in the study had findings of critical disability perspectives. Course texts, in particular, covered a wide range of social pathology and critical disability perspectives but not all social work text books addressed disability from a critical theory perspective. Instructors commented that there was a dearth of textbooks which addressed disability and social work practice. Some social work texts addressing disability at the St. Thomas University School of Social Work and the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work provided examples of social work interventions with disabled persons that were based on individual pathology perspectives of disability.

The modified inductive analysis of transcriptions from interviews with key informants had the finding that, there is a range of theoretical social work practice approaches represented in the transcripts from the interviews with key informants that includes social pathology and critical disability perspectives, with critical disability perspectives being more prevalent. There were several common themes identified across the three cases in relation to how disability was addressed by the instructors. The first theme was the difficulty that instructors had in finding a comprehensive text on social work policy and practice related to disability. This finding is

closely related to the invisibility of disability within critical theoretical social work scholarship, as identified by an instructor at the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work and an instructor at the St. Thomas University School of Social Work. The second theme of importance to the quintain was the fact that for every case, instructors found the voice or narrative of individual experience with marginalization and oppression to be invaluable for students to be able to understand the way that oppression becomes internalized. The positionality of the instructor was found to be important to how disability was addressed, or not, in curricula, and critical postmodern theory was viewed as a valuable theoretical framework for understanding the complexity of disability, and for understanding the relational, social and cultural interactions that produce disability. These findings form a part of a critical disability perspective in which the experience of disability is viewed as socially and culturally constructed, professional and client discourses are viewed as techniques of power, and narratives/stories about personal experiences with disability affirm the contributions of disabled people and dispel stereotypes of disabled people as victims of tragedy and incapable.

In at least two BSW programs, the St. Thomas University School of Social Work and the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work, there was evidence from the critical discourse analyses that anti-oppressive social work practice approaches were more characteristic of conventional rather than progressive social work practice. There was also evidence, in the case of the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work, that the approach to disability presented during the lecture was consistent with social pathology perspectives and reform liberalism. At St. Thomas University School of Social Work, the structural theory approach to social work practice and oppression did not form part of the class lecture or discussion during a class focused on radical social work practice strategies in addressing oppression. In a discussion on various

experiences of oppression, the students in the St. Thomas University School of Social Work class were not able to generalize structural theory to social work practice approaches addressing disability.

In summation, the main research question of this multicase study was to determine the extent to which critical disability perspectives, as explicated within the disability studies literature, are being presented, explained, and promoted within core theory courses and specialized courses focused on disability. My choice of BSW programs for the study was based on a theoretical replication logic that expected to find contrasting results in approaches to disability:

- St. Thomas University School of Social Work was selected because of its major emphasis on structural social work theory and on helping students to understand the structural roots of problems. Inequality is viewed as rooted in the social and economic order and not in the individual. The literature review to this study argued that structural social work theory is congruent with many of the theories and approaches advocated by critical disability studies.
- The Dalhousie University School of Social Work places emphasis on critical analysis in understanding equity and justice, and its focus is on elective courses that explore the differential impacts on constructs such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and ability. However, unlike the two other BSW programs in the study, the School is located within a Faculty of Health Professions which may influence the perspective on disability presented in the curriculum more in the direction of a medical model approach.
- The Faculty of Social Work at the University of Manitoba has a mission statement supporting diversity, inclusion and the principles of social justice. It is different from the other two BSW programs because it emphasizes psychosocial treatment and professional

intervention. The Faculty is located on the same campus as a Graduate Disability Studies program and the BSW program has a 6 credit hour elective course that specializes in social work practice with disabled persons.

Cross-case analysis has revealed that the way that disability is being presented, explained, and promoted within the three BSW programs is more complex than anticipated and that the hypotheses are not supported by the findings. There is a range of disability theory being presented within social work texts, including a high proportion with critical disability content. However, the way that these theories are being presented, emphasized and discussed within the three BSW programs is inconsistent and is influenced by a number of factors that have been identified through the various analyses undertaken as a part of the study.

Instructors have identified that there are few social work practice textbooks addressing disability from a critical theory perspective. Instructors generally believe that oppression can be best understood by students when they are able to relate to personal experiences in which they were oppressed, or the oppressor. Instructors often rely on their own experiences with oppression when providing explanations in class. Two courses, one at the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work, and the other at Dalhousie University School of Social Work, emphasized a First Person Voice perspective that exposes students to the firsthand knowledge and experiences of disabled persons. However, the disability studies literature indicates that personal narratives, alone, are not a sufficient strategy for understanding and addressing oppression.

Students in the three BSW programs are being exposed to critical disability perspectives within elective classes addressing disability, but they appear unable to integrate the perspectives into progressive social work practice approaches. There is a gap that occurs between exposure to

the material on critical disability theory and the way that it is presented, and understood, in the classroom. When students have not been provided with an opportunity to critically explore social work practice approaches in relation how they “fit” with particular theoretical perspectives, they tend to utilize conventional social work interventions.

There appears to be a growing influence of postmodern perspectives to addressing disability, which is congruent with the theoretical framework of critical disability perspectives. However, other critical theories within the critical disability perspectives framework have not been given as much attention, such as; feminist, post structural, materialist, Indigenous, and critical cultural perspectives, to name a few. One of the limitations of postmodern theory is that it rejects meta-narratives such as those advocated by the disabled people movement. Yet, postmodern approaches to disability are valuable for giving attention to diversity and for promoting the understanding that disability is a social and cultural construct and not inherent to individual conditions and circumstances.

Assertion Emerging from Theme 4:

Social work practice theories and approaches to addressing disability must be congruent with, and supportive of, the full range of critical disability perspectives if students are to develop social work interventions with disabled people that challenge and counter individual social pathology perspectives.

Chapter Eight

Assertions and Their Implications for Social Work Education Addressing Disability

In 2008, the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE) established Standards for Accreditation that asked schools of social work to examine how their respective educational mission and programs were addressing disability. The CASWE asserted that curricula in particular, were to reflect social work values that would eradicate oppressive conditions, ensure that students have knowledge of multiple theoretical and conceptual bases, and promote understanding of theories relevant to disability and their implications for social policies and the practice of social work (CASWE, 2008, pp. 8-9). In relation to study at the undergraduate level, the *CASWE Educational Policy Statements* (2009) stated that there should be systemic inquiry into, and critical evaluation of, the multiple theoretical and conceptual bases of social work practice, such as feminist, structural, traditional and culture specific theories.

A more recent version of the *CASWE Accreditation Standards* (2012) includes a set of principles guiding accreditation based on advocacy for human rights and respect for diversity. According to the new standards, diversity refers to a range of characteristics including disability/non-disability status. A review of the “Principles Guiding Accreditation of Social Work Education Programs” (CASWE, 2012) indicates that the approach taken by the CASWE signifies an important change in philosophy. The principles guiding accreditation are now focused on fundamental human rights and a respect for diversity, advocating for a link between interdisciplinary theoretical knowledge and social work practice. These principles are also characteristic of anti-oppressive social work practice, as described by Baines (2011). However, the range of theoretical perspectives to be considered is not specified by the CASWE, as it was in

the previous *CASWE Educational Policy Statements* (2009) (feminist, structural, traditional and culture specific), and as it is in Baines' (2011) and Mullaly's (2010) descriptions of anti-oppressive social work practice. It should be observed here that, in the opinion of the members of the Persons with Disabilities Caucus, the taskforce charged with streamlining the *Accreditation Standards* for the CASWE in 2011 significantly diminished the gains related to disabilities that had been accomplished just two years prior (Carter et al., 2012, p. 129). The significance of this change in the CASWE's approach to social work education in relation to disability will be discussed later in the recommendations and conclusion section of this chapter.

The work of the Persons with Disabilities Caucus has provided the impetus for this research study which explored the question of how three BSW programs at Canadian schools of social work, all promoting values of diversity and inclusion, prepare students for working with disabled people. Specifically, this multicase study identified the various theoretical lenses being utilized to educate social work students about disability, and compared them with current perspectives on disability as represented in the disability studies literature. The purpose of this chapter is to remind the reader of the research questions, to discuss the limitations of the study and the extent to which they impact the findings, to review and summarize the findings from the cross case analysis completed in Chapter Seven, to present and discuss the assertions deduced from the various analyses, and finally, to discuss the possible implications the assertions may have for social work education and future research.

Main Research Question and Methodology

The main research question guiding the multicase study was developed from the work of the Persons with Disabilities Caucus of the CASWE (2006) which recommended that all courses

offered at both the BSW and MSW level should have a critical disability focus based on a theoretical framework provided by the critical disability studies literature. The literature review for this study has argued that the critical disability studies literature encompasses a broad range of theory beyond simple social constructionist theoretical frameworks, such as the social model and the minority model of disability, to include postmodernism, post structuralism, feminism, Marxism, critical anti-racism, phenomenology, post-colonialism, Indigenous and critical realism. Therefore, it was important for this study to determine the extent to which critical perspectives of disability, as developed within the literature of disability studies, were being presented, explained, and promoted within social work texts, and within core theoretical courses and specialized social work courses addressing disability at the BSW level.

Three Canadian schools of social work were chosen for the study: St. Thomas University School of Social Work; Dalhousie University School of Social Work; and the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work on the Fort Garry Campus. The selection of the three programs was based on theoretical replication in which the cases were expected to have contrasting results such that the findings from each BSW program would represent different points on a range of theory between individual pathology and critical disability perspectives. My prediction was that: St. Thomas University School of Social Work would be positioned closest to critical disability perspectives of disability; Dalhousie University School of Social Work, located within a Faculty of Health Professions, would place closer to the individual pathology perspective; and the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Manitoba would place somewhere mid-range, within social pathology perspectives. These predictions were not supported by the findings which indicated that approaches to disability at the three BSW programs are influenced by a complex interaction of the choice and availability of appropriate

texts, the knowledge and experience of instructors in relation to disability, and the classroom experiences provided to students in helping them to understand oppression related to disability.

Cross-case analysis involved close reading of each of the reports of the case (the respective BSW programs) as presented in Chapters Four through Six, in relation to the theories and perspectives from the disability studies literature and critical social work theory. Cross-case analysis of the data from the three cases was based on an exploration of the main research questions of the study:

- What dominant ideas inform the theoretical lenses on disability within social work texts, instruction, and classroom discussions in core theoretical courses and specialized courses addressing disability at three Canadian BSW programs?
- How consistent are current social work perspectives addressing disability, found in social work texts, instruction and classroom discussions in core theoretical courses and specialized courses addressing disability with the perspectives advocated by critical disability studies literature?

These main research questions were further delineated into four research themes, which were specific to the data collection and analysis approaches utilized as a part of the multicase research design:

1. What theoretical and social work practice approaches to disability are prevalent in the course outlines and texts used in core theory courses, as well as specialized courses addressing disability?
2. What are the theoretical and social work practice approaches to disability represented in the transcripts from the interviews with key informants?

3. What are the theoretical and social work practice approaches to disability identified from analyses of the transcripts from classroom lectures and seminars addressing disability and/or oppression?
4. How do these social work theory and practice approaches to disability fit with current theoretical frameworks within disability studies?

Weaknesses and Limitations of the Study

Various strategies to enhance trustworthiness were employed in this multicase study. Construct validity was increased by accessing multiple sources of evidence for each case and by creating a chain of evidence: 1) data from course outlines and texts from core theory courses and specialized courses addressing disability were gathered and analyzed utilizing manifest content analysis; 2) themes related to theories of disability were identified from interviews with key informants, who were also the instructors for the courses sampled in the manifest content analysis; and 3) critical discourse analyses were conducted on transcriptions from classroom lectures or seminars addressing disability or oppression, for one of the courses sampled at each site of the case. However, the chain of evidence was affected by several unanticipated factors. First, the manifest content analysis of texts did not include the winter term course outline of a core theory course, “Feminist Perspectives on Social Work Practice”, offered by the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work, because the instructor did not consent to participate. The fall term instructor for the course informed me that course content during the fall term focused on theoretical perspectives while the winter term focused on social work practice issues. Second, it was anticipated that I would be able to interview each of the instructors from the three courses sampled in the manifest content analysis, at each BSW program. Only seven instructors agreed to participate, and out of the seven interviews, two audio-taped interviews were affected by

electronic feedback, making them difficult to hear and transcribe. Third, I was unable to audio tape a classroom session in the elective course addressing disability at the Dalhousie School of Social Work, as I had planned. The course was not offered during the 2010/2011 academic year.

A multicas e design was chosen for this study because it enabled the researcher to explore differences within and between cases; three Canadian BSW programs in accredited schools of social work. Purposive sampling was utilized to select three BSW programs, chosen because of their similar commitment to the values of diversity and inclusiveness. However, each BSW program was also unique:

- The University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work, Fort Garry Campus, was chosen because it has a mission statement supporting diversity, inclusion and social justice. It is different from the following two BSW programs because the program emphasizes psychosocial treatment and professional intervention, it is located on the same campus as a graduate level Disability Studies Program, and it has a 6 credit hour elective course that specializes in social work practice with disabled persons;
- The Dalhousie University School of Social Work in Halifax was chosen because it places emphasis on critical analysis in understanding oppression and justice, and its focus is on elective courses that explore the differential impact of social constructs such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and ability. However, unlike the other two BSW Programs in the study, the School is located within a Faculty of Health Professions and there was question about the influence of a medical model perspective on the social work curriculum, especially in relation to disability; and
- The St. Thomas University School of Social Work was selected because of its major emphasis on structural social work theory and on helping students to understand the

structural roots of social problems. According to structural theory, inequality is viewed as being rooted in the social and economic order and not in the individual. The literature review for this study argues that structural theory is congruent with many of the theories and approaches advocated by critical disability studies.

Purposive sampling was used to select the cases for the study because the goal was to obtain insights into how schools of social work in Canada are addressing disability at the BSW level of social work education. Patton (2003) explains that purposive sampling strategies involve the selection of information-rich cases for in-depth study. Variation sampling, in particular, focuses on selection of cases to include variations on dimensions of interest.

Internal validity was addressed by comparing the findings of the data analyses from the manifest content analysis, modified inductive analysis of transcriptions from interviews, and critical discourse analysis of a classroom lecture or seminar, within each case. The findings were expected to be generally consistent across the three analyses. However, there were many factors which influenced the way that disability was addressed or not addressed within the courses:

- There were courses at each BSW program that had very little, or not any disability content making it difficult to generalize from the three courses in each sample that a particular perspective of disability was more dominant than the others.
- The instructor's familiarity with disability theory was another factor in how disability was, or was not, addressed in a course. Several instructors stated that they could not find a text, or texts, adequate to address and explain disability from a critical social work practice perspective.
- The stance or positionality of the instructor was found to play a role in the way that the disability perspective was presented, emphasized and discussed in the classroom. I found

that the instructors tended to choose examples of oppression for class discussions that were based on personal and professional experiences with oppression.

- Students who had completed assigned readings examining disability from critical disability perspectives or from anti-oppressive social work perspectives, appeared to have difficulty generalizing the concepts from the readings to classroom discussions and exercises.

“Thick description” is one of the most important means for establishing credibility in qualitative research (Tracy, 2010, p. 843). Tracy explains that thick description involves in-depth illustration that explicates culturally situated meanings (Geertz, as cited in Tracy, 2010, p. 843) and abundant concrete detail (Bochner, as cited in Tracy, 202, p. 843). Thick description requires the researcher to account for the complex specificity and circumstantiality of his or her data. Tracy explains that this immersion and concrete detail are necessary for researchers to ascertain “tacit knowledge”, which is the taken for granted, largely unarticulated, contextual understanding of a particular context that transcends the immediate surface of speech, texts, or discursive materials. She also notes that accessing tacit knowledge takes time in the field and includes close observation of what people are talking about and what is not said. “Indeed, good qualitative research delves beneath the surface to explore issues that are assumed, implicit, and have become common sense” (Tracy, 2010, p. 843).

Thick description of each of the BSW programs in the study provides the reader with enough detail so that he or she may come to his or her own conclusion about the approach to disability within each case. A full description of all contextual factors related to the question of approach to disability at each BSW program was provided by visits to each site of the case by the researcher, description of the physical and geographical characteristics relevant to accessibility,

description of disability services available at the site, a review of admissions policies, a review of university calendars and publications addressing disability, a review of the academic backgrounds and research interests of faculty, taken from each school's website, and review of each BSW program's mission statement. Tacit knowledge of each BSW program was gained through interviews of instructors (key informants) at each site, and through site visits for the purpose of audio-taping a class for the purpose of critical discourse analysis.

Transferability refers to a study's potential to be valuable across a variety of contexts (Tracy, 2010, p. 845). Instead of formal generalizations, qualitative research designs achieve resonance, or meaningfulness, through transferability (Lincoln & Guba, as cited in Tracy, 2010, p. 245). "Transferability is achieved when the readers feel as though the story of the research overlaps with their own situation and they intuitively transfer the research to their own action" (Tracy, 2010, p. 845). Researchers may create transferability by providing rich description, and by writing accessibly and evocatively. Tracy comments that most qualitative researchers seek resonance not because they desire to generalize across cases, but rather because they aim to generalize within them by taking small instances and placing them in a larger frame. This multicase study examines core courses and specialized courses addressing disability in three BSW programs, utilizing various strategies of analysis, over a specific period of time, one academic year. This study may have limited generalizability, due to the small sample, in relation to how disability is actually addressed within the curricula of other schools of social work in Canada. However, when the findings from the study are placed within the larger frames of critical disability theory, anti-oppressive social work practice frameworks, and accreditation standards for educating social workers at the BSW level, they illuminate some of the gaps and

inconsistencies within social work education that directly impact our relationships, and interventions, with disabled people.

Findings and Assertions

The findings from the cross case analysis in Chapter Seven are presented here along with the assertions identified as contributing to an understanding of how social work education addressed disability within the three BSW programs sampled in the study. A summary of the supporting rationale for making the assertions is provided, followed by a discussion of the implications that each assertion has in relation to social work education addressing disability.

Assertion emerging from theme 1: Critical disability perspectives have not yet been fully integrated into the curricula of BSW programs. A review of the course texts and outlines in the manifest content analysis revealed that disability-related content varied disproportionately across the courses sampled in each case. Two BSW programs, at Dalhousie University School of Social Work and the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social work, Fort Garry Campus, each had elective courses addressing disability, but little disability content in the other two core theory courses. The St. Thomas University School of Social Work had one class, in one introductory theory course, dedicated to a broad discussion of disability theory and social work practice. While it could be argued that disability-related content was introduced during classroom discussions and presentations, the findings from the interviews with instructors indicates that the experience and knowledge of the instructor, in relation to disability, may have an influence on whether or not disability is addressed in the classroom.

The recruitment of faculty members who have a disability has been advocated by the Persons with Disabilities Caucus who believe that faculty members with a disability can speak from “their own location”, using their own experiences as teaching moments (Dunne et al., 2006, p.

15). The Caucus also believes that the recruitment of social work students with disabilities can also encourage discussion and sharing of experiences and insights related to disability. However, a comprehensive research study of how Canadian schools of social work respond to disability issues, conducted by the members of the Caucus, found that disabled faculty and staff represented less than five percent of employees (Dunn et al., 2006). A more recent survey of Deans and Directors of twenty seven accredited schools of social work in Canada, also conducted by the members of the Caucus, found that students may not disclose their disability due to the continued stigma attached to disability (Carter et al., 2012, p. 122). Until these issues of disability inclusion can be addressed through the introduction of equity policies for employment of disabled faculty members and staff, and the admission of more disabled students, there is a need to explore other options for introducing a disability perspective within the curriculum.

A seminal study of anti-racist social work education in Britain (Macey & Moxon, 1996) examined the teaching of anti-racist social work and the need to introduce “black perspectives” in the classroom. The authors found that students often had difficulty in reconciling personal experience to theory and practice, and they thought that it was both unrealistic and unreasonable to expect black social work teachers to act in isolation as significant agents of organizational change. The authors also contend that it is “naïveté bordering on racism to assume that any black teacher (or social worker) will more easily relate to any student (or service user) than would his or her white counterpart” (Macey & Moxon, 1996, pp. 306-307). They argue that prioritizing the black-white categorical distinction ignores the host of other aspects of the self which constitute a person, any one of which may take precedence over skin colour in particular situations. They

argue that a broad anti-oppressive social work approach would address the intersection of social divisions, such as class, race and gender.

Identity group and diversity approaches tend to overlook the pervasiveness of impairment and disability (Roulstone, 2012, pp. 146). A review of the course outlines from the BSW programs in the study indicates that only two of the core theory courses (Feminist Perspectives on Social Work Practice and Social Welfare Policy, University of Manitoba, and Theoretical Foundations in Social Work Practice, Dalhousie University) addressed the need for an intersectional understanding of oppression in social work practice. However, the texts for the “Feminist perspectives on social work practice and social welfare policy” course at the University of Manitoba, especially the main textbook for the course, *Feminist Issues: Race, Class and Sexuality* (Mandell, 2010), did not have any direct reference to the intersectionality of gender, race, class, and sexuality with disability. The course instructor did address the shortcomings of the textbook by adding a class on women and disability, but the readings from the class were primarily related to one particular type of ableism; violence against disabled women and the need for more accessible shelters. The second course, “Theoretical foundations in social work practice”, at the Dalhousie School of Social Work, addressed the intersections of gender and race (blacks, Aborigines, whitemale feminism and colonialism) but did not include disability in the analysis. The organization of course outlines from the other five core theory courses reviewed in this study tended to demonstrate that a “parallel model” of oppression was being used to understand and describe the oppressive experiences of women, blacks, Indigenous peoples, ethnic groups, lesbian and gay people, and disabled people.

Mullaly describes the parallel model of oppression as depicting all forms and sources of oppression running alongside each other in a non-hierarchical, parallel fashion:

According to this perspective, different forms and sources of oppression all involve similar dynamics of dominate-subordinate relations, but each is caused and maintained by an autonomous set or configuration of social, economic, cultural, political, and historical factors. In addition, each form affects only a single distinct group of oppressed people (Mullaly, 2010, pp. 193).

The limitations of the parallel model are that it does not account for people who experience two or more sources of oppression, nor does it address how oppressions interact with each other.

Anti-oppressive social work practice principles, as elucidated by Baines (2011), include consideration of how macro-and micro-social relations shape, perpetuate, and promote social ideas, values and processes that oppressively organized around notions of superiority, inferiority, and positions in between. “Multiple oppressions overlap, contest, undermine, and/or reinforce one another in ways that depend on a variety of factors in the immediate and global environment” (Baines, 2011, p. 5). For Baines, the fact that social relationships enacted by people generate the ongoing oppression of individuals and groups means that these oppressive relationships can also be changed by people. For this reason an understanding of the intersectionality of oppression has become very important to the process of coalition-building (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009, p. 61) and for understanding the way in which different forms of privilege intersect with each other, and with other forms of oppression (Pease, 2010, p. 18).

According to Pease, almost everyone at some point in their life experiences both privilege and oppression (Pease, 2010, p. 21). In most people’s thinking about oppression, people are either privileged or subordinated, while complexities and contradictions are ignored (Pease, 2010, p. 22). An intersectional analysis can help to deal with this complexity and assist oppressed groups to challenge exploitation and domination within their communities. An understanding of

privilege necessitates a structural analysis that identifies the systemic nature of privilege (Pease, 2010, pp. 23-24).

...I think that groups who are oppressed on one dimension need to acknowledge their complicity with other relations of domination and subordination. To understand this, they need to locate themselves in the social relations of domination and oppression. If everyone were simply privileged or just subordinated then the analysis of systems of privilege would be easier. But most people live their lives with access to privilege in some areas, while being subordinate in others (Pease, 2010, p. 23).

Pease provides several examples of the intersections of disablism with other forms of oppression; feminist analyses of the gendered nature of disability, materialist analyses arguing that disabled people are more likely to be in lower socio-economic groups, disabled people of colour struggling against racism and disablism in the able-bodied community, as well as their experience of racism and marginalization within the disability movement. Pease cites the writing of Vernon (as cited in Pease, 2010, p. 155) who says that male privilege applies to all men irrespective of other social divisions, and the same can be said about straight, white, and class privilege within the disability movement. However, the question posed by disability activists and academics is whether or not intersectionality will be a useful tool for CDS or will intersectionality scholars remain so attached to the conventional analysis of race, gender, sexuality, and class that they continue to exclude other groups, such as disability and age? (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009, p. 62).

Thomas (2007, p. 73) argues that theorizing the interrelationships between dimensions of social oppression has proven to be of limited value within disability studies. She believes that

Young's (1990) five faces of oppression is a more useful framework of analysis for determining whether, and in what ways, individuals and groups are oppressed. She believes that every facet of disablism can be located within Young's schema (Young, as cited in Thomas, 2007, pp. 74-75):

- Exploitation occurs when there is a steady transfer of the results of the labour of one social group to benefit another.
- Marginalization occurs when a whole category of people is expelled from useful participation in social life and are potentially subjected to material deprivation and even extermination.
- Powerlessness occurs in employment and other social settings where power and authority are exercised by some upon others. Those who lack power and authority are inhibited from developing their own capacities, lack decision-making latitude and autonomy, and are exposed to disrespectful treatment because of their lowly status.
- Cultural imperialism involves the universalization of a dominant group's experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm. Those not in the dominant group are marked as deviant and inferior Others.
- Violence is a form of oppression that combines systematic physical violence and its lesser though profoundly damaging expressions – harassment, intimidation, or ridicule.

Young's (1990) five faces of oppression are also viewed as important to structural social work for understanding oppression. Mullaly (2007, pp. 264-269) also cites the work of Young

(1990) to describe the same oppressive processes, explaining that, although any one of the five conditions is sufficient for calling a group oppressed, different oppressed groups exhibit different combinations of them, as do different individuals within these groups. Mullaly explains that he has adopted this framework for determining and analyzing oppression because it encompasses both distributive issues of social injustice and practices that go beyond distribution (Mullaly, 2010, p. 64).

Gourdine and Sanders (2002) found that one of the major obstacles to addressing disability content in social work education is the controversy over generic social work versus specialization. They identified three ways that disability content is being addressed in the social work curriculum; it is infused into the curriculum, considered an area of specialization, or a combination of methods is used (Gourdine & Sanders, 2002, p. 217). My analysis of the findings from the three BSW programs in this study seems to support an approach to disability content that infuses disability into a broad anti-oppressive framework. However, Gourdine & Sanders (2002) contend that when disability content is infused into the general curriculum it is difficult to standardize the amount of content needed for the transmission of knowledge about disability. The problem with specialized courses that was identified by Gourdine and Sanders is that only the students exhibiting an interest in learning about disability are exposed to this knowledge and skill development. This multicase study of the three BSW programs also revealed that the number of students choosing to enroll in specialized courses addressing disability is generally low when compared to the enrolment in other elective courses, another finding supporting the infusion of disability content in the general curriculum. Finally, Oliver, Sapey and Thomas (2012, p. 160) contend that it is insufficient to simply direct training at those who express an interest and, in their opinion as social work educators and disability activists,

disability studies must form the central, if not the foundational, aspect of the curriculum for social work education.

Second assertion emerging from theme 1: A necessary, but not sufficient, way to ensure the inclusion of critical disability theories requires the use of appropriate texts in the courses. It is interesting to observe that the role of textbooks in educating social work students about disability is not addressed by the Persons with Disabilities Caucus (2006, 2008, 2012). The predominant approaches to disability identified from the manifest content analysis of texts utilized in core theory courses, and specialized courses addressing disability, found that there were few texts within the core theory courses with disability-related content. However, the two elective courses addressing disability and social work practice used texts that presented a broad range of disability theory including the individual pathology approach, the social pathology approach and critical theory perspectives of disability. The individual pathology approach was often presented and critiqued utilizing the social pathology or critical theory frameworks.

British social work educator, Alan Roulstone, comments that; "...even a cursory gaze at key social work texts suggests that social work emphasizes certain 'client groups' more than others" (Roulstone, 2012, p. 145). He found that disability content was often absent from textbooks in which terminologies of "older", "frail", and "vulnerable" adults were used instead of disability, rarely exploring or problematising the commonalities between these populations groups and disability. This language was found in a social work textbook for a core social work theory course at the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work, Fort Garry Campus primarily in relation to case examples utilized to illustrate principles of social work practice. The textbook, *Social Work Practice: Problem Solving and Beyond* (Heinonen & Spearman, 2010), described people with physical disabilities as one example of a client group who were considered

“vulnerable” in the same way as the frail elderly and children needing protection from abuse and neglect are considered “vulnerable”. The fact that there are many individuals with physical impairment who are strong, self-determined individuals is not even considered.

Roulstone’s study concluded that, when disability content was included in textbooks it tended to be subsumed within a lifecycle approach or a diversity perspective (Roulstone, 2012, p. 146). The lifecycle approach to disability has been described as one of a group of longitudinal explanations of disability which “establish, and evaluate individual lives and groups according to age expectations throughout the lifespan, compare individuals to expectations, and determine the extent to which they fit or do not fit” (DePoy & Gilson, 2011, p. 69). DePoy and Gilson comment that the label of “normal” is often ascribed to phenomena most frequently occurring at each age. As disability theorist and activist Lennard J. Davis succinctly states: “Thus, the concept of a norm permits the idea of individual variation while enforcing a homogeneous standard or average” (Davis, 2002, p. 103).

Although I did not find examples of lifecycle explanations within the text books and readings that I reviewed for the manifest content analysis of texts at the three BSW programs, I did find a text being utilized at St. Thomas University School of Social Work which emphasized the need for “grief work” in relation to disability; *Grief and Loss: Theories and skills for helping professionals* (Walsh-Burke, 2006). DePoy and Gilson (2011, p. 67) contend that longitudinal approaches are more frequently referred to as developmental, stage or phase theories. Although DePoy and Gilson do not discuss grief work as a part of their discussion of longitudinal explanations for disability, I would argue that the stages of grief work, such as that described by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross (1969), also views disability from a medical-diagnostic perspective that posits specific stages through which individuals pass or negotiate. The individual pathology

model of disability presupposes that the problems that disabled people face are a direct consequence of their impairment. Therefore the role of social work intervention has been to assist the individual with the impairment to psychologically adjust, or come to terms, with the physical limitation or loss:

In order to come to terms with this loss, a process of grieving or mourning will have to be worked through, in a similar manner to those who must mourn or grieve for the loss of loved ones. Only when such processes have been worked through can individuals cope with death or disability (Oliver, Sapey & Thomas, 2012, p. 13).

I did find that the course outline for the “Social Work Policy and Practice in Disabilities Course” at the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work had organized classes and readings to reflect a lifecycle approach to disability. The course began with two classes discussing birth, disability and childhood autism, and disabilities and family life. The next two classes focused on disability and youth, and the following class discussed men and women with disabilities, including issues of sexuality. The following two classes addressed aging and disabilities, and then death and dying, including grief work. Oliver, Sapey and Thomas argue that the struggle against disablism must include an examination of the cultural assumptions that inform the syllabus for degrees in social work:

The focus on normalcy and deviancy through the inclusion of the study of human growth and development within this syllabus typifies the way in which, despite the exhortation of the social model within the context of anti-oppressive practice, social work education is still dominated by theories based on the individual model of disability (Oliver, Sapey, & Thomas, 2012, p. 161).

The modified inductive analysis of transcripts from the interviews with the instructors was invaluable to understanding the complexity of addressing disability in coursework. One issue that was identified by all of the participant instructors was the fact that there were few, if any, social work texts which addressed disability from a critical theory framework based on theories from disability studies. Many of the textbooks reviewed as a part of the manifest content analysis failed to represent the full range of theories and approaches to disability covered by disability studies, limiting analysis to the individual pathology perspective of disability critiqued by a social pathology perspective of disability as represented in both the minority model and sociopolitical approaches.

Meekosha and Dowse (2007) found that some social work text books cover wider issues of structural discrimination and rights while others assume a “tour guide approach” to disability where diagnostic perspectives are still dominant. One example of this approach that I found in reviewing the number of social work textbooks available specifically addressing disability was Rothman’s (2003) *Social Work Practice Across Disability*. I found this text to be characteristic of a tour guide approach to explaining disability because the text covers both individual and societal models of disability, which have been further delineated into The Moral Model, The Deficit Model, The Social Darwinist Model, The Medical Model, The Oppression Model, The Diversity Model, The Social Construct Model and a Feminist Model. In the opening chapter Rothman summarizes that disability in the United States is a complex blend of all models, with the medical model, as the most dominant perspective. A scan of the index found that there was not any mention of critical disability perspectives or disability studies, nor was there reference to postmodern, materialist, post structural or Indigenous analyses contributing to an understanding of disability.

American sociologist, Ben Agger (1989) wrote that there is an illusion of heterogeneity in sociology texts and that there is intellectual hegemony both reflected and reproduced in the “sameness” of sociology texts. In particular, Agger found that introductory sociology text books socialized students and the faculty members who teach them: “The books not only reflect our discipline; but they also help to reproduce it in the way in which they expose graduate students and faculty to the consensus underlying the dominant approach to epistemology, methodology, and theory” (Agger, 1989, p. 366). Agger’s “Critical theory of Text” (as cited in Wachholz & Mullaly, 2000, p. 55) provided a theoretical framework for a content analysis of the coverage and treatment of feminist, radical, and anti-racist social work scholarship in American introductory social work textbooks published between 1988 and 1997 (Wachholz & Mullaly, 2000). Agger’s “Critical Theory of Text” encompassed the following tenets:

- Textbooks play a political role in society. They act as delivery systems for political assumptions about the social world that largely favour the interests of capitalism and patriarchy. The knowledge appearing in social science literature in general, and in textbooks in particular, assists in the reproduction of the existing social order.
- Left-wing scholarship such as Marxism and feminism is frequently excluded from textbooks under the guise that it lacks objectivity and is non scientific. Positivism serves as a mechanism to suppress scholarship that seeks to transform the social structure.
- Most of the material appearing in textbooks is scholarship supporting the existing sociopolitical order – in which liberal reform rather than structural solutions are identified as means to deal with oppression and inequality. As such, textbooks serve to contribute to

the formation of attitudes that orient individuals towards the preservation of current relations rather than social transformation.

- Agger concedes that a significant number of social science textbooks may contain some coverage of Marxism and feminism, but the incorporation of this scholarship is largely symbolic to win the consent and assessments of legitimacy of those who threaten to overturn the current social order. When Marxism and feminism are included in textbooks, Agger argues that they tend to be treated in ways that neutralize their political and transformative potential.

In their own study of feminist, radical, and anti-racist social work scholarship in American introductory social work textbooks published between 1988 and 1997, Wachholz and Mullaly conclude that the knowledge contained within social work textbooks tends to assist in the reproduction of the social order and that this reproduction is aided by the suppression and marginalization of scholarship that seeks to challenge and transform it.

My review of several educational texts being used in several Canadian schools of social work (Hick, 2006; Chappell, 2006), completed in researching social work practice and disability culture (Dupre', 2012), found that students were being exposed to both the individual pathology and social pathology perspectives of disability, but that the identified social work practice skills needed to work with disabled persons were more characteristic of conventional social work practice, based on individual pathology. The findings of the manifest content analysis of texts from the three BSW programs in this current research study support this assumption, at least to the extent that some of the language and case examples used in a few of the social work texts discussed intervention strategies with disabled persons that were clearly based on individual

pathology. In courses where there was a predominance of critical disability perspectives represented in the texts, such as found in the two elective courses addressing disability, the texts tended to come from the disability studies literature and not social work. The problem is that there is a gap between understanding critical disability theory and conceptualizing methods of practice to support this understanding. Although I cannot argue, based on the manifest content analysis of texts completed for this multicase study, that critical disability scholarship has been deliberately suppressed, I will make the observation that critical disability theory may be marginalized within social work academia because of the influence of liberal hegemony within the Canadian and American social work literature, as argued by Mullaly (2007, pp. 109–112).

There are now at least three social work textbooks that address disability from a broad anti-oppressive perspective: *Doing Anti-Oppressive Practice: Social Justice Social Work* (Baines, 2011); *Challenging Oppression and Confronting Privilege* (Mullaly, 2010); and *Undoing Privilege: Unearned Advantage in a Divided World* (Pease, 2010). There are also two textbooks on structural social work that have chapters or sections addressing disability: *Social Work, Social Justice & Human Rights: A Structural Approach to Practice* (Lundy, 2012); and *Structural Social Work in Action* (Hick, Peters, Corner, & London, 2010). Although each of these books contributes to, and enhances understanding of disablism and ableism, there is a wide range of social theory that is found within the critical disability studies literature. The predominance of social work texts supporting conventional approaches to practice, currently found in the curricula of many Canadian schools of social work, must be balanced with texts presenting critical theory approaches to practice. The choice of the theoretical frameworks to be covered in relation to disability could be determined by researching various articles and books that provide an

overview of the major insights of disability studies, such as developed in the articles by Goodley (2012) and Meekosha and Shuttleworth (2009).

Assertion emerging from theme 2: An understanding of the theoretical frameworks informing critical disability perspectives is an important, but not sufficient way, to develop a curriculum that integrates critical disability studies into social work theory and practice. The experiences and voices of disabled people must be included in the development, planning, and delivery of course content addressing disability. The modified inductive analysis of interview transcripts for the seven interviews completed with instructors in the three BSW programs reveals that the instructors included several aspects of critical disability perspectives in describing their respective approaches to disability and oppression. The predominant theoretical themes were identified as:

- Social constructionism in which disability is viewed as being culturally and socially constructed, dominant discourses are deconstructed to reveal power relationships, diversity is accepted and valued as a part of human variation, and personal “stories” or narratives about disability are viewed as key to understanding how disability is relationally constructed; and
- Post structural theory, including the deconstruction of normative language and exploration of dualisms creating positions of privilege and/or dominance.
- There were individual instructors who mentioned the importance of materialist, Indigenous and feminist perspectives, but these topics were generally absent from discussion when instructors spoke about disability and oppression.

Critical disability studies (CDS) is described as a theoretical approach that seeks to extend and productively critique the achievements of working through more modernist paradigms of disability, such as the social constructionist model of disability (Shildrick, as cited in Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009, p. 49). There are a number of factors influencing the development of CDS (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009, pp. 50-51):

1. CDS partly emerged out of the tensions that surfaced as a reaction to the authoritarian Marxism and economic determinism associated with the social model. It also moved away from the social model's binary understandings of social versus medical, and disability versus impairment.
2. The influence of the humanities and cultural studies scholarship changed the terms of engagement in disability studies to include psychological, cultural, discursive and carnal theoretical perspectives.
3. CDS represents a distancing from those who have co-opted disability studies for normalizing ends. Quality of life paradigms which have been assumed under the rubric of disability studies carry regulatory and controlling undertones.
4. Critical theory frameworks, such as those in critical criminology and critical queer studies, have drawn on the Frankfurt School and post-structuralism in a critique of dominant ideology. They have set theoretical, conceptual, and methodological examples for CDS to follow.

More recent work by Goodley (2012) and Shildrick (2012) explains that critical disability studies do not abandon the social model of disability, but take it in new directions. For Margrit

Shildrick, critical disability studies must necessarily be interdisciplinary, encompassing feminism, postmodernism, queer theory, critical race theory, phenomenology and psychoanalysis. She believes that the conventional demand for an extension and solidification of rights for disabled people, and for a more inclusive culture, fall short of the need for a more radical move “that would contest the very nature of the standards that underpin their normative operation” (Shildrick, 2012, p. 32). Dan Goodley comments that the move towards critical disability studies offers space for the development of praxis: “the intertwining of activism and theory” (Goodley, 2012, p. 11).

A critical disability studies is mindful of connecting across nation-states on specific socio-historical conditions of oppression in relation to the globalization of disablism (Goodley, 2012, p. 9).

1. The task of critical disability studies is to recapture the self from its position as Other (Goodley, 2012, p. 10).
2. Critical disability studies needs to shift attention onto “the abled” in which ableist processes create a corporeal standard which presumes able-bodiedness, inaugurates the norm and affirms an ableist ideal. The individual remains a key site of everyday life, oppression and resistance (Goodley, 2012, p. 10).

In their chapter on “Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited” (Lincoln et al., 2011) the authors argue that, rather than focus on actual paradigms that may be in contention, it may be more useful to examine how paradigms exhibit confluence, and where and how they exhibit differences, controversies, and contradictions. Critical disability studies provide an exemplar of a process in which the differences, controversies and contradictions have resulted in a transformative/participatory paradigm which “blurs the borders

between paradigms” because it is activist, critical, and constructivist. The article “Dis/entangling critical disability studies” (Goodley, 2012) provides a case in point for highlighting how these differences, controversies and contradictions, together, comprise critical disability studies. The implication for social work is clear. Only anti-oppressive social work practice, which is an umbrella term for a number of social-justice oriented approaches, can provide an adequate social work practice response to the incorporation of critical disability studies within social work curricula. As Baines explains:

AOP does not claim to be an exclusive and authoritative model containing an answer to every social problem. Instead, consistent with its emancipatory heritage, AOP is a set of politicized practices that continually evolve to analyze and address constantly changing social conditions and challenges (Baines, 2011, p. 4).

Baines further explains that there may be disagreement at the level of social theory but there are core insights that are considered characteristic of AOP:

- “*Macro-and micro-social relations generate oppression.* Social relationships are enacted by human beings and generate the ongoing oppression of many groups and individuals. That they are enacted by people means that these oppressive relationships can be changed by people” (Baines, 2011, p. 4).
- “*Everyday experience is shaped by multiple oppressions.*” Multiple oppressions overlap, contest, undermine, and/or reinforce one another in ways that depend on a variety of factors in the immediate and global environment (Baines, 2011, p. 5).

- “*Social work is a contested and highly political practice. ‘Politicize’ and ‘politics’* refer to small ‘p’ politics – everyday struggles over meaning, resources, survival, and well-being” (Baines, 2011, p. 5).
- “*Social work is not a neutral, caring profession, but an active political process.*” There is no way to avoid power and politics in social work, especially when client needs must be met in the context of an increasingly pro-market, corporatized society that supports and benefits from war, colonialism, poverty and injustice (Baines, 2011, p. 6).
- “*Social justice-oriented social work assists individuals while simultaneously seeking to transform society.* Rather than an exclusive emphasis on changing individuals, social justice-oriented social work assists individuals in meeting their needs, whenever possible, in participatory and transformative ways, and simultaneously focuses on challenging and transforming those forces within society that benefit from and perpetuate inequity and oppression” (Baines, 2011, p. 6).
- “*Social work needs to build allies and work with social causes and movements.* Social workers cannot resolve larger social, economic, and political problems on their own. Social work must join with other groups to organize and mobilize people to make larger-scale, transformative changes” (Baines, 2011, p. 7).
- “*Social work’s theoretical and practical development must be based on the struggles and needs of those who are oppressed and marginalized...* Social work knowledge and practice must be grounded in the lives of those we serve, assessed in relation to critical approaches in order to ensure that we are building lasting change and not unintentionally reproducing various kinds of oppression” (Baines, 2011, p. 7).

- “*Participatory approaches are necessary between practitioners and ‘clients’*. Clients are not just victims, but can and need to be active in their own liberation and that of others. Their experience is also a key starting point in the development of new theory and knowledge, as well as political strategies and resistance” (Baines, 2011, p. 7).
- “*Self-reflexive practice and ongoing social analysis are essential components of AOP*” (Baines, 2011, p. 7).
- “*A blended, heterodox social justice perspective provides the potential for a politicized, transformative social work practice.*” Rather than claiming any single social justice-oriented model as the complete truth, a heterodox approach, involving and incorporating the strengths of a variety of critical approaches, provides the greatest vibrancy and potential to deliver emancipatory theory and practice (Baines, 2011, p. 7).

Many of the aforementioned principles of anti-oppressive social work practice, as developed by Baines (2011), illustrate the importance of working *with* clients and groups experiencing oppression. Mullaly comments that the most important guideline for being an ally is to understand that the role of an ally is to help or assist oppressed groups in any way one can in their struggle for liberation. “Under no circumstances should one assume that one knows better or should be the leader just because one is a member of a privileged group – this is probably the worst thing one could do” (Mullaly, 2010, p. 318). However, Mullaly asserts that becoming allies in addressing social injustice and inequality is critical because, although oppressed groups are not powerless, they cannot do away with entrenched systems of privilege on their own.

The pervasive view of disability as an innate medical condition, rather than a creation of societal oppression, often precludes an understanding that disabled people would benefit or need

allies: “Changing this attitude and increasing awareness among individuals who are not disabled that their able-bodied identity is ascribed and affords them power and privilege is a necessary first step in developing disability allies” (Evans, Assadi & Herriott, 2005, p. 68). Critical awareness of ableism involves challenging hegemonic understandings of disability in the classroom. In an article titled; “Teaching about disability: An ethical responsibility?” (2008) the author, Margaret A. McLean, a Senior Lecturer in Disability Studies in the Faculty of Education, University of Auckland, shares her belief that identifying, confronting, and changing ableist and oppressive views of disability is an ethical responsibility for educators. The intent of her argument is to promote opportunities for disabled and non-disabled people to get to know one another as both teachers and learners. McLean asserts that it is critically important for instructors and students to make contact and to develop relationships with disabled people in order to increase awareness of the “disabled state” and to reflect on any uncomfortable feelings or conditions that are a part of ableist thinking (McLean, 2008, p. 608).

In her article, McLean explains that the participants of a focus group comprised of human service workers had assumed that the experience of disabled people was little different than their own, and as one participant stated: ‘everything is hunky dory [fine] for disabled people’ (McLean, 2008, p. 610). However, the participant’s awareness was heightened as they began to learn more about disability from the perspective of disabled people. “The realization that some people with disabilities did not view themselves as disabled was challenging. Most surprising was the understanding that categorization as disabled was something that non-disabled people did to others” (McLean, 2008, p. 610). Once participants were exposed to the perspectives of disabled people they became shocked by discriminatory social practices such as the lack of accessibility of buildings and public areas, and by stereotypes of disability and normality.

McLean believes that the implication for adult educators is to find ways to vary, rather than repeat discourses that construct disabled identities as convenient and subordinate classifications.

More importantly, professional development presented participants with the chance to think about things. For some participants, it became apparent that reversing the injustices of ableism involved changing feelings and attitudes that made them who they were. This constituted commitment to changing the way they thought about disability and difference. It also involved taking steps to move away from paternalism to ensure that they understood the perspectives of the disabled person they supported... (McLean, 2008, p. 614).

Australian social work educators and disability activists, Helen Meekosha and Leanne Dowse, believe that the paternalism of traditional social work paradigms must be replaced by social workers becoming allies in the struggle for social justice. They suggest several ways that social workers can work in partnership with disabled people:

1. Social workers should become involved in supporting individuals and groups to pursue action through antidiscrimination legislation or to pursue direct action through public demonstrations to highlight the barriers disabled people face (Meekosha & Dowse, 2007, p. 176); and
2. Self-advocacy social work practice, based on the principle of people speaking for themselves, requires social workers to subvert their traditional advocacy role to support organizations and individual self-advocates in defining and pursuing individual and collective “best interests” (Meekosha & Dowse, 2007, p. 177).

As social work educators, Meekosha and Dowse believe that students need to explore the field of disability from a range of perspectives, but most importantly, students must explore the subject from the perspective of disabled people. They utilize a participatory approach in which students have the opportunity to expose the work they have completed in the course to members of the disability community in a public conference organized at the end of the course. The idea of social work students hosting a symposium or conference organized around a specific cause or issue, sponsored by a department, school or faculty of social work is not a new one. However, one rarely hears of a symposium addressing disability that is not focused on health, impairment or medical treatment. A symposium on social work and disability would provide educators, students and the public with the opportunity to discuss disability perspectives prevalent in the field with disabled people, and would promote the exploration of a number of social work practice issues which Meekosha and Dowse (2007, p. 179) identify as; independent/interdependent living, the politics/ethics of caregiving, contemporary legislation and policy, inclusive education, media portrayal, gender and sexuality issues, research, and the role of charities and the state in providing services and programs.

More recently, Karen Soldatic and Helen Meekosha (2012) are concerned with the influence of neoliberal policies in the field of social work. They believe that this influence results in more psychologizing and pathologizing of client behaviours, rather than situating people's issues and problems within broader structural analyses. In response, Soldatic and Meekosha believe that a feminist ethic of care in social work curricula would acknowledge that relationships of "care" and "support" are ones of interdependence (2012, p. 248). They contend that social work educators need to become aware of the "affective inequality" that is positioned next to the three pillars of structural inequality; economic, political and socio-cultural inequality, because of the

impact that it has on disability rights. According to Soldatic and Meekosha, negotiating relationships of help, care and support requires disabled people to negotiate with a macro policy environment with a neoliberal turn, to understand the organizational context with its regulations and unwritten rules, and the ideologies and attitudes of frontline social workers who assess and determine access to various supports and services (Soldatic & Meekosha, 2012, p. 250). An awareness of the constraints of such neoliberal environments and the influence of structural location on the ability of social workers to fully realize relationships of equality, may offer the opportunity to create solidarity between social workers and their disabled clients so that social workers actively seek to alter the harshest of neoliberal public and market policies.

Understanding their own location of structural inequality enables social workers to reflexively evaluate their own privileges and disadvantages, and to consider new dimensions of love, care and solidarity in support for the disabled people with whom they work (Soldatic & Meekosha, 2012, p. 250).

The ideas of Soldatic and Meekosha (2012), in relation to affective inequality, have implications for social work education, scholarship and practice concerned with human rights and social justice. The *Canadian Association for Social Work Education Standards for Accreditation* (May 2012) acknowledges the need to strengthen both education and the profession because both social work identity and domain have been increasingly challenged. However, the Standards do not state the source(s) of the challenge, nor do they include a comprehensive strategy for addressing the challenge other than to state that academic units have the flexibility to respond to particular socio-cultural and political-economic contexts. The helping relationship that exists between the social worker and the people they work with, or the teaching and learning relationship between educator and student, is not discussed in relation to

equality/inequality or privilege/disadvantage. The concept of relationship remains at the very heart of anti-oppressive social work practice, yet the word relationship is not included in any of the fourteen principles guiding the accreditation of social work education programs in Canada. I believe that it is important for the CASWE to examine the types of helping and learning relationships that would be characteristic of a social justice focus, in relation to how they contribute to, or reduce oppression.

Assertion emerging from theme 3: BSW programs, and instructors, must incorporate pedagogical strategies for developing the capacities of students to be able to translate critical disability perspectives into social work practice interventions. The findings from the critical discourse analyses of theory classes and elective classes addressing disability indicate that social work students at St. Thomas University School of Social Work and the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work generally had difficulty linking theory to practice in relation to working with disabled people. While readings and course material may reflect a critical disabilities stance, exercises in practice approaches addressing disability indicate that students tended to fall back on conventional social work practice approaches that have links to individual pathology and rehabilitative models of disability. This finding is not surprising given the number of recent social work education articles focusing on the need for the development of more enabling forms of praxis (for example see *Social Work Education: The International Journal*, Special Issue: Disability Studies and Social Work Education, 2012).

Anti-oppressive social work practice acknowledges the difficulty in translating theory into frontline practice and that much of social work practice is particular to the distinct area in which it operates (Baines, 2011, p. 11). Baines posits that, within the new contexts of practice, social work practitioners must ask questions such as:

- How do we understand and work across multiple and intersecting differences?
- In building oppositional analyses and resistance, how do we draw on the voices of marginalized people and their everyday knowledge as well as practice knowledge, research, and theory?
- How can resistance strategies promote a clear political program of change while remaining open, fluid, and inclusive?

In terms of pedagogical strategies specific to addressing disability, it must be acknowledged that there is still underrepresentation of faculty and staff with disabilities within social work (Dunn et al., 2006). However, faculty members should be encouraged to broaden their course material by including ableism as part of the analysis and discussions. Pease (2010, p. 172) believes that a pedagogy for the privileged provides a conceptual framework for engaging members of privileged groups about their unearned entitlements. He cites the work of Curry-Stevens (as cited in Pease, 2010, p. 172) to summarize six steps in educating privileged groups about oppression and privilege:

1. Develop awareness of the existence of oppression;
2. Understand the structural dynamics that hold oppression in place;
3. Locate oneself as being oppressed;
4. Locate oneself as being privileged;
5. Understand the benefits that accrue to one's privileged status; and

6. Understand oneself as being implicated in others' oppression and acknowledge one's oppressor status.

In the paper on “Best Practices in Promoting Disability Inclusion Within Canadian Schools of Social Work” (Dunn et al., 2008) the authors, who are also members of the persons with Disabilities Caucus of the CASWE, advocate that all students at the BSW and MSW levels should have at least a basic exposure to the concepts of ableism. A recent research study conducted in Wales (Rees & Raithby, 2012) found that interweaving features of a curriculum infusion model with a distinct module addressing disability was found to be most effective in closing the theory to practice gap. The recent social work literature addressing disability offers examples of how this may be accomplished:

- The involvement of disabled service users in social work courses addressing social work practice would help social work courses go beyond training and closer to enabling forms of praxis (Roulstone, 2012, p. 151);
- Collective involvement, building on disabled people's organizations and movements, is more likely to offer a base for challenging traditional understandings and provides social work students with service users' standpoints and knowledge (Beresford & Boxall, 2012, pp. 164-165);
- Case studies, service-user led teaching sessions and dedicated teaching sessions were found to be a particularly positive methods for encouraging students to reflect on “real life” challenges within a safe environment (Rees & Raithby, 2012, p. 198);

- Creation of a learning community through the involvement of disabled people, family members and practitioners in classroom dialogue (Gutman et al., 2012, p. 213); and
- Recruitment and development of social work practice placements within disabled people's organizations (Evans, 2012).

Second assertion emerging from theme 3: An understanding of the role of culture in the oppression of disabled people is an important element of critical disability perspectives.

There was evidence from the critical discourse analysis of transcripts from at least two of the audio-taped BSW classes to suggest that students were confused about the role of culture in oppression, particularly in relation to ableism. In one class, students demonstrated some understanding of cultural hegemony related to gender and race, but discussion about disabled people was limited to accommodation and assimilation within mainstream social, economic and political environments. There were also findings to indicate that the students at one BSW program did not understand how the portrayal of disabled people, by non-disabled people, was part of cultural hegemony contributing to depictions of disabled people as heroes and/or tragic figures.

Goodley (2012) explains that, while the materialist disability studies found a home in sociology departments, critical disability studies were being developed in other social science disciplines, including psychology, social work, education, and the humanities. Thomas (2007, p. 63) believes that the shift in disability studies from a focus on materialist to post-structural thinking has concentrated almost entirely on culture, language and discourse. The works of Michel Foucault have been particularly significant for questioning the traditional parameters of disability. Tremain (2005, p. 4) explains that Foucault's technologies of power, which he referred to as "bio-power" emerged during the latter half of the eighteenth century to provide a

way for demographers and politicians to measure social and economic phenomena in statistical terms.

The importance of critical work on bio-power (bio-politics) to analyses of disability cannot be overstated. For during the past two centuries, in particular, a vast apparatus, erected to secure the well-being of the general population, has caused the contemporary disabled subject to emerge into discourse and social existence (Tremain, 2005, p. 5).

Disability activist and theorist, Lennard Davis (2006) writes how normalcy is constructed out of the science of statistics to create the “problem” of the disabled person. “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” (Davis, 2006, p. 6).

Feminist theory has also contributed to our understanding of the cultural construction of disability. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson challenges entrenched assumptions that “able-bodiedness” and its conceptual opposite, “disability” are self-evident physical conditions. She explains that it is her intention to defamiliarize those identity categories by explaining how the “physically disabled” are produced in legal, medical, political, cultural and literary narratives:

By asserting that disability is a reading of bodily particularities in the context of social power relations, I intend to counter the accepted notions of physical disability as an absolute, inferior state and a personal misfortune. Instead I show that disability is a representation, a cultural interpretation of physical transformation or configuration, and a comparison on bodies that structures social relations and institutions (Garland-Thomson, 2009, p. 64).

Post-structural theory has also called into question the essentialist assumptions of modern Western thought. Corker and Shakespeare (2002) explain that the seminal work of Jacques

Derrida (1978), has contributed to the understanding that meanings are established and organized through difference in a play of presence and absence. “Meaning includes identity (what it is) and difference (what it isn’t) and is therefore continuously being deferred” (Corker & Shakespeare, 2002, p. 7). For example, when “normativism” is privileged, disability becomes a derivative, cultural arrangement that imposes on the taken for granted natural status of “normal”. Thomas (2004) summarizes the contributions of post structural and postmodern thought to our understanding of the cultural construction of disability by stating:

From these anti-essentialist perspectives, disability theory centres on the interrogation of cultural categories, discourses, language, and practices in which ‘disability’, ‘impairment’, and ‘being normal’ come into being through their social performance, and on the power that these categories have in constructing subjectivities and identities of self and other (Thomas, 2004, p. 36).

The study of culture provides an important focus for examining the dynamics of oppression at the cultural level of society, and how individual, cultural, and structural levels of oppression intersect to construct “ableism” (Dupre’, 2012, p. 169). An understanding of the role of culture in relation to disability can also provide social workers with important theoretical insights into the hegemonic activities of dominant culture in the oppression of disabled people and other marginalized groups in society. Mullaly (2002) believes that anti-oppressive social work practice at the cultural level must work to undermine cultural imperialism through understanding and supporting an approach that incorporates critical cultural studies. Cultural imperialism has been described by Young (as cited in Mullaly, 2007, p. 268) as occurring when the dominant group universalizes its own experience and culture and establishes them as the norm. Mullaly explains that our social institutions are based on the culture and experiences of the dominant group, as is

our education system, the media, the entertainment industry, literature, and the marketing of products which all reinforce the notion of a universal culture.

In recent years disabled people have come to view cultural revaluation as central to their political struggle (Riddell & Watson, 2003). Within the disabled people's movement and disability studies there are three ways that culture is promoted (Peters, 2000, as cited in Dupre', 2012, p. 173):

1. Culture as Historical/Linguistic – The interpretation of culture as historical/linguistic is linked to traditional concepts of culture as “depicted”, such as in art and poetry, or “received” through a common language, historical lineage or social community (Peters, as cited in Dupre', 2012, p. 173). The historical lineage of disability culture may be traced through several books and publications such as the oft-cited texts; *The Last Civil Rights Movement* (1989) by Canadian disability activist and historian Diane Driedger, *The New Disability History: American Perspectives* (2001) by Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, and *Disability Politics: Understanding Our Past, Changing our Future* (1996) by British disability activists Jane Campbell and Mike Oliver, to name just a few. History from the point of view of disabled people directs the attention of the reader to areas that traditional historical texts leave out. Peters (as cited in Dupre', 2012) believes that historical/linguistic notions of culture in relation to disability only derive meaning when analyzed within the context of power relations and the politics of difference – notions inherent to a postmodern view of culture.
2. Culture as Social/Political – Socio/political approaches to culture shift the view of disability as a medical problem to a view of disability as a limitation produced by the

complex interaction between individual difference and the social environment. Variants of this social political perspective include the social model in the United Kingdom and the minority group model in the United States.

3. Culture as Personal/Aesthetic – Culture as personal/aesthetic recognizes that, through personal interpretations of life experience, an individual creates a cultural identity of “disabled” (Peters, as cited in Dupre’, 2012, p. 177). Culture as personal/aesthetic fits within a post-structural view of culture that ties symbolic forms (disability) to concrete social events (the lived experiences of disabled people). Garland Thomson believes that the “self” materializes in response to an embodied engagement with its environment (Garland-Thomson, 2006, p. 267). For Garland-Thomson, identity categories cut across and redefine each other, pressuring both the terms “woman” and “disabled”.

The three approaches to culture within the disability studies literature; historical/linguistic, socio/political, and personal/aesthetic indicate that culture related to disability is counter hegemonic in the way that it deconstructs the dominant cultural discourse that serves to construct disabled people as Other. Disability activists and theorists have also deconstructed the way that disabled people have been portrayed and represented in art, literature, in the media and in the entertainment industry. In doing so they not only bring existing normative sub-texts to light, but write alternative perspectives which incorporate the lived experiences of disabled people as active agents in culture, rather than as passive and dependent receivers of cultural messages. Therefore, social work practice at the cultural level must recognize, complement and support the cultural productions and analyses of disabled people as a political project of the disabled people’s movement.

The disabled people's movement also deliberately contests dominant definitions of difference by making the body its principle site of a representational counter-strategy. Disability theorist and activist, Colin Barnes comments that through disability art, disabled people are not only able to celebrate difference, but to express themselves in a variety of formats including painting, sculpture, literature, poetry, music, theatre and dance. Barnes asserts that disability art is political and not just about mainstream artistic consumption and production; "It entails using art to expose the discrimination and prejudice that disabled people face and to generate group consciousness and solidarity" (Barnes, 2003, p. 13). The development of a vibrant disability arts movement is important for fostering representations that reflect the rich experiences of different disabled people (Campbell & Oliver, 1996, p. 111).

Anti-oppressive social work practice at the cultural level seeks to undermine cultural imperialism by identifying those aspects of culture that contribute to domination, and calls for their collective transformation (Mullaly, 2002, pp. 185-186). Practice elements include:

- Engaging in a cultural critique that denounces all forms of cultural oppression along with supporting and celebrating alternative cultures that have been suppressed by the dominant culture (Mullaly, 2002, p. 186).
- Resist blaming service users for resorting to acts of resistance when they are, in fact, protesting exploitive, discriminatory, and unfair treatment. The behavior should be explored with the individual and with other similarly oppressed individuals to assess its full meaning (Mullaly, 2002, p. 188).
- Resist essentialist categorizations of people by adopting a relational understanding of difference in which the multiple positionings of people are recognized and examined for

their intersections and relation to differential social, economic and political power (Meekosha, 2006, p. 172; Mullaly, 2007, p. 238).

- Encourage and support organized forms of collective resistance that are based on alternative knowledge claims that confront, challenge, and attempt to change dominant discourses (Mullaly, 2002, p. 188).
- Analyze and deconstruct oppressive discourses, as well as assist in the development of alternative discourses (Mullaly, 2002, p. 188).
- Support members of subordinate groups to define their own identity, and for this to occur stereotypes must be exposed, challenged, and rendered unacceptable so that it becomes more difficult for the dominant group to present its norms, values and patterns of thinking as neutral and universal (Mullaly, 2002, p. 192).

Assertion emerging from theme 4: Social work practice theories and approaches to addressing disability must be congruent with, and supportive of, the full range of critical disability perspectives if students are to develop social work interventions with disabled people that challenge and counter individual social pathology perspectives. The findings from the various analyses at the three BSW programs indicates that students in two of the BSW programs are being exposed to critical disability perspectives within assigned readings, but that instructors and students have difficulty integrating these perspectives into social work practice approaches. There appears to be a gap between exposure to the material on critical disability perspectives and the way that it is being presented and understood within the classroom. Yet, there is little in the new *CASWE Standards of Accreditation* (2012) to explain how schools of social work should address structural sources in inequity such as ableism. The *CASWE Standards*

for Accreditation (2008) had clear educational objectives in relation to disability and social work education. Two of the curriculum standards for accreditation at the BSW level, were that the curriculum would reflect social work values that promote a professional commitment to analyze and eradicate oppressive social conditions; and would ensure that the student has an understanding of the theories relevant to disability and their implications for social policies and the practice of social work. The revised *CASWE-ACFTS Standards for Accreditation* (2012) has addressed curriculum content by developing specific learning objectives for students which promote excellence in social work education, scholarship, and practice with a social justice focus. Several of the objectives are interesting in their interpretation of social work's responsibility to promote human rights and justice, support and enhance diversity, and engage in organizational and societal systems' change, through professional practice.

One of the most significant changes in the revised *Standards* (2012) is that there is more overall emphasis placed on "professional roles and practices". Under the section titled "Domain III. Program Content: Curriculum and Field Education", core learning objectives for students require them to develop professional identities, understand their professional responsibilities towards vulnerable or disadvantaged groups, and to understand their professional role in advancing human rights and responsibilities. Meekosha and Dowse (2007, p. 170) argue that neo-liberal⁸ market values have influenced structural, professional and social factors in

⁸ Neo-liberalism is consistent with classical liberal doctrine, or market liberalism, that is similar to conservatism, "as both developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, mainly in Britain and Western Europe, and both used the same writers and thinkers as the source for many of their ideas and theories" (Mullaly, 2007, p. 92). Equality within neo-liberal thinking means that everyone abides by the same rules, and does not extend to a responsibility to ameliorate inequality. "This is similar to the neo-conservative belief that there should be an equality of right (and responsibility) to participate (i. e. , work) in the market" (Mullaly, 2007, p. 92).

Australian society. The influence of neo-liberal thinking can also be found in one of the core learning objectives from the *CASWE-ACFTS Standards of Accreditation* (2012); students must promote human rights and social justice. This objective is further explained to include the explanation that: “Social work students understand their professional role in *advancing human rights and responsibilities* (italics added by author for emphasis) and social justice in the context of the Canadian society and internationally; (CASWE – ACFTS, 2012, pp. 9-10). Meekosha and Dowse (2007) indicate that one of the changes brought about by the neo-liberal welfare reform agenda has been the emphasis on mutual obligation in which “rights” are dependent on carrying out “responsibilities”. They have found that in Australia, this responsibility has resulted in a decrease in benefits to some disabled people and shifting disabled people into compulsory job seeking.

The core learning objective in relation to human rights and social justice also has a related secondary objective that; “Social work students have knowledge of the role that social structures can play in limiting human and civil rights and employ professional practices to ensure the fulfillment of human and civil rights and advance social justice for individuals, families, groups and communities” (CASWE-ACFTS, 2012, p. 10). This objective is interesting because it states that social workers must have “knowledge of” the role that social structures play in limiting human and civil rights, but it does not say that social workers should work towards the transformation of these social structures. Instead, social workers are told to employ professional practices at the level of the individual, family, group, and community. This approach to social justice is consistent with reform liberal⁹ ideology in which current social arrangements are

⁹ Reform liberalism acknowledges the role of the state in positive terms as promoting freedom for those who might not otherwise achieve it (Mullaly, 2007, p. 92). Reform liberals would use the instrument of government to modify

accepted as they are, but limited changes may be made to help society function better (Mullaly, 2007, p. 96). The reform liberal paradigm's influence within the standards is further exemplified by an objective related to organizational and societal systems change through professional practice (CASWE-ACFTS, 2012, p. 11). "Social work students acquire knowledge of organizational and societal systems and acquire skills to identify social inequalities, injustices, and barriers and work towards changing oppressive conditions" (CASWE-ACFTS, 2012: 11). Social change efforts, then, are to be targeted at the societal systems and not at the structures of society as a whole.

In the most recent version of the *CASWE-ACFTS Standards of Accreditation* (2012) disability is considered part of human diversity, based on characteristics including disability/non-disability status (CASWE-ACFTS, 2012, p. 4). Core learning objectives for students include recognition of diversity and difference as a crucial and valuable part of living in society (CASWE, 2012, p. 10). The concept of difference, or diversity, is widely used in academic discourse, even though its meaning is seldom clear (Mullaly, 2010, p. 35). The second objective related to the support and enhancement of diversity provides a clue to its meaning: "Social work students have knowledge of how discrimination, oppression, poverty, exclusion, exploitation, and marginalization have a negative impact on particular individuals and groups..." (CASWE, 2012, p. 10). This statement is consistent with a "value-neutral but socially constructed view of difference" presented by Stainton and Swift (as cited in Mullaly, 2010, p. 35) in which the imbalance of power and the existence of a dominant group are not acknowledged. The

society in order to make it fairer for individuals to compete in the market (Mullaly, 2007, p. 96). Reform liberals believe in making changes in order to help society function better, but they would not change society's fundamental nature. Liberal social interventions are designed to help the individual to cope with, adjust to, or fit into existing society (Mullaly, 2007, p. 96).

recognition and/or acknowledgement of diversity is part of a multicultural model of social work, that is consistent with reform liberalism, and that now has over 10 years of critique from feminist, anti-racist, post-colonial, postmodern, Aboriginal, and other progressive social work perspectives, and has been rejected in favour of an anti-oppressive approach to diversity (Mullaly, 2007, p. 53).

The influence of neo-liberal managerialism within social work education has implications for anti-oppressive social work practice with disabled people. Baines (2011, p. 30) observes that anti-oppressive social work practice has become harder to do because of the aggressive nature of globalization and neoliberal governments' response to it in the form of policies and practices. Lundy (2012, p. 7) notes that the diminished role of the state has resulted in the restructuring of welfare with the movement away from active welfare to the implementation of short-term life skills employment and training programs. A second way that social workers experience neo-liberalism is in the reorganization of the workplace and in the restrictions put on the use of social justice skills and interventions (Baines, 2011, p. 32).

In his chapter titled "A Profession Worth Fighting For?" Iain Ferguson (2008) describes how the growth of managerialism has squeezed the potential of social work to act as a force for social change. However, he believes that there is evidence of a reaction against the neo-liberal version of globalization. First, there have been a number of large protests each time the world's business and government elites, primarily the World Trade Organization and the G8 group of world leaders, have met to discuss ways in which the liberalization agenda can be furthered (Ferguson, 2008, p. 11). Second, the anti-capitalist movement has established its own structures of communication and information dissemination utilizing the World Wide Web network. Third, there have been mass movements against privatization in many countries, particularly in Latin

America, but also in Europe where new political parties have emerged in opposition to the neo-liberal agenda. Finally, anti-war protests in opposition to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have resurrected the term “imperialism” into common use in describing the behavior of major powers (Ferguson, 2008, p. 12).

Mullaly (2007) believes that in order for social workers to deal with the crisis presented by the changing social, economic and political context of welfare capitalism, they must learn about the nature and role of the state and social work’s relation to it. He also believes that there must be a reformulation of social work theory with the purpose to: (1) explicate social work’s ideology as a necessary step in building knowledge; (2) build knowledge about the nature and role of the state and social work’s relation to the state; and (3) include transformational knowledge about how social work practice can contribute to a changing society in a way that is more consistent with social work’s fundamental values of humanism and egalitarianism (Mullaly, 2007, p. 25).

Recommendations

Before making recommendations it is helpful to summarize the salient points from each of the assertions and their implications for social work education addressing disability.

- Anti-oppressive approaches to ableism and disablism must be infused into the general social work curriculum, but may be complemented with a class or module specifically focused on disability and social work practice.
- Current social work text books addressing social work practice do not incorporate the full range of critical disability perspectives found within the disability studies literature, and

when social work students are exposed to critical disability perspectives, they appear unable to link theory with practice.

- Anti-oppressive social work practice, based on a heterodox of critical social theories appears to have the most congruency or “fit” with critical disability perspectives.
- Pedagogical strategies for introducing course material related to critical disability perspectives involves participation and collaboration with disabled individuals and organizations formed by disabled people.
- Structural social work, with its focus on the three levels of oppression; the personal, cultural and structural levels of society, provides a framework for understanding and addressing cultural imperialism and suggests social work practice strategies at the cultural level that support many of the cultural analyses within critical disability studies.
- Social work has to acknowledge its politicized role in being situated between the state and the individual.

In the paper “The Inaccessible Road Not Taken: The Trials, Tribulations and Successes of Disability Inclusion within Social Work Post-Secondary Education” (Carter et al., 2012) the members of the Persons with Disabilities Caucus explain that the new *CASWE Accreditation Standards* (2012) greatly diminished the gains related to disabilities that had been accomplished in 2008, which at that time supported a curricular emphasis on ableism. I have argued that the most current version of the *CASWE Accreditation Standards* (2012) tend to reflect the neo-liberal interests of the state. The preamble to the Standards states that the policies and standards are not aimed at uniformity of social work education, but rather are intended to promote the uniqueness and diversity of social work programs across Canada so that they are better able to

respond to their respective contexts and stakeholders. The philosophy being reflected here is one of liberal pluralism.

In June of 2011, I attended a meeting of the Canadian Disability Studies Association, held during the week of the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences (2011). As a guest of the association I was disappointed to hear a disability studies scholar remark that “social work did not have the right orientation” to be considered an ally to disability studies. Later that week I attended several presentations within the CASWE-ACFTS Program, which had a main focus on “Neoliberalism and the Future of Social Work: Breaking Out or Breaking Down”. Based on the presentations made at the CASWE program, I assumed that the influence of neoliberalism on social work education and practice would be a major concern to the association and its members. Yet, the CASWE *Accreditation Standards* released in 2012 do not provide any vision or strategies for addressing neoliberalism within social work education and in fact, I have argued that many of the principles and objectives within the current Standards actually support a neoliberal agenda. Therefore my first recommendation is directed towards the CASWE and the need to rearticulate the fundamental values and beliefs, which have historically characterized social work’s transformative role, within its mission and goals.

I have also argued that the Principles Guiding Accreditation of Social Work Education Programs (CASWE, 2012) should move beyond thinking that support for diversity is sufficient action for addressing the various forms of oppression that are experienced by certain individuals and groups of people. The use of the term “diversity” rather than “difference” and the provision of “a range of characteristics” including “disability/non-disability” only serve to reinforce the categorization of disabled people as a monolithic category based on certain measurable and/or observable characteristics. A focus on “difference” rather than diversity allows for a more fluid

concept of identity and group membership, and shifts thinking towards the various ways that people experience disadvantage and oppression. Therefore my second recommendation is that the CASWE conduct a close reading of its Standards in relation to the philosophy and ideology that is being advocated. If the CASWE supports a liberal-humanist philosophy, as does the *Canadian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics* (2005), then it should be explicit in its support of that ideology rather than simply state that it has a “social justice focus” in the preamble.

The third recommendation is a call for the adoption of an anti-oppressive approach to social work education and practice. Although the Persons with Disabilities Caucus were successful in placing disability-rights on the platform of the CASWE and included within the CASWE *Accreditation Standards* (2008), it was a short-lived victory. It was reminiscent of the debate on the need to develop anti-racist social work education, as described in the article by Macey and Moxon (1996). The authors contend that a focus on anti-oppressive strategies, rather than on narrow anti-racism strategies, acknowledges the intersection of social divisions and provides a more inclusive understanding of various forms and experiences of oppression. Of course, this recommendation is premised on the assumption that ability would be included as one of the social divisions to be considered. It is interesting to note that the current CASWE *Standards for Accreditation* (2012) do not mention oppression or anti-oppressive social work practice within the Mission Statement and Goals, or the Principles Guiding Accreditation of Social Work Education Programs. Anti-oppressive social work practice based on the critical social justice frameworks of Baines (2011), Mullaly (2010), Pease (2010) and others would address many of the concerns that disabled people, and others, have expressed about mainstream social work;

primarily that it has narrow individually focused interventions, it supports that status quo, and that it is politically neutral.

All three of my recommendations involve large-scale changes to the way that social work education is promoted at the level of the CASWE. Individual schools and individual instructors can also introduce changes to the way that disability is addressed within social work education by making a conscious effort to include ableism in any analysis of oppression, by arranging for presentations to be made in class by agencies and organizations supported by disabled people, and by encouraging papers and projects on disability and social work practice.

Future Research

During the course of this research study I struggled with the need to address disability through specialized courses, as suggested by Oliver & Sapey (2006, 2012) and with support for an approach to social work education integrating disability content into all aspects of the curriculum. It was evident from the findings of the manifest content analysis of course texts and the modified inductive analysis of transcripts from interviews with instructors that disability content was not “infused” into the curricula in the BSW programs, even though some faculties and schools articulated specific policies to include disability content. Specialized courses addressing disability tended to be offered as an elective, in a field of elective courses, so student enrolment was often limited.

It is not known how much disability content would be sufficient to prepare social workers at the BSW level of education to work with disabled individuals, their families, and self-organized groups of disabled people. I believe it would be important to develop a survey instrument, based on specific learning objectives established by the Persons with Disabilities Caucus, to measure and evaluate the disability knowledge that students acquire when disability is infused within the

curriculum. The research would be invaluable to the continuous development and refinement of social work education addressing disability.

The survey could be part of a longitudinal, quasi experimental design that first year social work students are asked to complete a “Values, Beliefs and Assumptions Inventory” in which students identify some of the ideas and thoughts they have developed about disability and disabled persons. The Inventory could be comprised of open-ended and Likert- Scale questions. During the third or second year of the educational program the same inventory could be re-introduced to the students, along with an open-ended question asking students to evaluate their learning experience in relation to social work and disability.

If the school of social work has a specialized course on disability, it may be feasible to carry out a “between-subjects” design in which the group of students receiving the infused approach to education about disability is compared with students who receive a more intensive educational exposure to disability. In the case of the specialized class, students should complete the survey questionnaire prior to the commencement of the course and again at the completion of the course. Differences in the level of understanding of the group receiving the infused approach and the group receiving the intensive approach to disability theory and social work practice are to be expected. However, the findings from the group enrolled in the specialized course addressing disability may help to “fine tune” the focus of the disability content and pedagogical strategies that the infused approach should incorporate into the curriculum.

Conclusion

This study builds on the important work of the Persons with Disability Caucus because it actually focuses on how three of the twenty seven accredited schools of social work in Canada have addressed disability within core curriculum. To my knowledge, this study makes an

important contribution to the literature of social work education because it is interdisciplinary, in that it examines the disability literature to identify the perspectives comprising critical disability studies, and it also explores the capacity of current social work theories and practices to engage with such a dynamic theoretical framework. It is my finding that an anti-oppressive social work practice approach, particularly structural social work, is the most congruent with the theories contributing to critical disability studies.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Approval



Ethics
Office of the Vice-President (Research)

APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

CTC Building
208 - 194 Dafoe Road
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2
Fax (204) 269-7173
www.umanitoba.ca/research

August 27, 2010

TO: Marilyn Dupre
Principal Investigator

Frankel

FROM: Bruce Tefft, Chair
Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board (PSREB)

Re: Protocol #P2010:060
"Social Work Education and Disability: A Multicase Study of Approaches to Disability in Core and Specialized Curricula at Three Bachelor of Social Work Programs"

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol, as revised, has received human ethics approval by the **Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement. This approval has been issued based on your agreement with the change(s) to your original protocol required by the PSREB. It is the researcher's responsibility to comply with any copyright requirements. This approval is valid for one year only.

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

Please note:

- if you have funds pending human ethics approval, the auditor requires that you submit a copy of this Approval Certificate to Eveline Saurette in the Office of Research Services, (e-mail eveline_saurette@umanitoba.ca, or fax 261-0325), including the Sponsor name, before your account can be opened.
- if you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise the account will be locked.

The Research Ethics Board requests a final report for your study (available at: http://umanitoba.ca/research/ors/ethics/ors_ethics_human_REB_forms_guidelines.html) in order to be in compliance with Tri-Council Guidelines.

Bringing Research to Life

Appendix B: Letter of Introduction



Faculty of Social Work

521 Tier Building
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-7050
Fax (204) 474-7594
Social_Work@UManitoba.CA

August 30, 2010

Dear Dr. _____;

My name is Marilyn Dupre. I am a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Manitoba. I am conducting thesis research and I am writing to inform you that I will be approaching several instructors in your B.S.W. program to participate. The title of the thesis is: *Social Work Education and Disability: A Multicase Study of Approaches to Disability in Core and Specialized Curricula at Three Bachelor of Social Work Programs*.

The purpose of the study is to examine the particular theoretical perspectives that inform the design of courses addressing disability or oppression. I will be requesting to interview instructors and also to tape record a class, with the permission on the instructor and students.

Theoretical sampling has been used to select three B.S.W. programs that will likely correspond to a particular point on a continuum in relation to disability theory. A mix of core and specialized courses related to disability has been chosen from various years in each B.S.W. program.

This research has been approved by the Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board, University of Manitoba. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have about this study. You may contact me by telephone (506) 325-4833 or by email: Marilyn.Dupre@gmb.ca. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Sid Frankel, Associate Professor, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba, by telephone; (204)474-9706, or email: frankels@cc.umanitoba.ca.

I think that the findings of my research may be useful to your B.S.W. program. I would be happy to make a presentation to your faculty, to meet with you and to provide a written report once the findings are available.

Thank you in anticipation of your support,
Sincerely,

Marilyn Dupre
Ph. D. Candidate

cc. Dr. S. Frankel

Appendix C: Coding Instruction for Manifest Content Analysis

1. The coverage of perspectives in relation to disability, within core and specialized course social work texts, will be counted for each mention and categorized according to Table 2. Similarly, the coverage of conventional and progressive social work approaches to disability will also be counted and categorized according to one of the three categories outlined in the following typology in Table 4.
3. Any statements pertaining to the heritage, explanation, discussion, application in practice, and policy implications of theoretical scholarship are to be coded as part of the total coverage of theoretical scholarship.
5. Graphs, charts, diagrams and tables pertaining to theoretical scholarship will not be coded.
6. Pictures, suggested or further reading sections, statistical descriptions of disabled people, questions and answer sections at the end of a chapter, will not be coded.

Appendix D – Letter of Invitation to Instructors



Faculty of Social Work

521 Tier Building
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-7050
Fax (204) 474-7594
Social_Work@UManitoba.CA

Letter of Invitation to Instructors

Date: _____

Dear _____;

Study Title: *Social Work Education and Disability: A Multicase Study of Approaches to Disability in Core and Specialized Curricula at Three Bachelor of Social Work Programs.*

My name is Marilyn Dupre. I am a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Manitoba.

I am conducting a research study as part of the requirement of my Doctor of Philosophy in social work, and I would like to invite you to participate. The purpose of the interview is to examine the particular theoretical perspectives that inform an instructor's design of a course addressing disability or oppression. Theoretical sampling has been used to select three BSW programs that will likely present a particular point on a theoretical continuum in relation to disability. A mix of core and specialized courses related to disability has been chosen from various years in the BSW program. Your elective course, _____ has been chosen for the study because of its examination of (dis)ability from an anti-oppressive, social constructivist, and rights-based lens.

The interviews will be semi-structured and focus on asking how you came to teach this course, and on understanding your thinking about the design and content of the course. The courses selected for the instructor interviews are the same courses that I have chosen for a manifest content analysis of course texts and course outlines, and a class taught by an instructor will be selected for audio-taping, providing the study with three different levels of data and analysis. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to meet me for an interview about perspectives on the different approaches/perspectives that you use to teach students about disability/ableism.

The meeting will take place at a mutually agreeable time and place and should last about 90 minutes. Interviews may also be arranged by telephone if that is more convenient for your schedule. The interview will be audio taped so that I can accurately reflect on what is discussed. Tapes will be securely stored in a locked drawer at my home office and will be erased once transcripts are confirmed by you to be an accurate representation of the interview. Identifying information will be removed from the transcripts and they will be securely stored in a locked filing cabinet at my home and burned after defense of my thesis, tentatively scheduled to be completed by August 2012. Consent forms will be securely stored separate from the transcripts. Identifying information will not be included in the thesis or any presentations or publications based on it. However, colleagues or students may be able to guess your identity.

You do not have to answer all of the questions in the interview protocol if you do not wish to. Taking part in the study is your decision. You may decline to participate in the interview or terminate your participation at any time. A copy of the transcript of your interview will be sent to you for your review prior to any analysis. You may request that some parts of the interview be omitted in whole or in part.

I would be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me by telephone (506)325-4833 or by email: Marilyn.Dupre@gnb.ca. You may also contact my faculty advisor; Dr. Sid Frankel, Associate Professor, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba, telephone, (204) 474 – 9706, email: frankels@cc.umanitoba.ca. If you have any questions, complaints or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Human Ethics Coordinator, CTC Building, 209 – 194 Dafoe Road, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3T 2N2, telephone (204) 474 – 7122.

Thank you for your consideration. I have enclosed a consent form and a self-addressed, stamped envelope that I would ask you to return to me within two weeks of receiving this invitation, if you agree to participate in the study. If you do not wish to participate in this study, please inform me of this by email: Marilyn.Dupre@gnb.ca or by calling me at (506) 325-4833. If I do not hear from you, a reminder letter may be sent to you.

With kind regards,

Marilyn Dupre, Ph. D. Candidate

Appendix E: Interview Protocol

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Position/Role of Interviewee:

Questions:

1. I would like to know how you came to be involved in teaching this course.
2. What perspectives/theories of disability will be taught in your class?
3. What text books are you using to help social work students understand various perspectives on disability?
4. What thoughts/ideas contributed to your decision to choose these particular texts?
5. What are some of the most important concepts that you want students to understand about oppression and disability?
6. What else would you like me to know about your approach to teaching social work students about disability?

Appendix F: Informed Consent Form for Instructors



Faculty of Social Work

521 Tier Building
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-7050
Fax (204) 474-7594
Social_Work@UManitoba.CA

Informed Consent Form Instructor Interviews

Research Project Title: Social Work Education and Disability: A Multicase Study of Approaches to Disability in Core and Specialized Curricula at Three Bachelor of Social Work Programs

Researcher: Ms. Marilyn Dupre Ph.D. Candidate, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba; telephone, (506) 325 – 4833, email: Marilyn.Dupre@gnb.ca.

Sponsor: Research Supervisor: Dr. Sid Frankel, Associate Professor, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba, telephone, (204) 474 – 9706, email: frankels@cc.umanitoba.ca.

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

1. **Purpose of Research:** The purpose of the study is to describe the particular theoretical lenses used to educate social work students about disability and to compare them with approaches advocated by disability theorists and activists. The purpose of the interview is to examine the particular theoretical perspectives that inform an instructor's design of a course addressing disability or oppression.
2. **Description of the Procedures:** You will be involved in a telephone interview or in-person interview of up to 90 minutes. All of the interviews will be audio taped and transcribed for data analysis. The transcribed interviews will be made available to the interviewee, via mail, email or facsimile, so that the interviewee has the opportunity to review the information provided and to validate it with his/her signature as being an accurate representation of the interview.
3. **Risk and Potential Harm:** Identifying information will not be included in the thesis or any presentations or publications based on it. However, those with other information about you, such as colleagues or students, may be able to guess your identity.
4. **Voluntariness:** Participation is completely voluntary and no one will be informed if you refuse to participate.
5. **Recording Device:** Interviews will be audio-taped.
6. **Confidentiality:** Only the researcher will have access to the data. Tapes will be securely store in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home office and erased once transcripts are reviewed by the interviewee. Identifying information will be removed from the transcripts and they will be securely stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home office and burned after defense of the thesis in August, 2012. Consent forms will be securely stored in a locked drawer, separate from the

transcripts. Identifying information will not be included in the thesis or any presentations or publications based on it. However, colleagues or students may be able to guess your identity.

7. Feedback: If you would like a copy of the summary of findings, please provide the surface mail address to which it is to be mailed, or your email address, below:

The summary will be mailed in August, 2012.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate by allowing your course outline to be included in the study. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researcher or the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw your permission at any time, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Researcher: Ms. Marilyn Dupre, Ph.D. Candidate, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba, telephone, (506) 325 – 4833, email: Marilyn.Dupre@gnb.ca.

Sponsor; Research Supervisor: Dr. Sid Frankel, Associate Professor, faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba, telephone, (204) 474 – 9706, email: frankels@cc.umanitoba.ca.

This research has been approved by the Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board. If you have questions, concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-mentioned persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at (204) 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your record and reference.

I agree to participate: _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher and/or Delegate's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix G: Informed Consent Form and Script for Audio-taping a Class



Faculty of Social Work

521 Tier Building
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
Telephone (204) 474-7050
Fax (204) 474-7594
Social_Work@UManitoba.CA

Informed Consent Form Audio-tape of Class Lecture or Seminar

Research Project Title: Social Work Education and Disability: A Multicase Study of Approaches to Disability in Core and Specialized Curricula at Three Bachelor of Social Work Programs.

Researcher: Ms. Marilyn Dupre Ph.D. Candidate, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba; telephone, (506) 325 – 4833, email: Marilyn.Dupre@gnb.ca.

Sponsor: Research Supervisor: Dr. Sid Frankel, Associate Professor, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba, telephone, (204) 474 – 9706, email: frankels@cc.umanitoba.ca.

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

1. Purpose of Research: The purpose of audio-taping a lecture/seminar is to examine the particular theoretical frameworks and perspectives on disability being discussed by students and instructors in a classroom setting.
2. Description of Procedure: Today's class will be audio-taped by a research assistant who will not intervene in the conduct of your class in any other way.
3. Risk and Potential Harm: No risk or potential harm has been identified.
4. Voluntariness: Participation is completely voluntary and no one will be informed if you refuse to participate. If any student wishes not to consent the class will not be taped.
5. Confidentiality: Only the researcher will have access to the data. Tapes will be securely locked in a locked filing cabinet in my home office and will be erased once transcripts are reviewed to make sure they accurately reflect the tape. Your name will not appear on any transcript and any identifying information will be removed from the transcript. Transcripts will be securely stored in a locked drawer in the researcher's home office. Consent forms will also be securely stored in a locked drawer in the researcher's home office, separate from the transcripts. Both will be destroyed after defense of the thesis in August 2012.

6. Feedback: If you would like a copy of the summary of findings, please list the surface mail or email address to which it should be sent:

The summary will be mailed in August, 2012.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate by allowing your course outline to be included in the study. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researcher or the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Social Work from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw your permission at any time, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Researcher: Ms. Marilyn Dupre Ph.D. Candidate, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba; telephone, (506) 325 – 4833, email: Marilyn.Dupre@gnb.ca.

Sponsor: Research Supervisor: Dr. Sid Frankel, Associate Professor, Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba, telephone, (204) 474 – 9706, email: frankels@cc.umanitoba.ca

This research has been approved by the Psychology/Sociology Research Ethics Board. If you have questions, concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-mentioned persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at (204) 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your record and reference.

I agree to participate: _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher and/or Delegate's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Script to be Read to Students Before Audio-Taping A Lecture/Seminar

The Informed Consent Form that is being distributed to you is requesting your permission to be able to audio-tape your class today. I will be reviewing the form with you and I encourage you to ask questions and express any concerns that you may have about the purpose of the research or your participation in the study.

(The research assistant will read through the form).

Your participation in this audio-taping is voluntary. If you wish to participate in the study I would ask that you sign the form agreeing to participate and place it in the envelope provided to you. If you wish to decline to participate, do not sign the form. There is no penalty or consequence for not participating in the study. I will only audio-tape the class if all students consent to participate. Thank you for your time.

Appendix H: The Chi Square Test of Independence

H_0 : There is not any association between social work practice approaches to disability, identified in course outlines and texts, and particular university BSW programs.

H_a : There is an association between social work practice approaches to disability, identified in course texts and outlines, and particular university BSW programs.

Table 5

Results and Analysis of Chi Square Test of Independence – Cross Case Analysis

Sample	Individual Pathology	Social Pathology	Critical Disability Perspectives	Totals
STU	11 (14%)	36 (44%)	34 (42%)	81
DalU	72 (20%)	140 (39%)	148 (41%)	360
UM	17 (9%)	52 (30%)	106 (61%)	175
Totals	100 (16%)	228 (37%)	288 (47%)	616

Expected Values			$ O - E $	$(O - E)^2$	$(O - E)^2/E$
STU	Individual Pathology	13.15	2.15	4.6225	.3515
	Social Pathology	29.98	6.02	36.2404	1.2088
	Critical Disability	37.87	3.87	14.9769	.3955
DAL	Individual Pathology	58.44	13.56	183.8736	3.1464
	Social Pathology	133.25	6.75	45.5625	0.3419
	Critical Disability	168.31	20.31	412.4961	2.4508
UM	Individual Pathology	28.41	11.41	130.1881	4.5825
	Social Pathology	64.77	12.77	163.0729	2.5177
	Critical Disability	81.82	24.18	584.6724	7.1458

Chi Square = 22.1409

Degrees of Freedom = $(c - 1)(r - 1) = 2(2) = 4$

Reject H_0 because 22.1409 is greater than 9.488 at alpha (.05).

Appendix I: Modified Inductive Analysis of Transcripts from Interviews with Key Informants

Initial research hypothesis explored: The anti-oppressive social work practice approaches to disability will be consistent with the theoretical framework of critical disability studies.

Transcript #1

Theoretical Phrase/Concept from Transcript	Theoretical Perspective on Disability
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ...utilizes five faces of oppression and examples of ableism...• ...a general sort of critique on how oppression is structured dualisms that create a position of privilege or dominance.• [oppression] is culturally defined and socially determined...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Utilizes materialist analysis of oppression which is congruent with critical disability theory.• Dualisms and binary oppositions are challenged (Post structural theory) – critical disability perspective.• Oppression is relationally and socially constructed – critical disability perspective.

Hypothesis 1: The anti-oppressive social work practice approaches to disability are consistent with the theoretical framework of critical disability studies.

Transcript #2

Theoretical Phrase/Concept from Transcript	Theoretical Perspective on Disability
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ...we would address issues of diversity from a critical perspective in terms of power relations.• [ableism] wasn't a main focus and was one of the aspects that was woven throughout in bits and pieces.• ...it's more in terms of visibility and absence. And the dominant discourse in terms of ableism. But that language has not been particularly visible in this course.• ...practitioners are inherently complicit in oppressive practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Postmodern pluralism.• Oppression seen as a process and not just an outcome of dominate/subordinate relations – critical theory perspective.• A post structural analysis of oppression.• Professional discourses are viewed as disempowering – critical disability perspective.

Revised Hypothesis 1 continues to be relevant.

Transcript #3:

Theoretical Phrase/Concept from Transcript	Theoretical Perspective on Disability
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ...all of the readings are from a critical disability perspective, I don't believe that we included an article on disability specifically but we have articles about working with resilience...• I use the same explanation for disability that I use for racism...we need to look at who benefits.• ...the distance that we experience from whomever is defined as the dominant group has been socially constructed.• ...the idea about disability is disability compared to what? How does it get defined and Othered and made invisible in dominant discourse?• To be taking a strategy, a postmodern approach to social work... we all have a different story...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Resilience is associated with a strengths-based, ecological approach to social work practice. This approach is more congruent with a social pathology approach to disability.• A generalist approach to disability as one form of oppressive relations.• The social construction of disability is associated with both the social pathology and critical disability perspectives.• Post modernism examines the power relations of dominant discourse.• Postmodern approach emphasizing the importance of personal narratives about disability.

There is some evidence of divergence from initial hypothesis. The responses in transcript #3 generally fall within a social pathology perspective of disability.

Revised Hypothesis 1: There is a range of theoretical practice approaches to disability represented in the transcripts from the interviews with key informants that includes both social pathology and critical disability perspectives.

Transcript#4:

Theoretical Phrase/Concept from Transcript	Theoretical Perspective on Disability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The theoretical frame would be a social constructionist one. Disability is a social construct. • We spend time getting them [students] to learn how to use particular critical reflection skills, to deconstruct what those assumptions are... • ...move students away from an individualistic understanding of issues...to situate disability in a larger political context....the personal is political. • ...reframe it so that the issue is the barrier and not the disability... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both the social pathology perspective and the critical disability perspectives view disability as socially constructed. • Elements of postmodern deconstructionism. • Both a social pathology perspective and critical disability perspectives situate disability in a larger political context. • Consistent with the social pathology perspective.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I use the concepts of worldviews...what lens do we view the world from? • We are now using the phrase critical...the anti-oppressive approach was too rigidly rooted in identity politics... • ...we talk about the medical model, a biomedical or biosocial model versus a more critical understanding of health and wellness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postmodern pluralism. • Critical disability perspective based on recognition of diversity. • Biomedical or biosocial fits within a social pathology perspective of disability.
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Transcript #4 continues to support revised hypothesis 1: There is a range of theoretical practice approaches to disability represented in the transcripts from the interviews with key informants that includes social pathology and critical disability perspectives.

Trancript#5

Theoretical Phrase/Concept from Transcript	Theoretical Perspective on Disability
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It's really a human rights-based perspective coming from a social justice lens• We deconstruct traditional models like the medical model and look at Parson's sick role theory, certainly explore the social model• Look at identity and the construction of identity.• ...move to the significance of language and almost doing a discourse analysis around language• The things I wanted to talk about were issues around identity, issues around language, issues around deconstructing the medical model...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Addressing ableism and barriers through legislation is viewed as a public responsibility – social pathology perspective.• Post structural deconstructionism.• Disability is relationally and socially constructed – critical disability perspective.• Post structural deconstruction of terminology.• Postmodern elements falling within critical disability perspectives.

Hypothesis 2: There is a range of theoretical practice approaches to disability represented in the transcripts from the interviews with key informants that includes social pathology and critical disability perspectives, but critical disability perspectives are most prevalent.

Transcript#6

Theoretical Phrase/Concept from Transcript	Theoretical Perspective on Disability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...it deals with issues related to mothering, and like the social model versus the medical model of disability. • Marx suggests that we challenge this reductive focus on essential disabled persons in favour of an explanation in favour of the way that people are socially constructed within a range of disabling environments. • ...the importance of an intersectional perspective on disability, and that's the lens I use for the whole course... • ...I want them to understand that disability is a socially constructed category... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The social model is social pathology perspective. • Marxist analysis of disability – critical disability perspective. • Intersectional understanding of oppression; gender and disability; critical perspective on disability. • Disability is socially constructed – social pathology perspective.

Transcript #6 supports Hypothesis 2: There is a range of theoretical practice approaches to disability represented in the transcripts from the interviews with key informants that includes social pathology and critical disability perspectives, but critical disability perspectives are more prevalent.

Transcript#7

Theoretical Phrase/Concept from Transcript	Theoretical Perspective on Disability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...we are moving through a number of lenses...we are looking at disability through a number of lenses...a lens of normalcy, it's not exceptional... • We look at language, we look at stigma, we look at disability awareness... • Disability is all over the map. It's children, it's adults, it's older adults. There are cultural issues, access to barriers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examination of "normalcy" is part of a critical disability perspective. • Social pathology and critical disability perspectives. • The diversity of disability – critical disability perspective.

Transcript #7 supports Hypothesis 2: There is a range of theoretical practice approaches to disability represented in the transcripts from the interviews with key informants that includes social pathology and critical disability perspectives, but critical disability perspectives are more prevalent.